

## **ETHICS PORTFOLIO: "INKED IDENTITIES".**

*Made by Massimo Briani.*

*A man without tattoos is invisible to the Gods (Iban proverb).*

Getting a tattoo means marking your body from here to eternity. It is an ancient rite, also present in various tribes of the edge of the world. The first news of tattoos dates back to several centuries BC. Already in the Old Testament, the prohibition of marking one's skin for eternity was evident. And it is a prohibition still valid in Judaism and Islam. In recent decades, the idea that a person with one or more tattoos is a "disreputable" person has remained unchanged in many social groups. As mentioned, some religions still categorically prohibit the idea of the mark on the skin. Even the Armed Forces still have as an admission requirement the absence of tattoos that are visible when wearing the uniform. The reasons are different, but they all reside in the concept of identity. Those who choose to be part of the Armed Forces could be employed in tasks in which identity must be hidden and a tattoo would therefore be a risk. In many religions, the sharing of identity is a privilege reserved for a very limited circle of people; to this idea is added the conviction of not being able to radically change the body: the identity of creatures of one's god remains a priority. So in an anthropological reading, the tattoo can be considered a real brand. A symbol, like coats of arms on armor or flags. A brand to reaffirm one's identity, one's belonging to a particular group or creed. Many tattoo the name of their children or a loved one who is no longer there. Others brand a religious icon, the sign of a political idea, of a sporting belief, of a passion. The brand becomes an affirmation of belonging. An identification with a social group, with a specific idea. With your family or with your role. A part of himself so relevant that it has to become eternal. With this photographic portfolio "INKED IDENTITIES" I wanted to create a path through images that would help me answer many questions I had. I wondered how many and what reasons lead a person to choose a specific symbol to be accompanied throughout his life. Then, how many and what reasons lead to choose to get a tattoo at that precise moment. These questions forced me to look for the psychological root of marking one's skin, of getting a tattoo. The identity of each of us is not always easy to communicate or reveal. In an increasingly globalized and standardizing world, I believe that the desire that lies in many young people is precisely that of making their identity shine through and making it original. But it is certain that the tattoo is a brand that helps to transform the invisible into the visible. Here is a first reading key to take into consideration. With a tattoo, a piece of our identity is made clear and visible. A piece of invisible that becomes visible "black on white". A piece of us that goes from inside to outside. From secret it becomes public. Or, at least, available to sight and not just to inner knowledge. Branding your skin is equivalent to highlighting a piece of yourself. A "declaration" that will challenge time: it will be "for life". This is a very often frightening expression. An expression that appears unlikely especially in a historical period characterized by "liquidity" (see also the photographic project entitled "Liquid Heterotopia") so widespread that it becomes extreme uncertainty. Contemporary young people are increasingly reluctant to make choices that involve a lifelong commitment. Many also lack the ability to make choices throughout their lives. In this

"liquid society", as defined by Bauman, first of all it is relationships that cannot withstand the passing years. The tattoo, on the other hand, seems like a challenge to all this. The tattoo is a timeless brand that cannot be erased except with surgery. Getting a tattoo, marking your skin is a gesture that will accompany us throughout our life. Time may fade the drawn symbol. The skin can become softer, altering the contours of the symbol. But its meaning will remain unchanged. "Identity" and "eternity", these are the choices that are made by choosing to get a tattoo. These are the psychological readings that my attention has focused on most in questions about the meaning of a tattoo. Whether branding is a ritual or a choice made with little awareness, it is still a gesture that defies time and reveals a part of oneself. For this reason, even today the tattoo is an entity capable of catching our attention.