

# SEA SHEPHERD

seashepherd.tattoo  
seashepherdglobal.org www.facebook.com/seashepherdglobal

*As a valuable addition to the previous feature, let's take a closer look at Sea Shepherd as Fade FX whips over to Amsterdam to investigate further...*



Art and activism have always been good friends so it's no surprise tattooing has been known to cross into political territory.

Last year, a tattoo studio opened that embodies the partnership of tattooing and activism like no other, at the Sea Shepherd HQ in Amsterdam.

Sea Shepherd is a marine conservation society but more than this, an international direct action movement, operational for over 40 years, last year alone they maintained 30 active sea campaigns that spanned the globe.

Their missions aren't for the faint hearted, in 1994 a Sea Shepherd team famously scuttled the illegally operated Norwegian whaling vessel *Senet* in southern Norway, fast forward to January 2019 and a campaign vessel was attacked by poachers with rocks and molotovs in the Mexican Gulf of California.

Undeterred, the organisation is made up of hundreds of dedicated volunteers from more than 30 countries and continues to grow.

Brighton tattooist Fade FX went to interview Sea Shepherd Artistic Director Geert Vons, to discuss how tattooing is now becoming an integral part of the organisation's expansion by reaching new audiences beyond environmentalism.

Geert is a tattooist himself with 25 years experience and coincidentally became a Sea Shepherd volunteer at

the same time he began tattooing.

Speaking to Fade for the record he explains international conservation laws exist, but many nations lack the capacity to uphold them, especially as they need to be supported with a degree of justifiable force.

Sea Shepherd supply their own ships and crew in assistance of the coast guard, local authorities and legal bodies with the power to make necessary arrests in what is the only effective way to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing head on.

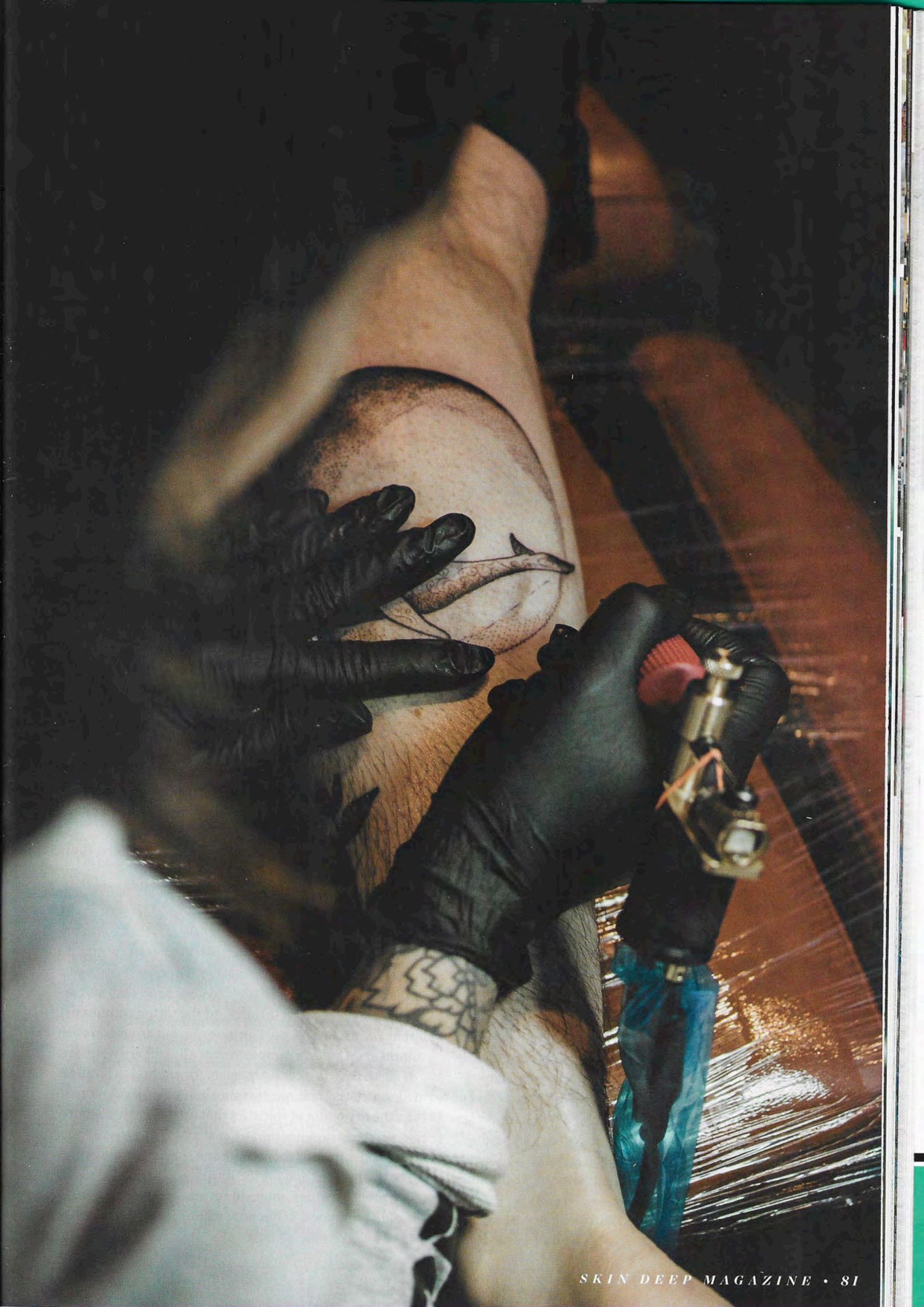
This year, in recognition of their patrols in West Africa supporting the Liberian coast guard, they received a military honour, the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) by Liberian President Dr. George Manneh Weah at the 62nd anniversary celebration of Armed Forces Day in Monrovia on February 11.

