

Meet

Body of evidence

Words — Susanne Madsen

I'm in a cab with Rico – aka Rick Genest aka Zombie Boy – and he's wearing a Kill Me t-shirt and talking in animated terms about his beloved Lucy: "I love her. She's so amazing," he says, flashing a boyishly charming smile. It transpires that Lucy is actually Lucifer, his pet boa constrictor. This comforts me. Boys with cadaverous tattoos need to date a Wednesday. Or a Desdemona. Or at the very least a Buffy, right?

Rico is in Copenhagen – accompanied by his manager, Colin Singer – to present an award at our annual DANSK Fashion Awards. From his intense, self-assured pictures, I think I was expecting some sort of cocky Marilyn Manson-esque persona, but in the inked flesh, he's slightly shy, extremely polite and a nervous smoker. You can't really blame him, though, if he seems a bit overwhelmed (or is that unimpressed?) with his newfound life.

Since his debut on Nicola Formichetti's revamped Mugler catwalk, Rico has been thrown into the shark-infested media waters as the talk of the town amongst fashion folk, the [insert any alternative crowd] scene and Lady Gaga groupies. And newspapers have been quick to brand him a fairy tale story: 'young man gets crazy expensive tattoos, works at car wash, sleeps rough, gets plucked from Facebook by fashion mastermind and ker-ching!'

I don't ask him about that, and that's probably a good thing since the bulk of my questions receive one-sentence answers. What has his meeting with the fashion industry been like? "Really amazing." And Formichetti? "Nicola is

great. We keep in touch." I skip the Lady Gaga question and ask him about his favourite horror movies instead. They're Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Evil Dead.

And as for the answer to the million dollar question – why did he decide to go all MJ Thriller on himself – you can keep guessing, y'all. Because so far, Rico hasn't really given anyone anything substantial on that subject. Beyond who did them (mainly Frank Lewis in Montreal), it's uphill: "I just thought it would be fun." (At least The New York Times got a snarky reply: "I guess I didn't really think it over. Kids and tattoos, you know.")

His eyes light up when I bring up his performance work. Rico has spent almost four years with the sideshow Lucifer's Blasphemous Mad Macabre Torture Carnival. The show has worm-eating geeks, fakirs, fire breathers and an executioner. "I love performing. At our show, you experience a night in hell. There's fake blood and real blood, and everyone gets covered in it."

Maybe we shouldn't expect Rico to make profound dissertation-style comments on his tattoos, in the same way we shouldn't expect an author to analyse and interpret his own novels. I can give you my five cents, though: I totally see Rick's body of work (ba-dum-teesh!) as a 21st century Memento Mori type of commentary. I ask him if he wants anything else done. "Yeah, I wanna ink the white of my eyes," he says, and I think he's bullshitting me but I'm not quite sure.





Suit and turtleneck by Prada — Fur by Burberry Prorsum



Trousers by Comme des Garçons — Hood by New Power Studio, Vest by Prada

