

A Letter to My Tattoo Artist

From Dennis Knight

Leonardo the Tattooist
Denver, Colorado

August 27, 2012

My Dear Mr. da Vinci:

I find in the yellow pages that your studio seems to have survived the many urban renewals on South Broadway, and I hope this letter finds you alive and still at your art.

Do you remember sweet Monica? It's been decades since you rendered the lovely, curvaceous lady on the upper mass of my right arm. What a dish. She would come alive with the merest flex of my bicep, and the mates down at the pub would crowd in to watch her as I lifted the occasional mug. Pints, all on the boys, would array before me as they cheered her oscillations.

You gave her, with delicate and artistic inking, a haunting Mona Lisa smile, but she had an even more compelling appeal. She could really shake that thing. So could I, but that was then.

I write today not just to see if you are still living and still tattooing, but to ask your clinical advice on certain matters concerning my little Monica. It seems neither of us is aging so well. My bicep neither flexes so often, nor as dramatically, and the pretty lady has become flabby. In fact, she's fat.

Yes, she's still shaking her thing, but it's more like a tidal wave, and then only when I heft a cup of water to down my daily meds. I suppose with a little exercise I myself could tighten her up a little here or there, but that sounds like work, and I fear Monica and I will never again draw the crowds and admiration of our youth.

It is time to return her to you, her creator, to be renewed, and she needs more than a face life, she needs a metamorphosis. Speaking of that, how about making her a butterfly? She already has achieved much of the shape. I envision adding antennae, and with a few colorful, symmetrical patterns inked into her flabbiest parts, she would take wing and flutter again.

Perhaps you could make her a frog on a lily pad. It would take a little filling in but she wouldn't need antennae. In general, in considering new forms for Monica, you need to be thinking broadly, very broadly. Tugboats and tubby tunas come to mind.

I have always been enamored with Disney's dancing hippos. You could achieve that lovely effect, of course, by inking in a tutu. The real challenge will be in stretching her Mona Lisa smile into the broad, toothy grin of a hippopotamus. Could you manage that and still leave the smile fetching?

I am hoping you will have suggestions of your own, but of course you will need to see us both, Monica and me. We will be downtown next week, so please get back to me soon and let me know if you feel up to the task. If it happens you are no longer slinging the ink, I am sure you can refer any number of former apprentices who are now tattooists in their own right.

By the way, da Vinci, if we are able to bring Monica back to glory, we will then need to revisit that little red star you once engraved on my rear end. It's gotten as big as a Texaco sign.

Sincerely,

Dennis Knight