



# Skinz: 'Patience'

Personal Narratives of Identity within  
New Zealand's Gay Leather Culture

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- 'Patience' is a Painting
- Mix of practice based research and theoretical research
- Background as an illustrator, graphic designer, sculptor and photographer
- Full time senior lecturer in the School of Art & Design, AUT University, Auckland

**Warning! - Some content may offend**

## Introduction:

Visual Culture Coding: often connected to visual consumption.  
Advertising, education, news, popular art, entertainment, etc..

I argue that culture coding within the majority of artworks about gay leather culture have focused solely on the “in scene/erotic” aspects of the culture, over the “out of scene” lives of the people participating. Creating a very narrow cultural code.

The SkiNZ project responds to this issue with a desire to expand knowledge and discourse of this minority sub culture.

## **My questions -**

1. How can I create images that expand our knowledge in the area of gay leather culture and create new discourse?
2. How can I create meaningful artworks worthy of creating in the first place?
3. How can I provide a wider exposure of these images once made so that discourse will begin.

# Visual Culture

Reflects and affects culture.

*Consumer - (Berger 2000)*

“Culture is seen not as something that is high and refined, but, rather, culture is ordinary. Culture is an everyday experience.”

*Educational - (Fischman 2001, Williams 1981, Mirzoeff 1998)*

The image needs to be grounded in sincerity

*Legitimacy - (Gardiner 2003)*

# Leather Culture

The modern leather scene as we now know it first formalized itself out of the group of men who were soldiers returning home after World War II. (1939-1945).

*The Old Guard - Baldwin*

“Leather people,” a term for those who identify with a community generally centred on sexualization of leather and domination”

*Leather Archive Museum – (Getsy 1998) Founded in 1993*

Key Motto - **Safe, Sane, and Consensual**

## **Leather Culture in New Zealand**

A mix of classical modern leather culture with personal lifestyles and environments found in New Zealand.

Note: Many participants also point out that they are also involved in the non-leather gay community.

