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Front side possible  
placement →



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## Curatorial Statement “MONKEY KING”

This project draws from *Journey to the West*, one of the foundational works of Chinese classical literature, in which the figure of the Monkey King—Sun Wukong—embodies rebellion, transformation, and the disruptive awakening of consciousness.

The artist's relationship to this myth is neither academic nor geographic, but cultural, generational, and personal.

The Monkey King first entered her visual memory through animated adaptations encountered in childhood, at a time when Asian narratives reached Western audiences primarily through animation rather than direct literary access. Long before the widespread diffusion of anime culture, these early translations shaped an intuitive connection to the character—an encounter with the image before the myth was fully known.

Only later did research reveal the deeper origin of the figure: a complex narrative rooted in Taoist, Buddhist, and Chinese folk cosmology, rich in satire, philosophy, and allegory. The grotesque and hybrid companions of the Monkey King—the monk, the pig, the demon—are not incidental characters, but symbolic devices through which the text reflects on discipline, desire, ignorance, and spiritual struggle.

This work does not attempt to illustrate the myth literally.

Instead, it isolates its symbolic nucleus: transgression as a catalyst for transformation.

Sun Wukong does not receive immortality—he takes it.

By consuming the Peaches of Immortality, he disrupts the celestial hierarchy, crossing the threshold between obedience and awareness, between assigned role and self-determined existence.

The monkey is rendered here not as a folkloric figure, but as a threshold being—intelligent, unstable, conscious.

The peonies, traditionally associated with Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the West and guardian of the celestial orchard, complete the symbolic architecture of the work. They evoke abundance, beauty, and power, while simultaneously recalling the danger inherent in forbidden knowledge and divine proximity.

The title “Journey to the West” acquires an unintended yet precise resonance within this project.

Beyond the original narrative, the Monkey King has undertaken another journey—one that carried this myth across cultures and centuries, from classical literature into global consciousness through translation, animation, comics, and popular culture.

This work emerges from that second journey: from childhood encounter to adult recognition, from image to myth, from entertainment to symbolic structure.

In this context, tattooing becomes a form of mythic inscription.

The body is not treated as a decorative surface, but as a site where ancient narratives of rebellion, transformation, and consciousness are reactivated in contemporary form.

The project situates tattooing between illustration and ritual—an embodied reminder that transcendence often begins with disobedience.



## Technical Sheet / Project Details



Year: 2026

Technique: Digital illustration, conceived for tattoo ink application

Medium: Tattoo — custom, site-specific, body-adapted

Process: The project originates as a fully developed digital illustration and is conceived specifically for realization through tattooing.

The final execution combines a structured visual framework with freehand adaptation directly on the body, allowing the composition to respond to individual anatomy, proportions, and movement.

Each realization involves a process of recalibration in which rhythm, spacing, and flow are adjusted in situ, acknowledging the body as an active collaborator rather than a neutral surface.

Placement may vary according to bodily architecture, with the design adaptable to the arm, hip, thigh, or side of the back.