

# Sunny delight

**Suzy Prince** immerses herself in the dark and feisty but unabashedly feminine work of Paris-based tattoo artist, painter and illustrator, Sunny Buick

**W**hat's inside a girl? Sugar, spice and everything nice, of course. On the outside she's a candy-coated illusion of sweetness. Inwardly she's famished for all that's out of reach, forced into a diet of self-loathing in search for perfection, a sweet confection feeding on herself, recycling her identity from what she culls from the outside. Corrosive like sugar to the teeth. She seeks her sanctuary inwardly and cannibalises it. Hungry because she shouldn't take too much. Taking too much because she's so hungry.' So begins Sunny Buick's manifesto...

Unlike so many female artists and tattooists who are forging their path through what can still seem to be a man's world, rather than suppressing her femininity and personality she makes constant reference to it, and her work is unabashedly and deliciously female in the very best way. It's beautiful, fragile, sometimes naive, but more than a little dark and feisty.

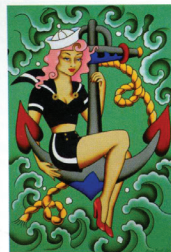
Five years ago Buick decamped from the relative security of the San Francisco tattoo and lowbrow art scene to a new life in Paris, where she's based herself ever since.

'I'm not going to make a big move like that again unless I become super rich,' she says. 'It's such an upheaval and you have to start all over again. Also, it's difficult in Paris because in the galleries there, they don't really show anyone unless they're already known. But in the States: politics, healthcare... ▶



*Profile*

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## Profile

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a lot of stuff is very messed up there right now, and I don't want to go back.

'My mom was a hippy: I was born in Canada because she escaped the United States. She was freaked out by what was going on — it was right after Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated and hippies were really being persecuted. She thought things were going to hell in a handcart which is pretty much how I feel right now too. Plus the quality of my life is so much better now.

'In San Francisco there's a huge concentration of the best tattooists in the world and it's very hard to make a name for yourself. Plus the rents are so expensive, so you're just working to live. Here, granted, I'm in a really tiny apartment with my husband, but I don't have to work that hard to make ends meet. And that leaves me a lot of freedom. I'm really inspired by the city. My art has changed since I've been in Paris. It's less kitschy.'

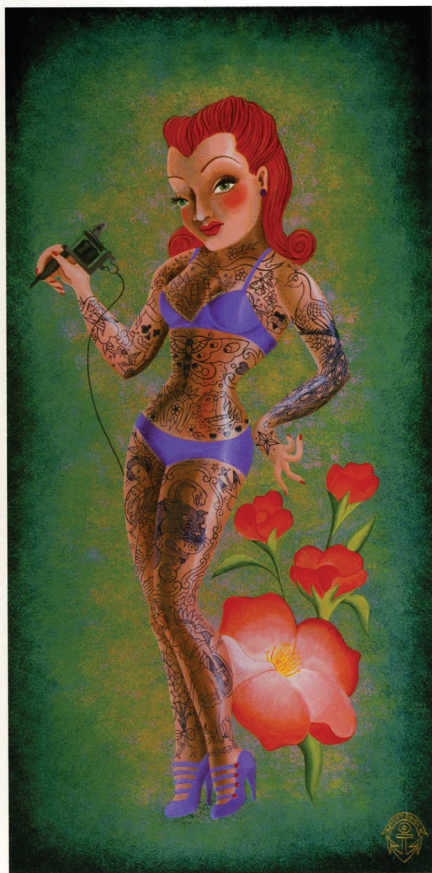
Although things have changed considerably in recent years, the ink scene is still largely regarded by many as a male preserve. So I wondered what it was that initially prompted Sunny to become a tattooist.

'Women are a minority in tattooing but we've always been involved in it. Many years ago it provided freedom for some women, with tattooed ladies in the circus. These were times when just revealing an ankle would be shocking — and here were these women with this attitude of "oh, look at my beautiful artwork, all over my body".

'Being a woman, I think it was easier for me to get a foot in the door because in San Francisco it's very competitive. There are a lot of talented artists and not many opportunities to do an apprenticeship, and I think I got mine with Henry Goldfield (*the legendary tattooist* — *ed*) because I was young and cute and a girl.'

It's refreshing for once to hear somebody admit that *that* might just occasionally be the case.

'I don't fit into the tattoo world,' she continues. 'I don't ►







socialise with many tattooists. In France it's all about hardcore violent rap music and hard partying. When you're working in the shop it's an intense 'family' situation, so you've got to have the same tastes. Working in a shop all day listening to violent rap, makes me negative.

It struck me that Sunny's artwork provides a real sense that she's a daydreamer who spends much of her time creating nostalgic, imaginary worlds.

'I read a great thing which Takashi Murakami said. He explained just why the Japanese are so obsessed with little girls. Little girls are left alone to fantasise longer and to dream. And are given less responsibility than boys — it's like, "oh well she can get married and have kids". And the Japanese are stuck in this pre-adolescent frame of mind following the atomic bomb, where the little girl who's left alone to dream is the ideal.

'I make these beautiful images because I'm really quite





scared of this age that we're living in. I surround myself with vintage stuff and wear vintage clothes and so on, because I don't have very much hope for the future. I create these environments as my little world as I want it to be. There's always an element of danger because, of course, I'm conscious of a lot of scary things out there. You'll notice in a lot of my work there are things like skulls which are creepy and scary, which I feel represents the outside threatening to encroach on my happy place.'

And unlike many artists, she clearly has a head for business.

'I read somewhere that you have to put as much energy into the business side as the art itself, and I think that's true. I think I have that naturally in my personality. Recently I've started home publishing and printing, which is brilliant because with paintings they have to be so much more expensive, but now with prints I can see a more immediate response. One good thing about the time we're living in is the technology — which I try to make the most of.'

To find out more check out [sunnybuick.com](http://sunnybuick.com)

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