

# Travis Browning at Lost Lakes Tattoo

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525 N Sherman Ave.  
Madison WI, 53704  
(608)709-5557  
travis@lostlaketattoo.com

## **Booking Info**

Thank you so much for your interest! This guide is meant to answer some questions about your tattoo ideas and my method of work. This is just my method, the other artists at Lost Lakes Tattoo each run their business their own way. Most of you have more than a few questions, so I wrote you a small book. Here's a table of contents so you can skip to whatever you're curious about.

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## **THE TATTOOS I AM OFFERING**

### **In general**

I'm very drawn to elegant, flowing artwork with harmonious colors. I'm also drawn to larger, bolder tattoos that fit well on the body. Putting those together is what I love most. Let's make a large, simple, flowing tattoo that looks great from across the room.

### **Art nouveau**

For many years now, Alphonse Mucha's artwork has been my biggest inspiration for tattoo design. If you're not already familiar with this style, just type in 'Mucha' on a search engine. There are many elements in his work that are perfect for tattoos. I love so much of it,

- the flow of the hair
- the flow of the stems
- the thickness of the lines
- the strong portrayal of women
- the focal point and all the flow that leads there
- the rigid framework
- the circular frames
- the flat coloring
- the flat subject matter
- the subdued colors
- the overlapping elements
- the glorification of a subject

I love to try to incorporate those elements into my tattoos. Not all of them, but enough to feel that my work is art nouveau.

For larger pieces, I'm up for flowers, plants, humans, faces, birds, most animals and insects, mythical beings, and occasionally an inanimate object. If it's smaller than a sleeve, there is usually a framework of some sort.

For smaller pieces, the subject matter is more limited to mostly flowers with the leaves and stem controlling the flow and the decorative aspect. For examples like this it helps to look up art nouveau in the form of tiles, fabric and jewelry.

### **X-ray Flowers**

Much of my x-ray flower inspiration comes from Dr. Dain L. Tasker. He was a radiologist who developed x-ray images of flowers in the 1930s. A customer of mine brought his flower prints in for tattoo inspiration and we tattooed an arrangement of flowers on her arm. Eventually more and more customers have asked for these delicate x-ray flower tattoos.

I soon exhausted the references of real x-rays on the internet and I decided to attempt to create my own fake x-ray flowers from references of both x-ray and non x-ray images of flowers. Somehow, this worked and it's a thing I do now. I get to have a bit more control over the flow of the piece this way by bending the stems, leaves and petals to the spots I want them.

For larger pieces, I'm up for most flowers as long as I can make them flow well together, and if it has some art nouveau direction. The bigger the better, also color is fun and I love thick lines on the outside.

For smaller pieces, The options are more limited, I can do up to a few simpler blossoms with an art nouveau flow to the stems and leaves.

All new x-ray tattoos will have a thicker outline for the outermost line. Still very thin lines on the inside though.

## **Cover-ups**

I'm well versed in cover-ups, but I still only want to do art nouveau or x-ray flowers. Color can really do wonders as a cover up, and for those that don't want color, x-ray flowers can cover up tiny tattoos incredibly well. I won't usually know until I see the tattoo in person though.

Sometimes laser removal is recommended. If we can both picture a good final product, then I can usually find a way to reduce the amount of lasering needed before I do the coverup. You don't have to remove the tattoo entirely, the laser can do part of the work and the cover-up can do the rest. So I can make recommendations on what to tell the laser removal specialist.

The majority of the cover-ups I do are 5-10 times the size of the original tattoo. If you're up for that, there are usually some great options to cover something.

## **What I am not offering**

I'm not offering tiny tattoos. I have a 2/hr minimum, so if the tattoo takes less time than that, I will still charge \$400 for that tattoo session.

I'm not offering any styles other than art nouveau or x-ray flowers. If the idea you're requesting doesn't quite fit in that window, I will likely not take it on as a project.

I will not recreate someone's artwork unless we are simplifying an art nouveau piece from the art nouveau time period.

