



Fakir's memorial altar at the APP Conference, 2019. Photo by Marina Pecorino

FROM THE BODY PIERCING ARCHIVE, 2019

DUSTIN ALLOR

This past summer we lost a most iconic and beloved member of the body piercing community. It is hard to imagine what the landscape of the piercing industry would look like without Fakir Musafar. He was part of the group who brought body piercing into mainstream western culture from underground society in the 1970s. Fakir inspired countless people to become piercers, taught the skill to approximately 2,000 attendees of his piercing workshop, moved many to try suspension and urged us to claim our bodies as our own, especially through body modification. He firmly believed that piercing was sacred, magical, and could be a special moment for all involved. His life was spent spreading that message and seeking the spirit through exploring and testing the limits of his body. This year's Body Piercing Archive exhibit unfolded many of the lives, hobbies, jobs, and performances of the multifaceted Fakir Musafar.

Walking into the exhibit was overwhelming in the best sort of way. There was so much information—so many visuals—that it was hard to know where to look. Each time I went in, there were things I hadn't noticed previously. It would have taken me a couple of focused hours to take in all the information. The outer walls were lined with banners. The inner walls had four alcoves with various displayed items. Several banners featured large photos of Fakir embodying his different personas. There were other banners that stood out to me: the timeline that shared childhood pictures, some of influential people in his life, covers of his *Body Play* magazines, and collages of the group photos from nearly every class of the Fakir Intensives.

Then there were the alcoves. One held books and images that inspired and guided a young Fakir to try so many unconventional practices. A few items in particular caught my eye: Fakir's yoga book from the 1950s



Top to bottom, views of the Body Piercing Archive's Fakir Musafar exhibit at the 2019 APP Conference — visitors enter the exhibit; two views of the exhibit; Annie Sprinkle conducting a tour of the exhibit. Photos by Marina Pecorino

and *National Geographic* from Fakir's childhood where he got the idea to perform his first piercing on himself at age 14. Another area had masks, homemade eyelets for stretching his nipple piercings, some of Fakir's septum jewelry, and articles he had written. There was a section that had a bed of nails, a bed of blades, a kavadi frame, a suspension frame, and other inventions of Fakir's that I'm not sure have names. Most of these devices were featured in Fakir's early self photography. Having been born in a rural area in 1930, out of necessity he developed a resourceful and inventive ability. A large portion of the objects in the exhibit were things he made at home by hand. Rarely disposing of his creations, the BPA was able to acquire or borrow many of them from his wife, Cléo Dubois. It was fabulous to see classic Fakir photos right next to the actual items he made and was wearing in the portrait.

There was a screen toward the back of the exhibit playing the Mark and Dan Jury film *Dances Sacred and Profane* starring Fakir, Jim Ward, and Charles Gatewood. Mirroring that was a second screen dedicated to performances he had done, featuring video from one of his European performances. Between those was information on *RE/Search #12: Modern Primitives*, the publication where so many of us discovered Fakir for the first time.

The last alcove in the exhibit was the most solemn. The exhibit overall celebrated Fakir's life, but the last alcove honored his death. Fakir felt that altars were important. He would make one at the end of every piercing class, a place to look to for focus, to display images and objects that had meaning to him and to help inspire a particular mindset he was looking for. The last alcove of the exhibit, with bright yellow and red walls, was an altar to Fakir. It displayed a large photo of him, photos of those close to him who had also passed, images of deities he was drawn to, fresh fragrant flowers, candles, and a few personal items like his chest spears. When he announced that he was sick and had limited time left, Fakir asked that instead of emails or phone calls, that people hand write and mail him letters if they had anything they wanted to share with him. Hundreds of letters came in and he read all the words of love and thanks before he left us. A selection of those cards were strung from the center back wall of the alcove, extending to either side of the door, framing the altar and giving the space a sense of depth, layers, and sentiment.

Fakir was so many people wrapped up in one. It was impossible to know everything and everyone he had been in his life. Depending on how you knew him, you would connect and learn about different aspects of his personality and

interests, hearing different stories of his past. In addition to all the visuals in the exhibit, docents who were personally known to Fakir gave tours. Each had unique experiences and insight on who Fakir was, having known him in a variety of circles and points of his life. Several of the instructors from the Fakir Intensives gave tours, as well as friends of Fakir's including Allen Falkner and Annie Sprinkle. Each offered unique flavors, new insight and things to learn about Fakir. Hearing their stories really brought Fakir's memory to life in a vivid interactive way and I wish I could have seen all the tours.

