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This all-women Utah tattoo studio specializes in covering up pains of the past



(Leah Hogsten | The Salt Lake Tribune) Andrea Reynolds, who had a double mastectomy in 2013, shows the artistry of Fallen Angel Tattoos founder and owner Terrina Francis, Friday, April 20, 2018 in her home. Francis tattooed leaves and branches over Reynolds' reconstructive surgery scars in 2014. The all-women tattoo shop specializes in helping women who have had breast cancer and reconstructive surgery by tattooing art on their bodies to cover scars.



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It was just some leaves and branches, but it brought Andrea Reynolds to tears.

Not so much the tattoo as where it was inked — across her chest, covering up the scars and lumps left in the aftermath of the double mastectomy she had done after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

“Cancer really changes you,” Reynolds says. “And the treatments threw me into menopause. I was pretty depressed after the surgery.”

To pull herself out of her funk, Reynolds decided to get a tattoo to cover some scar tissue and dots remaining from her radiation treatments. She searched online for photos to try to pin down a creative idea that could incorporate her love of the outdoors, but nothing clicked.

“There was a lot of floral stuff with pink colors, but I’m not really into that,” Reynolds says.

Her husband encouraged her to keep pursuing a design that spoke to her, but finding an artist who could work with her proved difficult. She was told of monthslong waits for appointments and huge up-front deposits.

She also wanted a female tattoo artist, a relative rarity in the industry.

And then she found Fallen Angel, Utah’s only all-women tattoo studio, and its owner, Terrina Francis.

Reynolds booked some time, finalized the leaves design with Francis after throwing some sketch ideas around, and soon ...

“I finally felt womanly again,” Reynolds says. “Terrina changed my life. I wasn’t afraid to look in a mirror anymore. To get anything of beauty out of the cancer experience was incredible.”

Francis, whose aunt died from breast cancer, got the idea of using her talent to help people cover scars and disfigurements after seeing a news report about an East Coast artist who was tattooing nipples onto the breasts of women who had them removed after their cancer surgeries.

“The media and society make women feel like our hair and our breasts are what makes us beautiful,” Francis says. “But these women go through chemotherapy and lose their hair and get their breasts cut off. And if they survive cancer, they don’t like what they see in the mirror.”

Francis and her team of five artists also cover over varicose veins and post-pregnancy stretch marks.

“Many women would be embarrassed to go into a tattoo shop and ask a guy artist to cover up varicose veins,” Francis says. “But in here, we’re all women, we’re moms, we get it. Women aren’t going to go into a place where there are guys who look like they

just got out of prison, blaring screamo music and scaring them away.”



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They also help mask the scars of women who've been injured in domestic violence incidents, and scars that have been self-inflicted.

That was Addie Parker, who had scars on her thigh from cutting herself during her teen years. Francis tattooed a patch of wildflowers on Parker that she says helped her move on from a painful time in her life.

“It wasn't who I was anymore,” says Parker. “I have some young siblings who look up to me a lot.”

Parker loved the comforting experience of being among the Fallen Angel women while Francis worked on her piece.

“It was very important to have it done and have it done right,” she says. “It was incredibly releasing. I definitely cried when I saw it.”

Francis made a conscious decision to make Fallen Angel a testosterone-free zone, at least behind the needle.

“There aren't that many female tattoo artists,” she says. “When I was trying to find people, I thought that maybe I needed to hire a guy. But then I thought, if he's good and experienced, he's going to try and run my shop, and I'm going to have to show him who's boss. So I just didn't want any of that drama.”

Francis' work has been rewarding in ways she never imagined when she started out, after selling her Mercedes and leaving her steady real estate gig.

“I just thought I was going to draw for a living and it will be cool. But I didn't realize how much tattoos meant to the people, especially when you do memorials and cover-ups for cancer victims. I had no idea that owning a tattoo shop could be that fulfilling.”

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