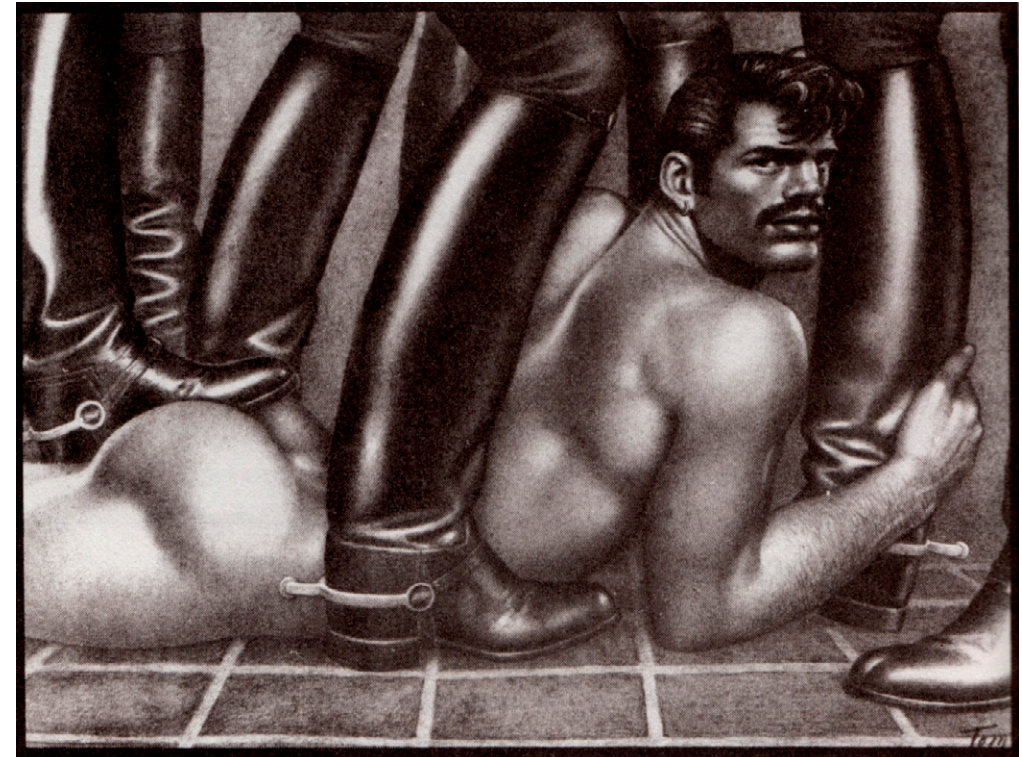


# Some Key Artists of Leather Culture



**Etienne**

One of the earliest leather artists. His early works (painted under the name 'DOM') show a strong relationship with classical paintings, exchanging Greek & Roman gods for tough leather clad men.



**Tom of Finland**

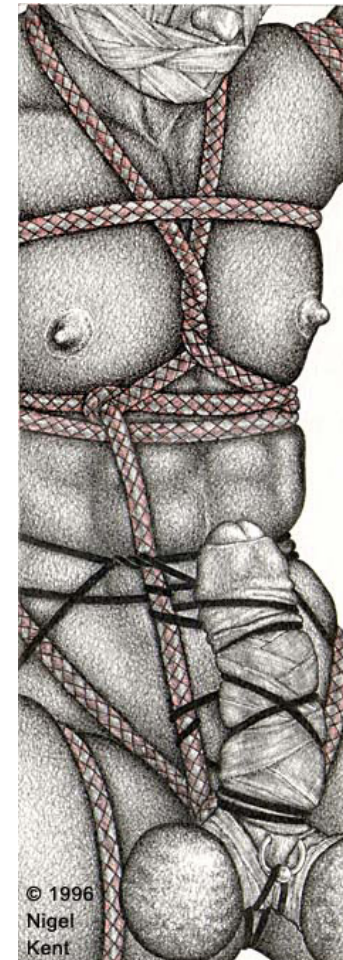
Most well known.  
Most published and longest career.  
Most influential providing gay men a model to follow.  
Tom of Finland Foundation - set up to - Protect, Preserve, & Promote the Erotic Arts.





## Les Farnek

A local hero of the  
Chicago scene.  
Fantasy views of S&M.



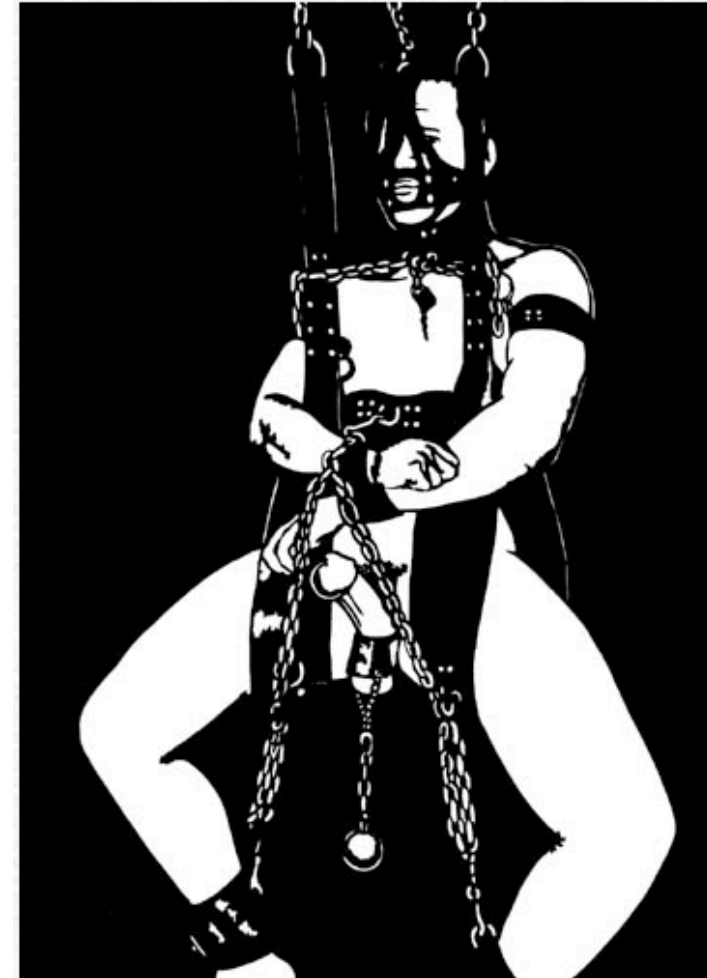
## Nigel Kent

Works with rough heavy  
material to portray the rough  
heave nature of his work.