This is the highest military award given by the Ministry of National Defence and the Armed Forces of Liberia, recognising exceptional service to the Republic.

The award is indicative of the indispensability of Sea Shepherd operations at a time when ocean life is at breaking point.

Consumers are generally unaware that marine species have decreased by 39% in as many years and illegal, unregulated fishing constitutes an estimated 11-26 million tonnes (12-28%) of fishing worldwide.

Similarly almost 30% of fish stocks are overfished, over 60% of stocks are fully fished and use of illegal types of net result in over 300,000 whales and dolphins being killed annually through entanglement alone.





It's a deadly, tragic reality that Sea Shepherd are confronting with every voyage, but more resources and campaign funds are always needed.

Geert himself is a veteran of 4 anti whaling missions in the Antarctic and in launching Sea Shepherd Tattoo he's interjecting a new perspective in creative fundraising, where artists and clients alike can support the cause.

Fade has recently been one such artist, last year she held a Flash Day at her Brighton studio and has since tattooed mandala animals and breaching whales in dot realism at Sea Shepherd Tattoo, raising over €1,500 in the process, funds that go directly to sea conservation.

The doors and the books are open, ready for mass collaboration which includes Sea Shepherd booths at conventions all over the world.

As a tattooist himself, Geert knows he's tapping into a rich industry full of dedicated, socially conscious people, often widely travelled and with the means to give something back making them ideal candidates to step up and get involved.

As travellers they potentially witness environmental impact and changing landscapes first hand, an experience that could make them inclined to support campaigns.

This rings true with Fade having spent much time in South East Asia she came face to face with the consequences of deforestation from intensive logging, a subject that's touched upon in her film, 'The Point of No Return' which documents the hand tapped tattooing techniques of the Iban tribe in Borneo.

Sea Shepherd Tattoo opened with welcome donations

of a chair and oak workbench from friends of friends and has now launched its own vegan ink brand, available from Tattoland or their own website and Facebook page, all profits go directly to fighting the good fight.

There are grand plans for a wider network of artists, a gallery space, benefit gigs and more, plans are coming together and ideas are always welcome.

'All art should have a message' Geert muses, 'its a language so what's the point of creating art if you don't have anything to say?'

Sea Shepherd always put their money where their mouth is and their message is loud and clear.

As ever, the time to get involved is now and the organisation is calling on tattooists to become featured guest artists at the Amsterdam studio, to hold art auctions, exhibitions and Sea Shepherd days in their own studios, to purchase their ink brand and merchandise (even add a range of Sea Shepherd T shirts to your shop rail) and actively spread the word throughout the tattoo community by any means necessary. The more adventurous can even volunteer on board a campaign ship, all skills are welcome.

If all we have to offer is art, never forget this is a limitless medium that communicates on an influential level, more so than the dry realm of statistics that are too easy to ignore. Everyone can do something. Creativity is key to grabbing an audience, making them think and shaking things up.

For the present and for the future, Sea Shepherd needs more creative allies, more fundraisers, more action, as the old saying goes, 'If not now, when? If not you, who?' ▣