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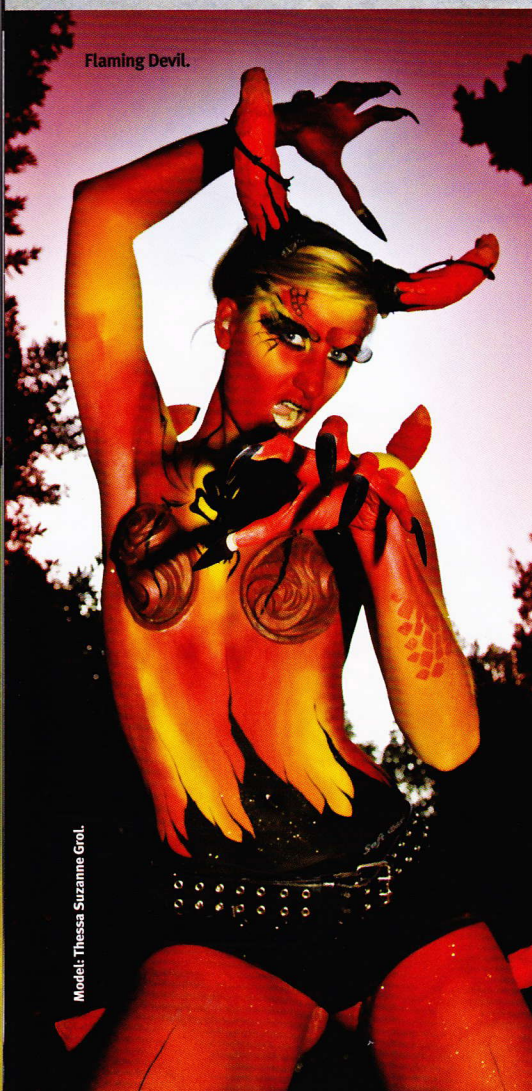
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The Shanghai Bodypainting Festival



The models gathered on stage showing the high standard of body art.

By Denis Tingay and Mark Greenawalt



Flaming Devil.

Model: Thessa Suzanne Grol.

The Shanghai Tourism Festival attracts millions of tourists every year, taking place throughout September and October with a diverse range of events across the city. At the tourism festival's twentieth anniversary in October 2009, for the first time, it included the AEMI Shanghai Bodypainting Festival.

One of the twenty artists from ten different countries representing the body painting community at the festival was Mark Greenawalt. He explains: "Since it was the first event of its kind, the Shanghai government was apprehensive about allowing this art form into their culture.

"At times it felt like we were part of a social experiment to see how the Chinese people would react to seeing painted people; would they perceive it as inappropriate or would they see a dynamic art form? As ambassadors of body painting we felt privileged to display our work and hoped this new audience would embrace the world of body painting."

AEMI president, Chris Wang, had previously produced the AEMI World Clown Festival and the AEMI World Balloon Art Competition, but after witnessing the World Bodypainting Festival in Austria, he set out to introduce body painting to the mix in Shanghai.

Michael De Prycker of Fantasy-Worldwide took on the role of organiser and one of his first tasks was to solicit entries from body artists all over the world and submit their portfolios and biographies to the Shanghai government. In the planning stages, it was decided that this would be a competition and that fifteen of the artists would be competitors and the remaining five would be judges.

AEMI covered the artists' expenses for travel, hotel, meals and visa costs. Mark continues: "Regardless of the competition results, we all felt like winners of a pretty exclusive all-expenses-paid trip to China. We became a close-knit group of friends for the two weeks we spent together, staying at the Shanghai Ming Zhu Hotel, a government-owned hotel that was close to the festival grounds.

"Also at the hotel were more than a hundred artists, making up the dance troupes, models, balloon artists and performance artists. I was relieved that English turned out to be the common language spoken in the group. The only communication issues were with the Asian models, but AEMI had hired several translators to help us."

Four European models – Evy Vermeulen, Thessa Suzanne Grol, Christle Tjon and male model Pieter Van Mieghem – took part along with American model Lena Toney and six Asian models. Sometimes, when more models were needed, the artists recruited the dancers.

Mark wrote a diary each day but his overriding thoughts are of an event that he and his fellow artists will remember for the rest of their lives. "The extraordinary Shanghai festival is etched into my memory. Next year, when Shanghai plays host to the World Expo, the exposure will be greater and the event will grow. I hope that I get the opportunity to join in the fun again and recommend it to any artist with a taste for adventure."

Website: www.fantasy-worldwide.com/shanghai/

A design created by Birgit Linke.

Models: Ice (right) and Landy (left).

