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Tattoo Style and Body Horror with Valeria Chrampani

An under-explored theme in these conversations has been the intentional, decisive modification of one's own body. The distance between a 12-year-old's first ear piercings and the surgical insertion of prosthetic horns into one's forehead is perhaps characterized by a familiarity with body horror that comes with age—as we live within the bounds of our flesh, we see the depths of the grotesque every day through injuries, illnesses, and normal facets of aging that would leave a Martian aghast. Body modifications are one of the few ways we can claim agency over our bodies' aging processes, and tattoo-loving stylist Valeria Chrampani's keen eye for the offbeat, strong constitution (what disturbs others inspires her), and sense of humor in her style radiates off her Instagram page, so I was excited to pick her brain:

E: What is the relationship between body modification and your personal style?



Valeria Chrampani: I love this question.

Since I was really young, I've felt like I would love to have my style even while I'm naked.

E: I love that. For me, it's that I want people to look at me and know that I'm not this... 'pure,' unadulterated person that they can just project whatever they want onto. That I have made decisions about what they get to, or have to, see when they look at me.

V: And they're memories, they're part of your identity—I've gotten tattoos since I was young, and most of them I hate, but I feel like they're a part of me from my early years.



E: What's your worst tattoo?

V: MY WORST tattoo, in MY OPINION, is a diamond I have on MY finger.

But I was ready to get one even worse back then—I don't know if you remember the mustache tattoos everyone was doing...

E: Of course. Iconic.

V: I think I wanted to do that, but I didn't.

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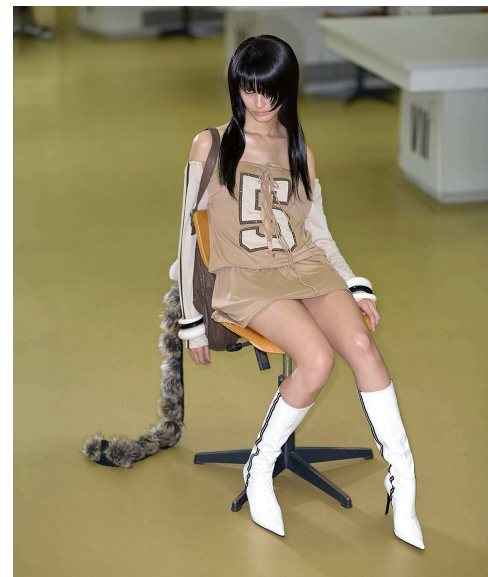
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E: So, what's one of your favorite tattoos?

V: The MF Doom tattoo. I love MF Doom.

E: You said earlier that comfort is the most important factor in how you dress, but do you think that discomfort plays a role in fashion, or what do you think that discomfort can do for an outfit? Do you think it's always bad?



V: Well, Michaela Stark squeezes and folds her body with garments and fabric, and it creates very interesting shapes—I really love that, but for me, the number one thing is to be comfortable, so I don't know if I would squeeze myself like that!



E: Do you know about this artist named Orlan, who got horns surgically implanted into her forehead as a performance art piece? In your styling, you seem to work a lot with body horror. I saw this picture you styled for Paper Magazine where someone's wearing a transparent fake stomach with a fake baby inside it. What is your relationship with body horror?

V: If I describe MY WORK in one word, it would be 'disturbing,' in a way. All MY inspirations are disturbing, and I

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always use the body as
a tool.

E: Why do you think you gravitate toward trying to create these disturbing images of the body specifically?

V: Because it's fun. I love to play around. It's a more artistic perspective rather than just creating a really beautiful outfit, if that makes sense.

E: Do you ever freak yourself out with the things that you think of or that you make?

V: No, it all feels very natural.

