

DO TATTOOS MAKE YOU AN INDIVIDUAL ?

Laura Geisler testifies ...

She started small, with the outline of a star on the back of her neck. Even her mum thought she was a wimp for not getting it coloured in.

But it gave Lauren Geisler an idea. Now a decade later, the 31-year-old has an ever-expanding William Morris pattern running from the top of her left arm, over her shoulder and across her back.



So far it has taken 15 hours over multiple visits, many of them painful, but it's still, Geisler says, a work in progress.

"There's no such thing as getting one tattoo," she tells friends when they make their inaugural trip to a parlour. "You're getting your first tattoo."

Tattoos are everywhere. Tattoos are respectable. Once associated with sailors, convicts and gang members, now one in five US adults say they have one. But increasingly bearers are no longer content to settle for a single, discreet tattoo - like the prime minister's wife Samantha Cameron, who has a dolphin design on her ankle - that can be easily concealed. Instead the inspiration is the likes of David Beckham, who has no fewer than 34 tattoos, and Cheryl Cole, whose collection includes a bunch of roses tattooed across her lower back, buttocks and legs. [...]

The psychology of tattooing has been the subject of increased academic analysis in recent decades. But what drives people to come back for more, rather than settle for a single tattoo, is a question that researchers have largely neglected to address.

A 2012 study found that personality differences between tattooed and non-tattooed individuals were "generally small" although those with tattoos tended to be more extroverted and display a greater "need for uniqueness".

(Source : <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24296713>)