Humans have been marking their skin permanently for thousands of years. A tattoo can be a remembrance, a constant prayer, a warning, or simply an amazing work of art. The reasons behind them can be intensely personal, decorative, whimsical, or utilitarian. They can signify tribal allegiance, personal history, or nothing at all. Collected below are recent images of skin art and a few glimpses into the owners of these tattoos and their reasons for modifying their own bodies. 

[36 photos]
Tattoo devotee Deryn Stephenson poses during The Tattoo Jam Festival on August 5, 2011 in Doncaster, England. The Tattoo Jam Festival is Britain's biggest gathering of tattoo professionals and skin art devotees. The event hosts over 300 artists working in the exhibition hall of Doncaster Racecourse revealing their latest designs and techniques. (Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)
People display their tattoos during the third Sydney Tattoo and Body Art Expo on March 11, 2011. (Greg Wood/AFP/Getty Images)
A Thai Buddhist monk, his head tattooed with sacred religious writings, offers prayers during merit making ceremonies on Sunday, June 19, 2011, to remember those killed in last year's riots in Bangkok, Thailand. (AP Photo/David Longstreath) #
An artist tattoos the arm of a client during a tattoo festival at Legian Kuta on Indonesia’s resort island of Bali, on September 23, 2011. (Sonny Tumbelaka/AFP/Getty Images) #
Miljenko Parserisas Bukovic displays some of his 82 tattoos of U.S. actress Julia Roberts during a photo-shoot in Valparaiso, Chile, on March 9, 2011. Parserisas, 56, started getting tattoos of the actress after watching her film "Erin Brockovich". The newspaper vendor, who has spent a million pesos ($2,500) for the 82 tattoos of the actress inspired by various scenes in the film, plans to get more tattoos of her on his chest, back and arms as long as there is space and he has the money. (Reuters/Eliseo Fernandez)
Sharon Swates shows a memorial tattoo to her sons on active service during the Ink For Heroes event on June 18, 2011 in Catterick, England. Ink For Heroes is a charity event to raise money and awareness of the soldiers that are injured during service, with all proceeds going to both 'Help The Heroes' and 'The British Legion'. Injured soldiers can also get tattooed for free during the event. (Bethany Clarke/Getty Images)
A Maori warrior performs during an official welcome ceremony for the Rugby World Cup in Auckland, New Zealand, on September 3, 2011. (Reuters/Stefan Wermuth)
A man shows his chest tattoo with pictures of his daughters Lea and Sara at the 19th International Tattoo Convention in Frankfurt, Germany, on March 16, 2011. (AP Photo/Mario Vedder)
A Libyan government soldier displays a tattoo of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi at the west gate of town Ajdabiya, on March 16, 2011. (Reuters/Ahmed Jadallah)
Leader of Mara 18 street gang, Marlon Martinez, gestures while inside a maximum security cell within the Torre de Tribunales courthouse in Guatemala City on March 30, 2011. The gang members were sentenced to 47 years in prison for the murder of Jorge Winter, a teacher at the Etapa II correctional facility, during a riot. (Johan Ordonez/AFP/Getty Images)
French writer Tristane Banon takes part in the TV show "Le Grand Journal" at the French TV Canal+ in Paris on September 19, 2011. Banon, who has accused Dominique Strauss-Kahn of attempting to rape her in 2003 recently showed her new tattoo, which reads in part "never flee, always pursue".

