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Artistry in Healing: 3 Stories of Empowerment



PMU is more than just a sharp brow or blushed lip. In the world of restorative artistry, Natalie Martin, Nancy Rodriguez, and Kyra McElroy shine as beacons of empowerment through their mastery of 3D areola tattooing. Their stories unfold narratives of resilience, dedication, and the transformative power of reclaiming identity after challenging cancer journeys. Get ready to explore the vibrant canvas where healing meets creativity

Embark on the inspiring journey of Kyra McElroy, a former educator turned certified restorative medical tattoo artist who calls Bradenton, Florida her home. With certifications in 13 dermo-pigmentation techniques, Kyra's expertise ranges from 3D areola tattooing to scar camouflage and stretch mark revision. Kyra's commitment to cancer survivors is exemplified not only in her comprehensive services but also through her annual donation of areola tattoos, a heartfelt contribution to the emotional healing of deserving survivors. Delving into the details, let's explore her case study.

Client Case & Considerations:

Kyra's client Amanda is a 47-year-old breast cancer survivor who posed a few specific challenges. Known for her love of tackling challenging cases, Kyra first sought out to draw attention away from the noticeable breast size differences—A cup on the left and C-D cup on the right. Beyond traditional, geometric measurements, Kyra relied on her instinct of the overall look of both breasts by looking away and then back again to assess the overall visual symmetry. This personalized approach ensured that the position of the areolas not only enhanced the end look but also celebrated Amanda's individuality. In this journey, Kyra's artistic touch brought both balance and beauty to

Amanda's post-cancer experience.



Before

“At this stage, I ask myself questions such as:

- *Does the current placement of the areolas enhance the surgical outcome or highlight differences?*
- *Are the areolas sitting naturally for her age?*
- *Does the placement accentuate or distract from the size differentiation?*
- *Are they too centered or looking up to the ceiling?*
- *Are they proportionate and in-line with what the client asked for?”*

Client Goals:

Amanda expressed a simple desire for soft, natural-looking areolas to distract from her varying breast sizes. She initially wanted to start light in color.

Skin Analysis:

Amanda presented as a Fitzpatrick II with fair skin, susceptible to burning and occasional tanning, with a cool undertone adorned with freckles. Her breast cancer journey involved surgery, including DIEP Flap Reconstruction and radiation. The replacement of her natural areola and nipple with abdominal skin presented a color contrast challenge for Kyra, prompting thoughtful decisions on placement to achieve a harmonious look for both breasts. In addition to radiation effects, which could potentially cause ash coloring if pigment selection wasn't precise, Kyra had to consider Amanda's diagnosed anemia. Mindful of the risk of bleeding, the first session required careful needle depth, emphasizing caution on the number of passes over the skin. Kyra's expertise navigated these complexities, ensuring a personalized and safe approach to Amanda's unique circumstances, all while preserving the artistry and empathy that define Kyra's practice.

Color Choice:

During the consultation, various shades were placed on her skin to observe how Amanda's undertones influenced the pigment hues. Preferring peachy pink colors and favoring small to medium-sized areolas, Amanda hoped the tattoos would divert attention from the size difference between her left and right breast. Choosing very light areolas in the initial session, she later decided on a slightly darker shade during the touch-up.

Kyra used Perma Blend Cheeky, Perma Blend Pink Dermis, Perma Blend High White, and Perma Blend Middle Mixer. Dilution was adjusted for soft transitions. Amanda's cooler undertones guided the selection of brighter pigments.

Design Approach:

Kyra initiates every session by thoughtfully delving into her client's cancer journey, recognizing the significance of this milestone in their breast cancer recovery. Listening attentively to their stories forms a crucial connection, ensuring an enjoyable and memorable experience. The consultation covers details such as the number of surgeries, prognosis, radiation, and medication timeline.

Following this heartfelt discussion, Kyra outlines the session's three major steps. The first involves sizing and placement, where clients choose two areola sizes to "try on" from a circle template. Utilizing a clean digital caliper, Kyra meticulously measures from breast to breast and to the sternal notch, forming an equilateral triangle (Penn's Triangle). For clients with significantly different breast sizes, Kyra employs a more artistic approach, making the process less scientific.