## **Pierre & Gilles**

Photographer & Painter  
Create highly attractive images  
where men are portrayed more  
god-like, than animal-like.



## **Joseph Bean**

A paper cutter - Does not  
identify as an erotic artist, rather  
a folk artist with a penchant for  
gay male erotic subjects.



# Domestic Portrayal

Some photographers have looked at the domestic portrayal



Robert Mapplethorpe



Tom Attwood



Mark Beehre

## **SkiNZ: 'Patience' is my latest response**

It provides a visual fusion of the everyday lives of gay New Zealand leathermen, in and out of character. The resulting image portrays the duality of their lives, and in doing so creates a new visual coding that expands our understanding by painting visual traces of truth gathered from personal photoshoots and interviews.

## Process:

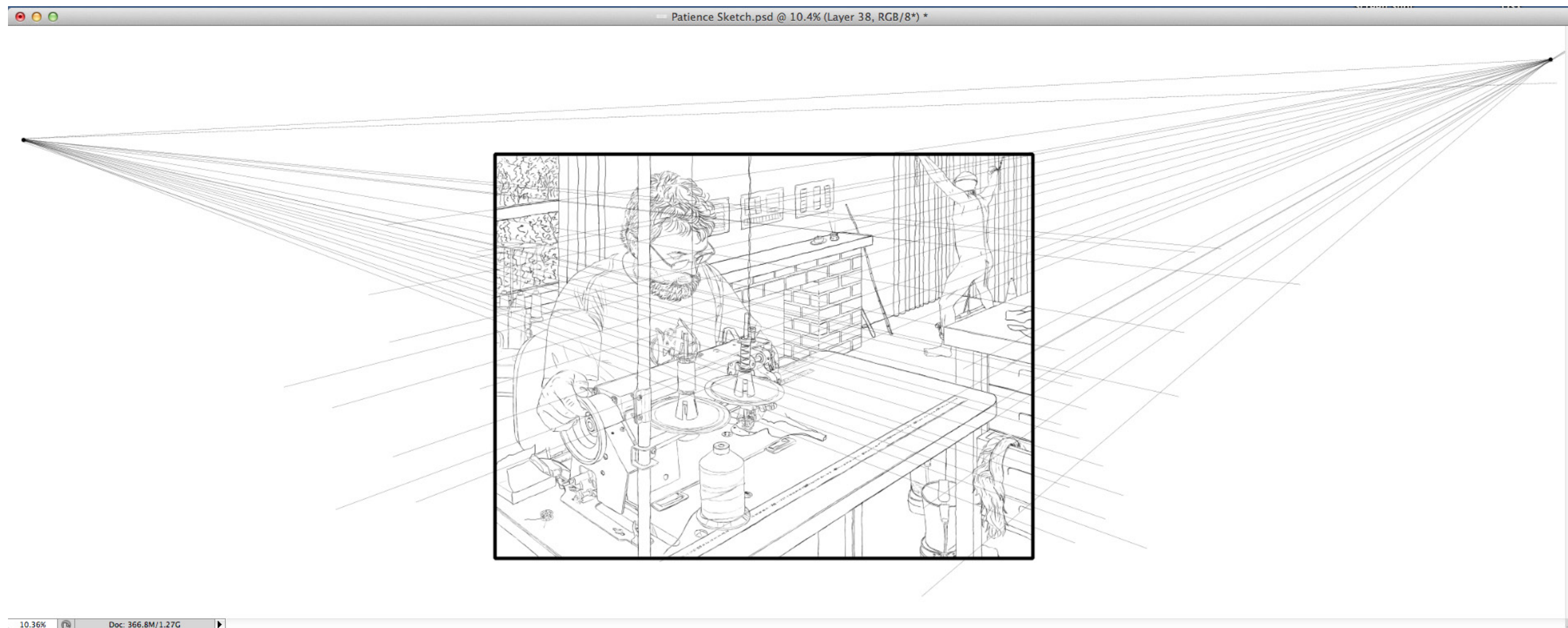
- Ethics Approval
- 12 Participants
- Photo-shoots
  - Interviews