Models painted by Sabine Gabrielle Vogel (right) and Mark Greenawalt (left).

Statue painted by Mark Greenawalt.

Sabine Vogel and her winning face paint design.

Competitors

- Kimberly BuysSENS
- Einat Dan
- Emma Edworthy
- Catriona Finlayson
- Mark Greenawalt
- Carrie Hoyle
- Filippo Ioco
- Birgit Linke
- Lital Nave
- Melanie Rodel
- Anita Rorije
- Mario Speleman
- Craig Tracy
- Sabine Gabrielle Vogel
- Bella Volen

Judges

- Olivier Zegers, Jodi Carr,
- Karen Mills, Yolanda
- Bartram, Clelia Marsadie.

The international artists chosen to compete in the event.

Model: Thessa Suzanne Grol.



Mark's diary:

Day one

We had the whole of Yanzhong Park to ourselves and though the drizzling rain tried to ruin our day, our tents protected us from the elements. The group was split into two teams and the eight members of Group A were given the theme **Welcome to the Future – East Meets West**. Group A team had first pick of the models while the Group B were free to paint whatever they wanted on the remaining models, within the limits imposed by the government. Unfortunately the outdoor gala, where the painted models could walk the runway, was cancelled due to the rain.

Day two

This was Group B's chance to shine on the **East Meets West** theme and we were relieved that the weather improved. Once painted, the models and their artists took a private bus over to Fuxing Park where other carnival activities were taking place. The painted models worked the runway at the mini-gala. Other entertainment included flamenco and break dancing, jugglers and the renowned balloon fashion show.

Day three

Since there was no competition, everyone used this free-form day to practice their art and showcase their skills. A favourite painting of the day was Yolanda's blue and green gremlin painted on Pieter, which included dazzling special effects in the form of a prosthetic nose and ear pieces. In the evening, Shanghai's vice mayor Zhao Wen joined us for the banquet, where he was entertained with a body painting show and balloon fashion show.

Day four

The government decided that body painting was, in fact, art and moved our tents from Yanzhong Park to Fuxing Park so that the larger crowds would see us. Everyone had a late start, but there were still some great body painting designs on show.

Day five

The theme of the day was **Street Performance – The Art of Surprising People** and both groups competed together. Some stunning works were completed this day and all were prominently displayed on the runway. Bella Vollen painted a beautiful giraffe on a male model and earned first place.

Day six

The groups came together again and were given the theme **Shanghai World Expo 2010**. It was interesting to see the different interpretations with several paintings using the Shanghai skyline and others featuring the mascot for next year's expo. Sabine's painting paid tribute

to her home in Rotterdam and its involvement in the expo. Carrie's painting included scenes from around the world and a neatly hidden 'Made in China' that was revealed on stage when the model hiked up his britches. It was satisfying to see the body paintings so well received at the evening gala.

Day seven

A relaxed day's painting that felt more like a jam than a competition. We were asked to incorporate balloons into our designs and were pleased that some balloon artists were on hand to create balloon accessories for our work.

Kimberly painted Yoda on a model's back and a balloon artist created a Darth Vader head piece. Mario and Olivier stole some of the spotlight with a Freddie Kruger and Chuckie homage that featured small balloons filled with red paint attached with liquid latex to a create a stunning impression of boils. Late in the afternoon the models and artists were brought on stage for the announcement of the winners. Bella took top spot, with me in second and Einat and Mario taking joint third. It was a very close race and the judges were faced with some tough decisions with such varied styles and techniques. The prizes included Chinese crafted trophies, a deluxe case of paints from Einat Dan, an impressive collection of paints, glitters, sponges and brushes from Fantasy, a selection of prosthetics from Body FX and a subscription to **Illusion** magazine.

Day eight

What was going to be a day off was hastily reorganised after the authorities asked us to stage a face painting competition. Sabine took first place with a feather mask painting that incorporated real feathers and feathery eyelashes. Lital came second with a flowery design in black and white with blue accents, and the addition of glitter and jewels. Catriona came third with a ying-yang design made up of black, white and blue paisley strokes.

With the body painting competitors off sightseeing, the judges took their turn with their brushes, using the performers from the gala as models. Models Evy and Pieter were painted as trees with leaves sprouting from their heads and hands. The break dancers were transformed into skeletons and the female dancers and balloon fashion models were given the face painting treatment to make them even more glamorous.

The theatrical production was called Elementz and it was a stunning show complete with a love story that showcased incredible balloon fashions and set decoration, wonderful dancing and choreography, and a sound track that was wrought with emotion. The body painting elements were subtle in the production, but added delicious icing to the cake.