To ensure optimal placement, Kyra has clients shake out their shoulders or do a little hop, preventing any tension that could affect the tattoo's position. She emphasizes that sizing and placement are paramount, allowing clients to make adjustments until they feel completely confident.

Moving to the second phase, Kyra assists in color selection by presenting laminated drawing cards featuring 12 different areolas. Clients point out two preferred colors, providing a guide for the color palette. Testing 2-4 areola colors on the breast, they adjust and mix until deciding on two final colors. Kyra then uses her professional judgment to select additional colors for the palette, including nipple color, white, and two tones of brown for shading and creating realistic details.

The third and final phase involves the actual tattooing, with Zensa numbing cream occasionally used as needed, ensuring a comfortable experience for her clients.

Procedure Notes:

Kyra began the tattooing process by shoveling the ink with quick, overlapping ovals, ensuring the outline of the nipple and areola would hold even if the drawn-on outline wore off. Employing the "backing off the needle" technique from Terry Lively, she swept the needles backward and in one direction, creating a softer edge.

Pro Tip: Begin the areola shading close to the outline of the nipple and then blend outwards.

Once the base of the areola was complete, she incorporated whip-shading and pointillism to add three-dimensionality to the nipple. Using small compact micro-dots, she created a texture that mimics the realism of pores and skin overlapping in a natural nipple.

Pro Tip: Small compact micro-dots create texture. Micro-dot textures mimic the realism of pores and skin overlapping in a natural nipple.

Analyzing an imaginary light source from a specific point, she used her second darkest color to create a crescent moon-like shape around the base of the nipple. For the final touch, she outlined the nipple with the darkest pigment, leaving the top slightly open. Adding a small amount of white at the top created a "light" effect, suggesting light shining down from above the nipple for a 3D creation.

Once the nipple was complete, she added realistic details discussed with the client, such as Montgomery glands and

soft shading.

Pro Tip: Always ask your client if they prefer realistic details before you add them. Do they like the look of wrinkles around the nipple? Do they like the presentation of Montgomery glands in the areola? Show them the difference between a nipple that has pointillism and one that has simply whip shading and adapt your techniques to the look they prefer.

Tools:

Kyra used the Microbeau Flux Mini in Champagne for its wireless and user-friendly features, confidently gripping the machine to ensure steady needle control. Setting the machine speed at 6.0V, she considered the client's anemia and thin skin, being cautious not to overwork the tissue. She transparently communicated to the client about the likelihood of needing the included touch-up session, taking into account the sensitivity of radiated skin and the underlying anemia.

For shading the areola, Kyra used the Peak Quartz 1207 Curved Magnum - 5.5mm Taper. When working on details within the areola and the nipple, she reached for a Peak Quartz 1205 Tight Round Liner - 5.5mm Taper.

Method:

Kyra's technique involved creating a soft, not overly brown, color palette to meet her client's preference for light, peachy, pink areolas. Her method included an "areola blushing" approach, where the color gracefully fades out with soft edging. This meticulous technique aimed to achieve a natural and aesthetically pleasing outcome, aligning with her client's desire for soft, natural-looking areolas.

Immediately After:



Results immediately after

Immediately after the procedure, both Amanda and Kyra were delighted with the color and the intricate detailing of the 3D look. As discussed in the consultation, Kyra informed the client about the potential 25-40% fading that could occur after the first session. Emphasizing a two-session approach, Kyra offers the second session without additional charges. Her commitment is not only to achieve perfection in her work but also to encourage clients to return for their second session. While some clients may not necessarily require the second session, Kyra urges them to come back for final pictures and a thorough check of both her work and the healing process.

Healed Result:



1st Session Healed results prior to Touch-Up

About 8 weeks later, during Amanda's touch-up session, Kyra addressed the anticipated faded ink saturation by using the same color pigments with a slightly adjusted mixture ratio. The goal was to touch up specific areas and ensure consistent saturation across the entire areola and nipple. Additionally, Perma Blends Micro Mod Pigment Modifier in orange was employed to seamlessly blend Amanda's blue radiation markers into matching brown freckles.

Touch-up:



Immediately after touch-up

The touch-up session focused on slightly deeper penetration into the skin, with a quicker speed of 7V. Kyra retraced nipple details, enhanced highlighting, and pointillism for the final perfecting touches.

Follow Kyra on Instagram: [@medinkflorida](https://www.instagram.com/medinkflorida)

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