# Sean and Woof





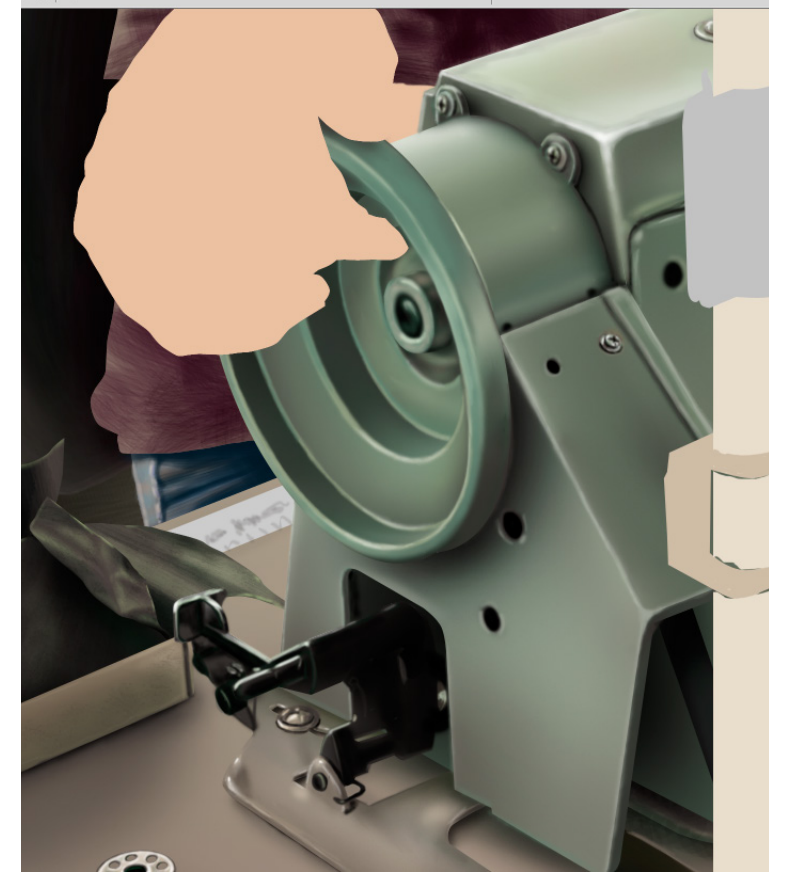
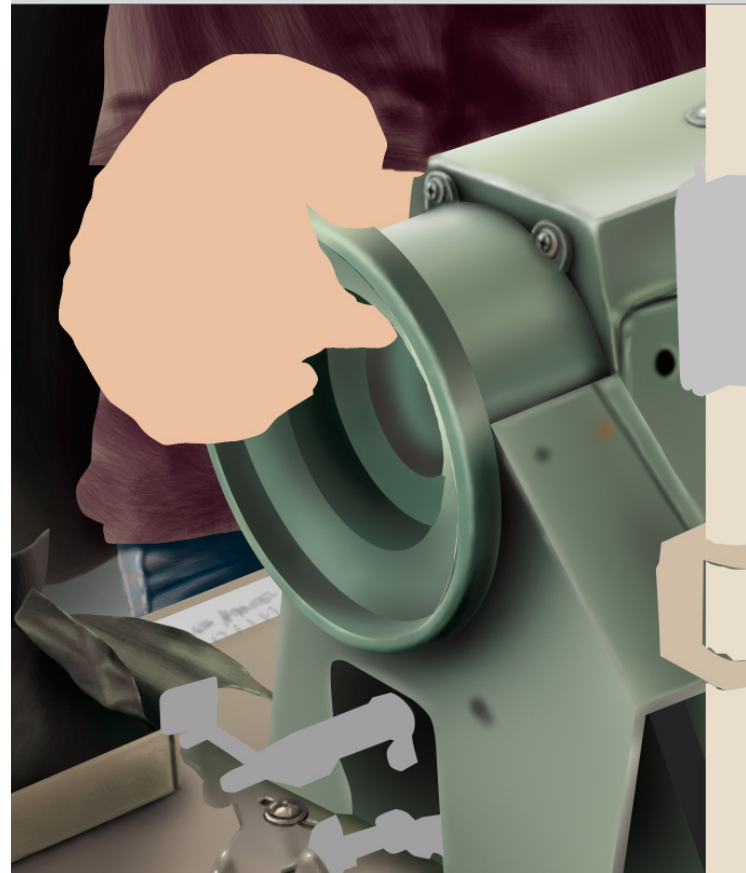
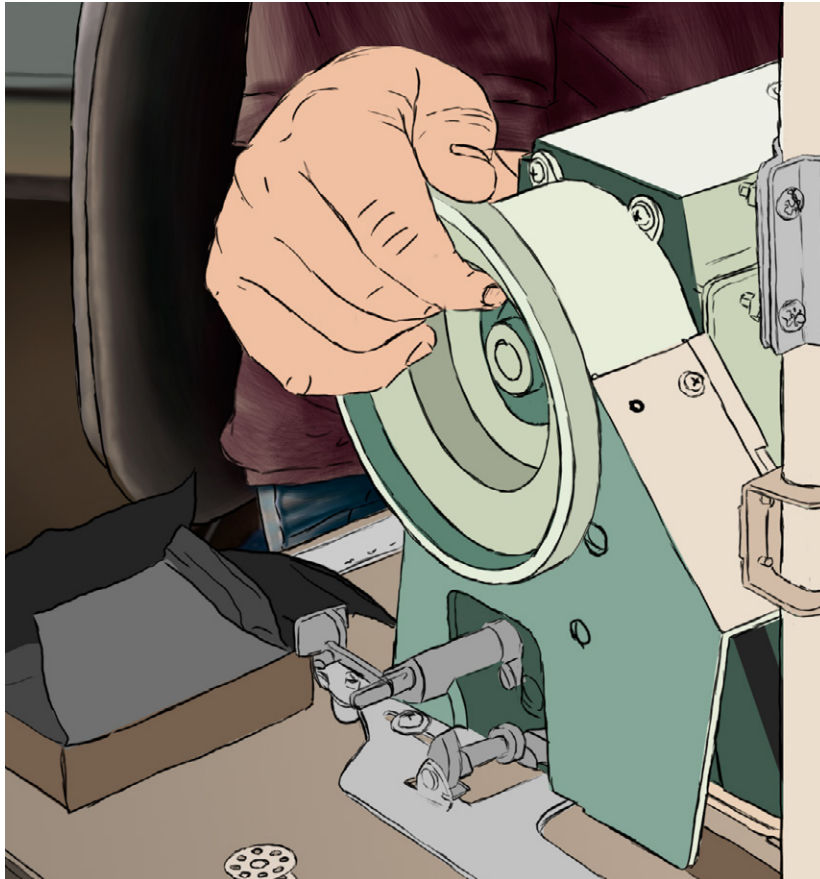


Drawing the new scene in perspective space



Building up layers in Photoshop





Tradition Airbrush techniques are used -  
Masked Shapes, sprayed surfaces, and hand painted details



I use my photography as reference, not un-similar to life drawing





Patience

## Conclusion:

Personal and ordinary portrayals of culture are valid, and highly important historical snapshots.

I believe that my sincere attempt to create a fusion of 'in and out' of the leather 'scene' is constructing a new way of painting a narrative, and in doing so expands the culture coding of leather culture, thus, providing new areas of discourse about this minority subculture and the traces of truth found within.