I will not do lettering unless it's poster-sized in an art nouveau font as part of a large art nouveau tattoo.

## **BOOKING INFO**

### **Making a request**

Just send me an email at [travis@lostlakestattoo.com](mailto:travis@lostlakestattoo.com) during a week that I have open books. Or fill out a consultation form at [www.lostlakestattoo.com](http://www.lostlakestattoo.com).

Books will open twice a year, the last week of March and the last week of September. This cuts down on hours of communication and it allows me to focus more of my work hours on designing instead.

When you send an email try to include these things on this checklist:

- Subject matter
- Style
- Color ideas
- Size
- Placement on your body

Ideally I'd have everyone send photos of the spot on their body that we will be tattooing, but if I take on your idea, I'll ask during the consultation process anyway. So no need upfront, but please include a photo if it helps to explain your idea.

I do not take on every request. I prioritize the ones that will look best in my portfolio. Larger color art nouveau will usually get prioritized above other options.

I still attempt to respond to all requests, if I've taken longer than a week to respond, my apologies, I've probably made a mistake and it's no longer on my radar, please resend.

### **Consultation**

I have a consultation for nearly every tattoo I do. The consultations are free. I will sit down with you and just listen to your ideas at first. After a little back and forth, I'll start drawing a really rough sketch, or many rough sketches usually on my iPad. I'll get some more direction from you and continue drawing until usually I get to a point where either A) I need more time to develop the idea, and we book an additional consultation, or B) we're both really happy with the direction. If so, then we can move forward and book the tattoo.

For larger work and more complex designs I'll often do 2-3 consultations before booking the tattoo dates. This can sometimes drag out the process several more weeks before we begin, but I feel that's the right

way to approach something very large or complex. We've got to really iron out the blueprints, and the location before we both agree it's time to pour a foundation.

I can do a zoom consultation for those traveling far, but it is a much less efficient way to get things done, so in-person consultations are preferred.

At the end of a consultation or two or three, when we're both really sure what we're signing up for, I'll take a \$200 deposit to book the actual tattoo appointment. Try to bring a form of payment to your consultation if you can.

## **Drawing fee**

Drawing is free up to a point. I try to have it baked into the final price of the tattoo, so I generally will spend up to an hour of drawing and consultation for every 2-4 hours of estimated tattoo time.

Most tattoos that are smaller get designed during the consultation. I can usually sketch what someone is thinking and get it to a point where we're both confident that we're on the same page. When this happens, there is no drawing fee.

Average sized tattoos will usually get roughly designed during the first consultation, and a second one will be booked a week or so later, where I will usually bring more drawings to the table and then draw a little more to get us to the point where we're ready to book the tattoo. When this happens there is no fee.

For larger work or more complex designs I can end up drawing for several more hours. I'll estimate the hours it may take to draw an idea to completion and if the time needed to design is more than average, I'll give a quote on the drawing time involved before we proceed.

Occasionally, the customer is unsure, or changes their mind pretty far into the consultation process, for instances like these, I will charge a drawing fee to continue drawing just to ensure I am not working for free.

For all drawings, I show them at the consultation only. We figure out all the art direction for the design during the consultation(s). I don't show any more drafts or final drawings after that until the day we tattoo it. I don't go back and forth with drawing edits between email after email. I just bring the final line drawing to begin the tattoo on the day we do the tattoo.

When I do feel the need to ask for a drawing fee, it is usually \$50/hr booked hourly. (Not refundable, does not go toward tattoo, paid up front.)

## Deposit

\$200 flat at time of booking the tattoo appointments. (Not refundable, applied to cost of tattoo at final session.)

Disclaimer: I will not give you this money back. This is an agreement between us that we both complete this tattoo someday. It's not refundable for any reason even if it's a really reasonable reason. We can always reschedule to a future date instead. And if I or you are unable to complete the tattoo due to health reasons, I owe you nothing. I still keep the non-refundable deposit.

For last minute cancellations and no-shows, your deposit will cover the time lost on my end, and will go to me as payment for that day. I will ask you to make a new deposit to hold on to any further existing appointments, or to reschedule a new appointment.