Working closely with Fakir's wife, Cléo, the BPA team put together an amazing and moving exhibit. Fakir was always touched and awed by the gratitude, credit, and honor people extended to him. I think he would be absolutely blown away and speechless by the beautiful display and celebration of his life that portrayed so much of who he was. To Paul King, Becky Dill, Devin Ruiz, and all your behind the scenes helpers, thank you for all your hard work in putting together such a rich and beautiful commemoration of Fakir's life. It was wonderful to get to celebrate Fakir's life together with the bulk of the piercing community this year at the APP Conference.



Dustin Allor and
Fakir Musafar

BPA: FAKIR MUSAFAR, IN PURSUIT OF THE SPIRIT

DEVIN RUIZ-ALTAMURA

Photo by Devin Ruiz-Altamura



Personas
Roland Loomis

"Why would I abandon the comfort of the status quo for the unknowns of body modification and ritual? I did it primarily because I was curious and bored with the status quo probably the same reasons early explorers risked the hazards of sailing uncharted seas. And like explorers of the past, present, and future seeking rewards of some kind: treasure or knowledge. In my journey, I sought to explore the seas of consciousness, my own inner self. The most personal and accessible vehicle was my own body."

-Fakir Musafar
 author@bpa.org, 1996

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Personas
Yogi Ankora Yogi Satya

"I have what I call the 'body first approach' for exploring spirituality. It involves piercing, cutting, branding, tattooing, flesh hooks, Sundances, sculpting the body, you name it. All these things will get you to the same place. As Ram Dass said, there are many paths up the mountain, but the view at the top is the same. My path is the body path..."

Fakir Musafar
 author@bpa.org, 1996

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ONLY what we accept as natural!

I not always agree with the physical status quo... the body, the body and especially continues to the process can become "spirituality"

Fakir Musafar
 author@bpa.org, 1996

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Gentleman Corsetier

OC in the present!

Fakir Musafar
 author@bpa.org, 1996

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Fakir Musafar
 author@bpa.org, 1996

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All these years later with half a decade of counter work at Cold Steel under my belt and a relatively new position with the Body Piercing Archive, I couldn't help but be so thankful for Fakir's unexpected influence on my life.

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I wasn't prepared for the magic I felt when entering the completed exhibit room for the first time. I had probably handled each object in that room more than a dozen times over the past nine months, and written down their item numbers or descriptions just as many times. It didn't make this collection any less powerful for me. I hope everyone else who got a chance to see the exhibit found it as moving as I did.

This year's Body Piercing Archive exhibit, "Fakir Musafar: In Pursuit of the Spirit," was our most ambitious to date. It was also the most comprehensive exhibit that has ever been seen on Fakir Musafar's life and legacy. Featured were over 2,000 square feet of original images, digital media, and fabricated items, many of which had not been collected or displayed together under one roof since their creation. Visitors were led through the exhibit by a diverse crew of docents, all who had unique and personal experiences with Fakir himself and the Fakir Intensives School.

The exhibit opened with a timeline of the life of Roland Loomis, also known as Fakir Musafar. The timeline acted as a guide through the room and the objects. Next, a series of banners displaying all of the various personas that Fakir inhabited: Roland Loomis, Yogi Ankora, Fakiki, The Perfect Gentleman, Ibitoe, Golden Apollo, etc. Some of the first items displayed were examples of early corseting inspiration, and original National Geographic issues that planted seeds in a young Roland's mind. It was extremely gratifying to see what parts of Fakir's history were a surprise to the various docents and speakers. These little surprises really showed the amount of dedication that Paul King and

Becky Dill put into their research, and the generosity that Cléo Dubois showed us in sharing some never before seen photos and artifacts. From there was a chance to see many of the various handmade masks, devices, jewelry, and tools that Fakir designed and fabricated for his own use in photoshoots and personal play.

The transitional space between the first and second half of the exhibit held some of the work that served as an introduction to Fakir for many people, myself included. The film *Dances Sacred and Profane* could be viewed here alongside a performance Fakir did with Cléo Dubois, his wife and partner.

Standing amongst the tour group for Paul King's first guided tour of the exhibit, seeing Fakir on screen taking Kavadi, was another truly surreal moment for me. I remembered being 12 or 13 watching that clip for the first time and thinking this was exactly what interested me the most. All these years later with half a decade of counter work at Cold Steel under my belt and a relatively new position with the Body Piercing Archive, I couldn't help but be so thankful for Fakir's unexpected influence on my life.

