



What's behind the tattoo?

TARA DAKIDES

Long before Tara Dakides was an X Games champ and leading lady of snowboarding, she was another 18-year-old having doubts about her next tattoo. "He had a twitchy eye," Dakides remembers of the tattooer who took a turntable in payment for a tattoo. "I should've known from that point that he probably wouldn't have done good work." She took the plunge anyway, and the artist left her with a giant mushroom design that spanned the side of her torso and ribs.

Dakides never felt the image reflected who she was at the time. She always considered herself an outsider and spent her teens at basement punk shows and partying with southern California's rougher crowds. At 16, Dakides got her very first tattoo, a Dr. Seuss-themed piece on her calf mimicking the characters she loved in childhood. After a painful breakup with her boyfriend, another quickly followed (the word love on her foot). "You walk with love or in love-not just necessarily love for someone else," she says. "It wasn't for the relationship that I broke up from, it was for myself, which is how all tattoos should be."



"It wasn't for the relationship that I broke up from, it was for myself, which is how all tattoos should be."

Later, as Dakides's snowboarding career advanced, she took a stab at perfecting the piece on her side. While recovering from knee surgery, she decided to cover up some of the original work and sought the help of pal Carey Hart at his shop, Hart & Huntington. Dakides decided to get an alien woman enclosed in a cocoon, a reminder to stay calm when everything around you is chaotic; she enlisted Twig, Emiliano, and James Ferreira to work on the piece. The image includes a pressure gauge to symbolize her need to take a break when life gets too hectic. "It's one of my favorite things about the tattoo because I like to race cars. If things ever get to be too much, you just hit the pressure gauge and everything is released."

Facing what may be her last season snowboarding professionally and a recent split with Omatic snowboards, Dakides is releasing pressure in new ways, mainly through motocross and monster truck racing. "I don't ever look too far down the road because things constantly change, and I like to leave room for those changes to happen."