## Scheduling tattoo dates

All tattoos that I schedule a date for must have a consultation first, an agreement on what exactly we're tattooing, and then a \$200 deposit.

I used to just do tattoos on the spot and design them on the spot. I used to wish I had just 20 more minutes with every design, sometimes another few days or weeks, but I didn't. It's just not how the tattoo shops worked when I started. Now I am not in a hurry, and I'm not designing tattoos on a customer's tight timeline. If you want a tattoo within a month or two of thinking of it, I'm probably the wrong guy to ask. After waiting for my open books, it may take a month or two before we've agreed on a design and then another month or so before we can begin tattooing. This is just the nature of a tattoo artist who focuses on larger work and custom designs. I can't usually meet deadlines within a few months, so please consider this if you are traveling from afar or moving away within the year.

I try to book out all the sessions a larger tattoo might take. For something smaller than a sleeve, it could be 1-4 sessions. For some sleeves we can book out 6-9 sessions, for backpieces 10-12 sessions. Usually I try to pace them so the previous session is healed, which is usually 2 weeks. So I'm often tattooing the same piece every 2, 3, 4, or 5 weeks apart. Occasionally I can tattoo someone once a week or a few days back to back as long as we stay an inch away from what is healing.

I find that with large scale work we usually have to reschedule a few appointments over the course of a season or two, and we just touch base as it goes if we need to add an appointment at the end. Or sometimes we finish before the last one and we cancel the remaining appointments. This is usually possible in a reasonable amount of time because I try not to book out much past 6 months in advance.

I generally book one or two tattoo sessions a day, depending on session length. I work Mon-Thur starting as early as noon and sometimes I can start around 5 or 6 pm for sessions under 3 hours. I also work Sundays starting at 1pm, but those are often booked up pretty far. I do not work Friday or Saturday.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Tattoo pricing**

\$200/hr for all tattoos including cover-ups.

\$400 minimum even if it takes less than 2 hrs. I'm looking to do hand sized tattoos or larger.

You pay at the end of each session, sessions are usually 2-5 hours long, but I can tattoo longer for those traveling a long way, or for outlining a very large piece.

I look at the clock when we begin needle to skin, I look again when we end, then I deduct a few stretch or snack breaks and that's the way I calculate how many hours to charge. I generally don't take breaks much, because that's how I prefer to be tattooed, but I'll take as many as the customer wants. I don't usually like to stop for a meal unless the session takes 5 or more hours. So eat ahead of time or bring snacks, or if we're marathoning through a backpiece, let me know ahead of time, maybe we can plan a meal break.

On smaller tattoos I can usually fill a 4x6 postcard in 3-4 hours, on larger simpler designs I can double that area, on more detailed, multi-colored areas it is almost halved. More bendy areas of the body can double the time over the easier to tattoo areas. So it really varies and I can't give a quote until I have all the info. A small arm can be filled in 20-30 hours. A large arm can be 30 or more hours. Legs and backs usually are more, but it really depends on size and details.

### **Payments**

I accept cash, credit, venmo, cashapp, and cryptocurrency (bitcoin/ethereum/etc.). I take deposits and drawing fees at the time of agreement. I take payments for tattoo sessions at the end of each session.

Cash is preferred, as all other forms are taking a cut off the top. But I am no longer charging any difference between cash and digital alternatives for my tattoos.

### **Touch-ups**

I offer free touch-ups on every tattoo I do for the first year. After that I charge the same rate as I do for any tattoo. Touch-ups usually take much less time to do though.

Some tattoos will need a touch up because not every detail stayed through the healing process. This is uncommon because I strive for it to be an uncommon occurrence, but it does still happen, and I want my tattoos to look awesome out there, so I'm happy to do touch ups when needed.

Some older tattoos have seen a lot of sun and a lot of years, so at that point a touch up on a few colors can make them feel almost brand new again.