The second half of the exhibit highlighted *Body Play Magazine* and the Fakir Intensives School. Printed media, photography, and graphic design were all large parts of Fakir's life; *Body Play Magazine* was the culmination of all of these passions and interests. Original working layouts of the magazine could be seen alongside their completed counterparts and final editions.

The Fakir Intensives School was many people's first hand experience with Fakir, and the foundation of so many memories. It was great



Above, Fakir memorial altar, photo by John Balk; below, part of the exhibit, photo by Devin Ruiz-Altamura



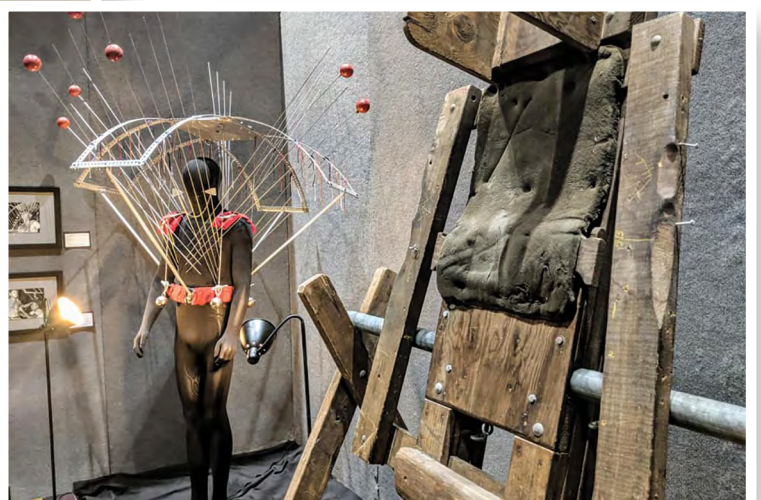
to watch people find themselves in the class photos or even be able to see themselves evolve over the many years they had attended or been an instructor. I love knowing that Fakir got to spend the second half of his life immersed in the community he desperately searched for in his early years. He got to witness first hand the impact he had on our industry, and on so many people's lives—not something many get to experience in their lifetime.

The backdrop for this more recent history was a grand display of the most iconic hand fabricated objects and sculpture associated with Fakir. The Bed of Blades and Bed of Nails from his first public performance at the 1977 international tattoo convention in Reno, Nevada, the Sword Swing and wooden and aluminum "encumberments" seen in various photo-shoots, the horizontal suspension rig used for countless people's spiritual flights, the Witches Cradle seen in *Body Play Magazine*, and the Kavadi featured on the poster for *Dances Sacred and Profane*. The sheer amount of work and devotion Fakir put into his spiritual endeavors and "body play" was inspiring.

The culmination of the exhibit was a small curtained room that, once entered, dazzled the viewer with a bright display of red and gold. Before this room had even been filled, the impact of the change of color and tone brought those of us there to tears. The alter that was set up within was lovingly curated by Grin, a Fakir Intensives instructor and close friend of Fakir and Cléo. Flowers, candles, and sentimental objects were all present and served as a beautiful tribute to a person whose vast career and extraordinary life could hardly be contained within any exhibit walls.

The Body Piercing Archive would like to thank all docents, speakers, and volunteers that gave their energy, love, and time.

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| Special Thanks to: | Jef Saunders |
| Cléo Dubois | Cynthia Wright |
| Jim Ward | Yossi Silverman |
| Annie Sprinkle | Grin |
| Veronica Vera | Paul Fox |
| Ken Coyote | Jamie Biggers |
| Paul King | Matte Erikson |
| Becky Dill | John Balk |
| Ian Bishop | Theo Williams |
| Allen Falkner | Jenna Dittrich |
| Dustin Allor | Rafael Diaz |
| Cody Vaughn | Pablo Perelmuter |
| Betty Ann Peed | Danny Greenwood |



Photos by Paul King.



fakir musafar

In Pursuit of the Spirit

MAY 12–17, 2019
PLANET HOLLYWOOD
LAS VEGAS



On August 1, 2018, the piercing community grieved the passing of one of its greatest piercing pioneers, Roland Loomis aka Fakir Musafar. Just nine days shy of his 88th birthday, vibrant, and productive until very near the end, it is difficult to wrap one's head around the breadth of his cultural contributions!

