TATTOO ARTIST: A photograph from the University Avenue Project series by Wing Young Huie - ca. 2007-2010

A photograph by Wing Young Huie is like a documentary film as it tells a story but one caught in a split second in time. His photographs always demand more time from us as viewers because they raise questions about the subjects and their history.

Mr. Huie grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in Duluth as the only member of his family not born in China, and his personal view as an artist has this two world perspective, among many others. Wing Huie in the early 1980s studied with the American art photographer Garry Winogrand (1928-1984), and he started to see the possibilities of photography as an expressive medium to record the lives of his neighbors in Minneapolis and St. Paul. One of Winogrand’s main ideas as a photographer was to take the camera to the street life around you.

This photograph of a tattoo artist is from one of a themed series of pictures called the University Avenue Project, and the woman in the photograph most likely has a business on that avenue offering that special service to her customers. Is this an advertisement of some kind? The why and how of the image casts a kind of spell. And why the figure is reclining for the portrait is a mystery as well.

Wing Young Huie has a journalism background and he is the author of several books that illustrate the rich cultural and social diversity of the Twin Cities where he lives and works.