The colors that fade quicker in the sun are pinks, reds, oranges and yellows. They're still amazing colors though, they stay bright for decades in spots that see little sunlight. and they're otherwise easy to touch up

15-25 years down the road. All colors and lines will spread with time, so get tattoos that are not too detailed so they still look great in your future.

## Numbing agents

Do not bring your own.

There are two types of numbing agents, the topical cream and the spray. I have experience working with both but I have limitations I have to set with them.

For the topical cream, I only use a few brands, and we have to have a conversation in person before each application. Each tattoo requires different prep and setup time, so we have to get on the same page about when and where you apply the numbing cream. The one I prefer to work with takes 2 hours to absorb properly, so the conversation has to happen ahead of time.

Well applied topical cream can make a very sensitive spot almost pain free for about the first 5-10 minutes. Then for 20-30 minutes it's generally easy but not painless. Then it fades to a normal tattoo feeling here and there over the next hour. Around that point and for the next hour or so, experiences vary. For more than half the body, I don't recommend numbing cream at all. Your body has its own endorphins that do a better job overall. For a few areas though, it is worth having the discussion.

For the spray, I carry one at my station, I rarely use it, but I will occasionally offer a spray of it when we are already in a very sensitive area and someone is about to throw in the towel. This usually buys us another five or ten minutes of tattooing in that area before moving on. I will only use it once or twice near the end, I won't use it before the tattoo, or throughout the tattoo process, it's just not efficient that way.

## Aftercare

Space bandages! Or adhesive film bandages! These didn't exist when I started tattooing, but they're amazing if you're not allergic to adhesive. It's a bandage that's clear and as thin as cling wrap and it adheres to your skin. It's water resistant and breathable and it protects your tattoo while healing it, like everything a scab does, just a lot prettier.

So I often send people home with these space bandages on their freshly cleaned tattoo, then I tell them this:

- You can wear the bandage 1-5 days
- Take it off if
  - It rips
  - It leaks
  - It's irritating your skin
  - There is a lot of fluid and you don't think you'll make it through the day without it leaking.
  - Water has gotten into it from a shower or submerging it



- It is water resistant so it can be taken in the shower, but do not submerge. Keep it removed from the shower stream for the majority of the shower. If you can reduce your amount of showering and still have friends, feel free to skip a shower or two and skip the risk of getting water into the bandage.
- If leaking or ripping is minor and done in a clean way, you can wait until the end of the day to remove the bandage in a shower. Usually it will continue to leak, so keep that in mind.
- Ideally, the bandage survives a few days and you are free to take it off.
- It is easiest to remove in the shower
- It is similar to removing duct tape. Hold nearby skin down while removing.
- After removing, immediately wash with plain soap and water. My favorite soap to recommend is Dr. Bronner's Castille soap in liquid form. They have a 'for babies' soap for anyone concerned with allergic reactions to a soap. Scents are okay if you're not allergic to them, but the peppermint Bronners feels pretty spicy on a fresh tattoo.
- Wash away any bits that are on the surface and be sure to have clean hands when you start
- Dab dry with a clean towel
- Apply either an ointment or a lotion over the next few weeks
  - Ointments are more efficient at moisturizing, the best ones are petroleum free and organic. We sell an organic ointment at the shop we like a lot called 'Redemption'.
    - Apply any ointment very thinly, rub it in well with freshly clean hands.
    - Too much ointment can prevent the tattoo from getting the air it needs to heal, and can sometimes stain clothing..
    - Apply a few times a day or when the tattoo feels dry or tight
  - Lotions need to be applied more frequently but they are very light feeling and easy with most clothing and situations. Same rules for application as the ointment just more frequent applications as it dries out sooner. A common route of healing is to do ointment for the few days after the bandage and then lotion for the remainder of the healing.
- Usually it heals in 2-3 weeks! Lines sometimes take longer to fully settle in.
- Let it go through any peeling or scabbing on its own.
- Don't pick at it.
- Don't scratch it.
- Treat it like an open wound.
- Picking or bumping a scab off early can leave a spot with no color. Usually there is very little to almost no scabbing, but if a scab develops, be gentle with it.
- No pools, bath tubs, hot tubs, lakes, oceans etc. Don't submerge it.
- Keep it clean, wash it up to a few times a day or only when it seems like it needs it.