In honor and celebration of Fakir Musafar's life, the Body Piercing Archive (BPA) will present, *Fakir Musafar: In Pursuit of the Spirit*. This will be the most comprehensive exhibit that has ever been seen on Fakir's art and legacy. Over 2,000 square feet will be staged with his original iconic images and fabricated sculptures made famous over eight decades of accumulated artwork and Body Play. Many items have never been on public display. The show will run from Monday May 13 through Thursday May 17, 2019, at Planet Hollywood, in Las Vegas, from 10 am to 6 pm.

Specially selected docents were chosen to lead tours. Each guide has known Fakir for decades and in different contexts. We encourage you to attend as many of the tours as you can for new information and differing perspectives. Docents bring the material to life, so don't miss out!

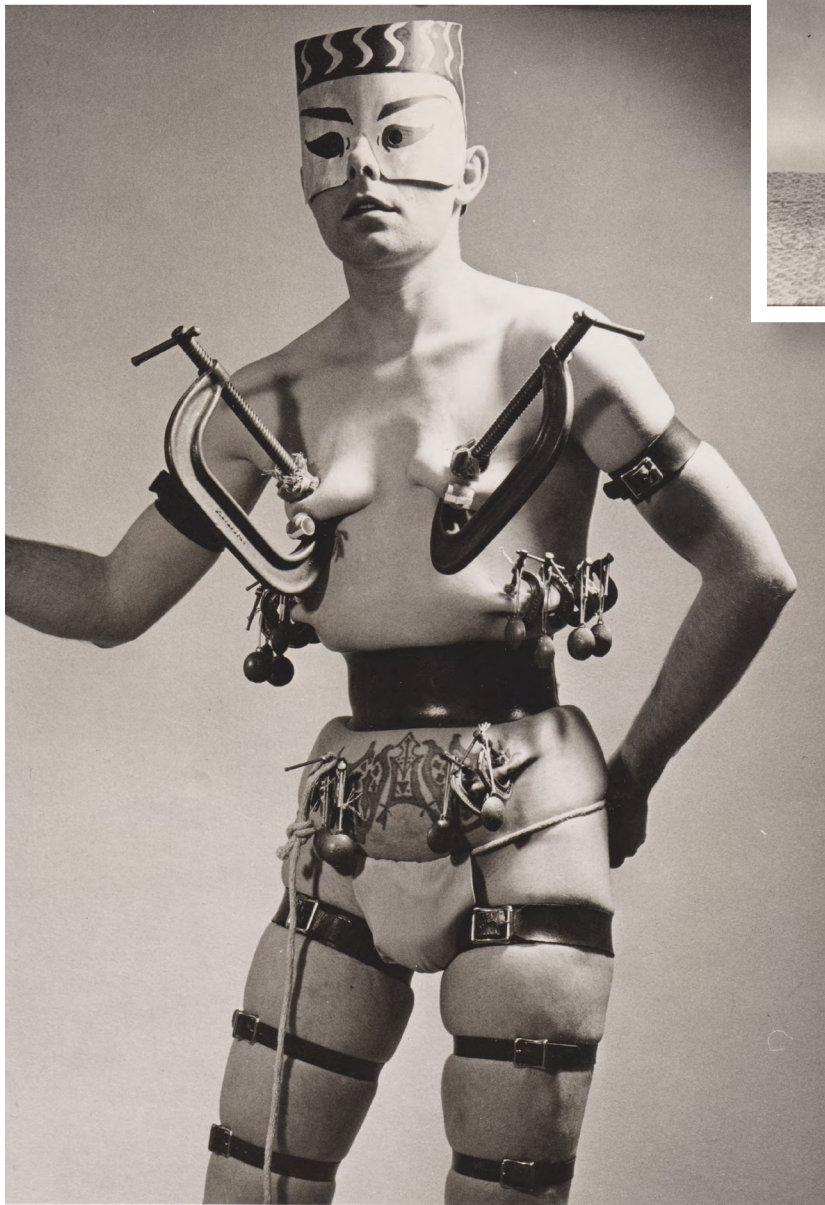
The highlights of the BPA program occurs on Wednesday, May 16. The day's program begins at 10 am with the world premiere presentation by Jim Ward, *Fakir & Me*, a one and a half hour lecture that gives an overview to their historically important, yet complex, personal relationship. Then at 12:30 pm, the legendary Annie Sprinkle will give her inaugural APP presentation, *Take a Walk on the Wild Side*, in which Annie discusses the impact their meeting had on both of their personal lives and careers. The day wraps up with *Fakir Musafar: an Evening of Remembrance and Celebration*, with presentations by Ken Coyote and Dustin Allor of the Fakir Intensives, Allen Falkner, and the keynote speaker, Fakir's life partner for more than 30 years, Cleo Dubois. The evening program runs from 6 pm to 8:30 pm and is open to all.