(Joel Saget/AFP/Getty Images) #
A woman holds her cat on August 6, 2011 during the two-day international cat exhibition in Bratislava. (Samuel Kubani/AFP/Getty Images)
A man is tattooed during the International Tattoo Parade in Prievidza, Slovakia, on July 30, 2011. About 30 tattoo studios from Czech republic and Slovakia participated in the first such event in Slovakia. (Reuters/Radovan Stoklasa) #
Michelle Hidalgo of Leesburg, Virginia, reveals a tattoo on her back in memory of her father, Jim Hull, who was a flight attendant and one of the 230 people killed when a Paris-bound TWA flight 800 jet exploded in the sky off the Long Island coast 15 years ago. Family members and friends gathered to mark the anniversary of the crash at Smith Point County Park in Shirley, New York, on July 17, 2011. (AP Photo/Kathy Kmonicek)
A man has his leg tattooed during the third Sydney Tattoo and Body Art Expo on March 11, 2011. (Greg Wood/AFP/Getty Images)
A tattooed Buddhist monk waits for a train in Yala province in southern Thailand, on February 28, 2011.
(Reuters/Damir Sagolj)
An inmate of the Women’s Prison of Brasilia prepares for the third annual beauty pageant titled Miss Penitentiary, in Brasilia August 3, 2011. A modeling agency selected 12 finalists out of nearly 100 women who entered the competition. The tattoo reads "Deliver me from evil". (Reuters/Ueslei Marcelino)
A pro-Syrian regime protester with a tattoo on his chest of Syrian President Bashar Assad, left, and his brother Bassel Assad, right, near where about 200 people from the Islamic Group Jamaa Islamiya, who are opposed to Assad, had planned a protest, in front of the Syrian embassy, in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 11, 2011. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)
A man with a completely tattooed face attends the Berlin Tattoo Convention at Tempelhof Airport on December 4, 2010 in Berlin, Germany. (Carsten Koall/Getty Images)
Actress Angelina Jolie attends "The Tree Of Life" premiere during the 64th Annual Cannes Film Festival at Palais des Festivals on May 16, 2011 in Cannes, France. Tattooed on her back, a prayer in Sanskrit, and on her arm, the locations where her immediate family first entered her life or the world; biological and adopted children Maddox (Cambodia), Zahara (Ethiopia), Shiloh (Namibia), Plax (Vietnam), twins Knox and Vivienne (France), and Brad Pitt (birthplace in Oklahoma). (Pascal Le Segretain/Getty Images)
A tattooed model presents a creation by French designer Thierry Mugler during the Men's fall-winter 2011-2012 ready-to-wear collection show on January 19, 2011 in Paris. (Francois Guillot/AFP/Getty Images)
An ethnic minority Chin woman, bearing a facial tattoo, in Panmaung Village, in Myanmar’s remote northwest, on February 8, 2011. Ma Htwe recalled the day of agony she suffered, more than five decades ago, when her face was etched with the intricate tattoo that still lines her papery skin like a spider’s web. With the practice ceasing two generations ago, Ma Htwe is now among a very few women left alive who bear the tattoos.

(STR/AFP/Getty Images)
A Russian specialist shows his tattoo in front of an Su-30 during MAKS-2011, the International Aviation and Space Show, in Zhukovsky, outside Moscow, on August 16, 2011. (Dmitry Kostyukov/AFP/Getty Images)
In this photo taken March 16, 2011, Duane Barker of Rome, Georgia, shows off his tattoos. Barke said the tattoos on his chest -- of Marlon Brando and Johnny Cash -- were probably the most painful because they cover his collarbone. He and his wife Amanda Barker have decorated their bodies with tattoos of stars, including Sharon Stone, Vincent Price, Clint Eastwood, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and Al Pacino.

(AP Photo/The Rome News-Tribune, Daniel Varnado)
The identification number that the Nazis tattooed on Oscar Florentine's arm during World War II is visible as a group of 30 Greek Jews, all Nazi concentration camp survivors, attend a ceremony in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki, on Monday, June 20, 2011. An estimated 60,000 Greek Jews, most of the country's prewar Jewish population, were killed by the Nazis during the war. (AP Photo/Nikolas Giakoumidis)
Tattooed hand of a member of a white supremacy group giving a fascist salute during a gathering in West Allis, Wisconsin, September 3, 2011. Neo-Nazi demonstrators gathered for a "rally in defense of white America" in response to an incident that Milwaukee Police Chief described as racially charged violence outside the Wisconsin state fair on August 4, 2011. (Reuters/Darren Hauck)
27 A woman poses with her tattoos at the 19th International Tattoo Convention in the central German city of Frankfurt am Main on April 16, 2011. (Boris Roessler/AFP/Getty Images)
Skater "Cherry D'vine" from the Stockholm Roller Derby shows the tattoos on her hands before a women's flat track roller derby bout against the Kallio Rolling Rainbow in Huddinge June 11, 2011. (Reuters/Bob Strong) #