Oh yeah and they aren't really called space bandages (I might actually be the only one who's says that). Tegaderm is the hospital grade one, Saniderm is a well marketed and distributed one. Second skin, Hypafix, Viewgard, etc. They're all similar and the adhesive seems to be the biggest difference.

For the classic bandages, (not space bandages, not adhesive, just pads) everything is the same after removing the bandage, it is just removed sooner and it is more sensitive, more likely to form a scab, and

harder to keep moisturized during those first few days. For the first 15 years I tattooed, and for I'm sure a long time before that, artists would put ointment on your freshly cleaned tattoo and then cover it with a breathable, fiber filled plastic bandage. You wear that for 1-12 hours, remove and wash and then follow normal moisturizing routines. I offer this method for anyone who prefers it that way or for anyone allergic to the space bandage adhesive. 9/10 people prefer the space bandage/adhesive film bandage.

## **WHO I AM**

### **About me**

I've always loved drawing, and I basically lived in the art room in high school. I got my Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Media Arts and Animation in 2001 at the Illinois Institute of Art, then instead of landing a job in animation, I got swept up in the idea of being a tattoo artist. I took an apprenticeship in 2003 at RJ's Tattoo Studio in Harvard, Illinois. RJ taught me single needle tattooing as well as everything that goes with tattooing, down to machine building and soldering our own needles (because you couldn't really buy the good premade needles back then). I laid my first ink in 2004, and I've been doing it full time ever since..

After 4 years in the small town of Harvard, I wanted to spread out and learn from more artists. When I approached Steve's Tattoo, he was already about to open a joint venture with a great artist, Spike Beiganek. The new shop was to be called Spike-O-Matic, and they offered me a position as an artist there. During that time I learned from dozens of artists between Spike's and Steves, and overall really felt part of something. I was lucky enough to be part of Spike-o-Matic from day one in 2008, and eventually stayed there about 6 years. In 2014 I went off on my own and I opened Iron Quill Tattoo. I took on a few artists, then a business partner, then more artists, and as it grew and grew, my business partner and I realized we didn't get along at all, and had different paths to follow. I split from my business partner by buying him out and giving him the name 'Iron Quill Tattoo' as part of the buyout, and then I rebranded as Lost Lakes Tattoo in the same location with all the same artists at the start of 2018. Bit by bit, I've been managing the shop while tattooing. Overall, I really enjoy investing my time and money back into both the shop and my own art.

### **My art direction changes**

At the beginning RJ taught me that I needed to learn how to do any tattoo that walked in the door. This turned out to be a fun and fulfilling goal that I pursued for 10-15 years. In those years there was less demand and if you were picky enough as an artist, you may not make rent that month. So in a typical week, I could tattoo a tribal thing, a dog portrait, several names, a few stars, a dolphin, a family crest, some chinese lettering, a tree, a paw print, a baby's foot print, and a cartoon character. Although this time was still very enjoyable, I'm wearing a few of those tattoos myself, and I learned things you can't learn without experiencing them. In the long run though, I wasn't content. I often looked back and felt more like a put together cover band than an artist that was making his own hits. Eventually, demand picked up, my reputation picked up, and I had more requests than I had time. If I said yes to every request, I'd have no choice in my art. So eventually I stabbed toward an art direction and customers pulled me in their random art directions, and I've ended up in my own little niche, which brings us to what I'm aiming at now.

Art nouveau works really well for tattoos. The more I get to create it, the more I love it. I get most of my inspiration from Alphonse Mucha, but I try to eliminate most of the fine details. I love the flow of the hair and the plantlife. They seem to have an almost sassy flow to them, like the smell of a pie in a cartoon. I love his emphasis on linework being thicker around each subject. That along with really flat coloring with little depth really allows the linework to define the depth. I love the framework of rigid vertical panels and big circles around a focal point really help glorify a subject. Often the subject is tucked behind part of the frame or popping out in front of the frame. I love that most of the subject matter is either a plant or a human, usually a female. And I love how he forces the plantlife into a decorative shape, usually very elegant and using repetition in its flow. If you love a lot of similar things, I might be the right artist for you.