EXHIBIT HOURS:

Monday 10 am–6 pm
Tuesday 10 am–6 pm
Wednesday 10 am–6 pm
Thursday 10 am–6 pm

“To *not* have encumberments, to *not* have holes in your body, to *not* have tattoos may be debilitating—this is something people have to consider...being comfortable isn’t necessarily living a “good” life—that’s the myth, but it’s not true. Living an *uncomfortable* life is sometimes far more satisfactory than a placid, bovine existence...People may be missing beautiful, rich experiences because of cultural biases and conceit.”

—V. Vale and Andrea Juno,
Modern Primitives, 1989, 15.



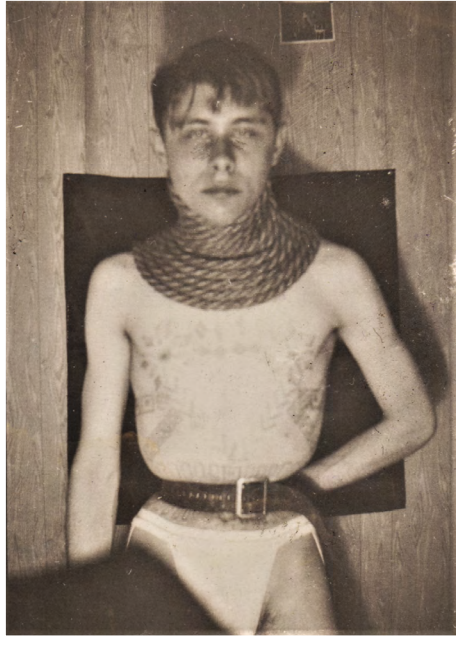
MONDAY DOCENT TOURS:

Paul King 11:30 am–12:30 pm

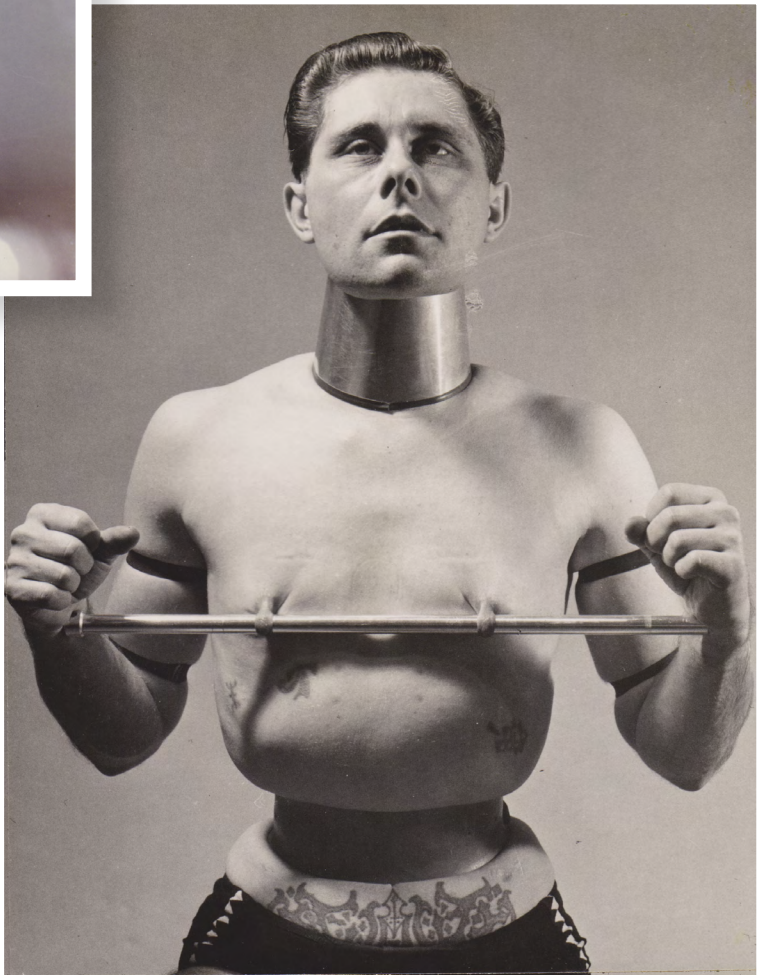
Ian Bishop 1 pm–2 pm

Allen Falkner 2:30 pm–3:30 pm

Dustin Allor 4 pm–5 pm



Top to bottom, adolescent Roland—his birth name—with neck ropes and stenciled on tattoos; standing on a bed of red cutlass blades, 1963; dressed with posture collar, stretched nipples, and tight belt. *Opposite*, Fakir experimenting with breast clamp O-Kee-Pa; Fakir lies on a bed of nails while Sailor Sid hammers a wooden block on his back as part of the entertainment at the Reno ITTA tattoo convention in 1977, photo by Doug Malloy



