

IMPLANTATION TECHNIQUES

by Alfredo Gonzales

The objective of this article is to learn the ideal and most frequently used techniques to implant pigments for cosmetic and body art tattooing.

I have divided the more popular pigment/ink implantation techniques into groups depending on the movement. Also, as you read this article you will learn why some techniques deposit more pigment than others, and the influence of the speed you work with. It is my hope to assist you in differentiating and properly applying each technique.

Most technicians would agree tattoo techniques can be categorized in three different implantation movement families.

- a. Dots (pointillism)
- b. Circular (coils, ovalvoid, spiral)
- c. Lines (sketching, strokes)

Dotting:

The Dotting techniques are considered to be methods of saturation since the pigment is implanted cylindrically and in a deeper manner. These techniques are considered to be very gentle and do not traumatize the area. However, they can also be the most uncomfortable.

Some feel the dotting techniques should be used only for lining. Using these techniques for camouflaging or filling, according to some, can result in a less than desirable effect. Yet, when applied on thick, oily or traumatized skin it could ultimately be the best option. Absolutes in permanent make-up are not a good idea and I want to leave the option of using this technique on specific types of skin open for consideration.

The use of different needle configurations depends on the type of machine being used. Generally, I do not recommend more than a three-prong cluster needle when using the lighter rotary pen devices and the dotting technique. The use of larger cluster needles and pointillism do not deposit enough pigment. This happens due to the bouncing of the needles off the skin.

Use a perpendicular projection when using pointillism.

Circular:

These techniques are divided into:

1. Tight circles
2. Open Coil or Ovalvoid
3. Oblong – loose oval shaped circles

Circular or coil techniques are used for both permanent make-up procedures and body tattoos. Coil techniques are performed in circular motion. These techniques can be applied for lining, filling and camouflaging procedures. Be very cautious since these techniques are aggressive, especially if using an incorrect needle configuration for the job at hand.

The wider the diameter of the coil or circular movement, the less color is infiltrated in the center portion of the coil, giving a softer effect. Also, consider that the speed you work with influences the amount of pigment deposited.

To deposit more pigment, work slowly to let the needle penetrate the skin more times per second in the same area. Try to maintain the same movement during the whole procedure for the least skin trauma. Use a perpendicular projection when using clustered needles, and an oblique projection when using flats.

Very tight circular movements create a slightly wider line than obtained by the linear movement. To fill the lips or create a solid effect on eyebrows, you can use the looser circles or ovalvoid technique using clustered needles and a perpendicular projection. When using flats, work with an oblique projection and the oblong technique.

The difference between the ovalvoid and the oblong is that the ovalvoid is more circular and the oblong is more flat and long.

Lines:

Lines, scratching, stroking or sketching movement techniques are divided into the following groups:

1. Short and over-lapping strokes in one direction.
2. Long and firm strokes in one direction.
3. Short overlap strokes in two directions, horizontally or pendulum.
4. Short overlap strokes in two vertical directions or zigzag.
5. Long strokes in a continuing and rapid movement or shadowing, feathering or brooming technique.
6. Continuous line – one continuous line with no breaks from start to finish point.

In both cosmetic and body tattooing, these techniques are the most popular. Any flat or clustered needle can be used. You can use perpendicular or oblique projections depending on the needle configuration and the effect desired.

The length of the stroke of the first five techniques determines the saturation. The longer the stroke, the less color that will be deposited and the softer the result. The exception to this is the continuous outline technique. In this line the tattoo artist can create a long consistently firm line or a softer, more delicate line by controlling depth and angle of implantation along with needle selection. It is the most difficult of the lining styles to master. All linear techniques can be used to outline, fill, or camouflage. They can be moved from left to right or up and down at different angles to the skin to create different results.

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