X-ray flowers were an unexpected and somewhat experimental turn for my art. They began with a customer bringing in a reference to actual x-rays of flowers and asking me to arrange them on her arm. It turned out really good, and another customer eventually asked for something similar, that also turned out really good, and it began to snowball from there. I did maybe a dozen or so more before I realized I'd run out of reference material very quickly. I started to play with the idea of creating my own fake x-rays by just combining what I knew of x-ray flowers with an actual flower photo, and those opened up a new door for me. Now I can theoretically turn any flower photo into an x-ray flower piece. I've done dozens and dozens of those in the skin, and they feel much more delicate than my other work, but they still have enough black to really hold up well over time. I can also get some of the art nouveau flare on these now by bending the stems into a decorative shape. I've done a few with bold outlines as well, and I may eventually only offer that, as I'm 100% sure I'd enjoy seeing the bold lines decades in the future.

Altogether I feel like I finally have a path for the direction of the artwork I'm making. I'm sure it will grow into something different, but I am happy with the current direction and excited to keep creating more of it!

## About Lost Lakes Tattoo

Lost Lakes Tattoo is about as laid back as tattoo shops get. After years of running a tattoo shop it's safe to say now I only hire talented artists who will promote a relaxed, drama free environment. With plenty of room for eight artists to each sprawl out, a clean environment, plant life, a consultation room, a photo room, a humongous mirror, and a lobby with little gift ideas from local artists, Lost Lakes Tattoo can really be a comfortable spot to come get a tattoo.

Then there are all the things you might not appreciate until being in enough tattoo shops to see the difference. As the tattoo industry has exploded, I've tried to roll with the punches as a shop owner. I think one of the biggest changes is trying to create an environment that has fair pay and truly treats the independent contractor as an independent contractor. So the artists here have 100% control over their own schedules, the tattoos they do, the prices they charge, and their communications with their clients. This is not the case at all shops. Many shops try to have control over when their artists are working, and sometimes even what tattoos they do. Not here, this is basically a clubhouse where a handful of artists all individually come and do their own work, their own way, on their own schedules, and they book their own clients, it just all takes place in this shared tattoo shop.

Lost Lakes Tattoo tries to create a comfortable, safe, peaceful environment more than your average tattoo shop. Usually we don't have anxious music on, and there isn't drama or tension in the air. The interior doesn't feel busy like a traditional tattoo parlor or a skate shop. It's still clearly a tattoo studio though, with tons of art everywhere, it's just more peaceful than your average one.

We also had a change during the covid era that we all like here. It's the locked door. As covid arrived, we were already not able to accept walk-in customers due to each artist already having their own customer base. When someone would walk in, we'd usually be tattooing and booked out a bit, so we'd send them to our website to submit a request. Now that we don't have an open door, we don't have as many interruptions, and overall less interruptions makes a better experience for everyone involved in getting a tattoo. So we're keeping our door locked and it's an appointment only shop.

Lost Lakes Tattoo employs a support staff Tues-Sat, noon-5. They help answer questions, check customers in, direct customers to the right artists, clean, and answer emails and phone calls. This is the best time to call in with scheduling questions or to make a credit card deposit via phone. Most artists book through their own methods, so the support staff usually just forwards or redirects customers to contact the artists the way the artists would prefer.

Overall Lost Lakes Tattoo is a really cozy and fun gathering of art and artists. For many of us, it is a sanctuary, and it can be the most peaceful place in our lives when it is not peaceful outside these walls. It feels like home to me, but it also feels like a forever work in progress. I'm proud and excited to share it with everyone! And I'm so proud of our current crew! Thank you so much for your interest and support!