TUESDAY DOCENT TOURS:

- Cody Vaughn 10 am–11 am
- Paul King 11:30 am–12:30 pm
- Ian Bishop 1 pm–2 pm
- Betty Ann Peed 2:30 pm–3:30 pm
- Jef Saunders 4 pm–5 pm



“Body Play is a process that courts unusual feelings and states of consciousness which, in the end, result in elevated consciousness (we know something we didn’t know before). In practice, Body Play is aimed at increasing ‘body awareness.’ That is to make one increasingly aware of one or more distinct body parts. You pierce an ear, you are aware that it exists. You constrict the torso with a tight corset and you are constantly aware that it exists. When the new ‘body state’ feels ‘natural’, the effect is heightened to again bring back the desired state of ‘body awareness’ (the ear piercing is stretched larger, the corset tightened). Finally, no matter how extreme you apply the ‘change of state’ that change feels natural and you are empowered.”

—Fakir Musafar, *Body Play*, v. 1 no. 1, 1992.

WEDNESDAY DOCENT TOURS:

Cynthia Wright 10 am–11 am

Ken Coyote 11:30 am–12:30 pm

Yossi Silverman 1 pm–2 pm

Grin 2:30 pm–3:30 pm

Annie Sprinkle 4 pm–5 pm

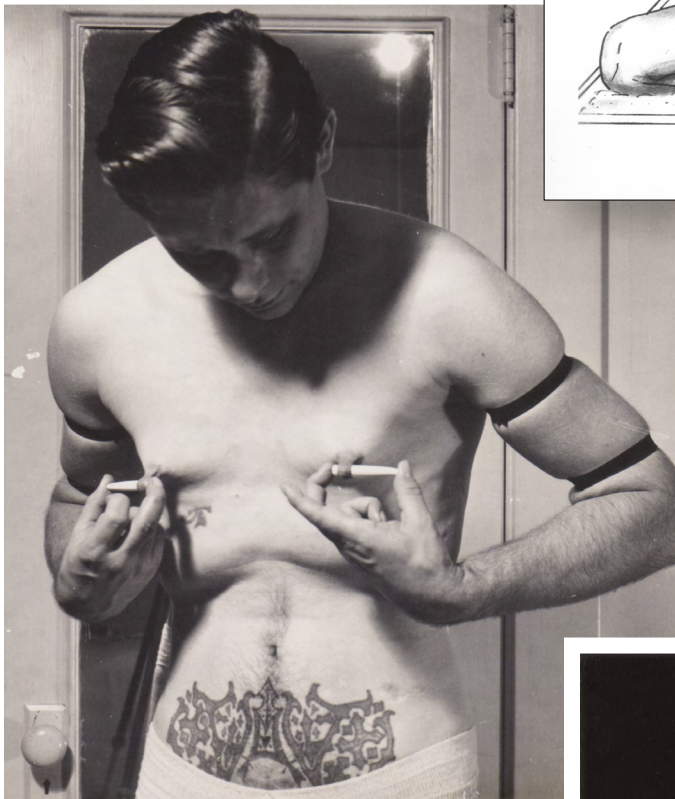
An Evening of Remembrance & Celebration

6 pm–8:30 pm with Ken Coyote, Dustin Allor, Allen Falkner, and keynote speaker, Cleo Dubois presenting *Fakir, the Bigger Picture*.





Top to bottom, an illustration Fakir created for the fetish magazine *Bizarre*; Fakir stretching his nipples; Fakir and his wife Cleo on a Princess Cruise in 2014



THURSDAY DOCENT TOURS:

- Grin 10 am–11 am
- Paul King 11:30 am–12:30 pm
- Allen Falkner 1 pm–2 pm
- Cynthia Wright 2:30 pm–3:30 pm
- Ken Coyote 4 pm–5 pm

