

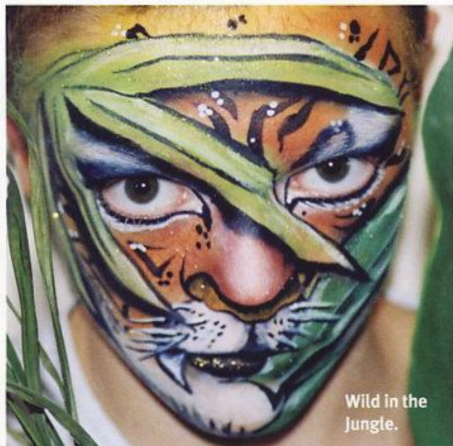
Under the Spotlight

Zoë Crowned Queen of the Jungle

By Denis Tingay

It took Zoë Thornbury-Phillips 13 years to win her first body painting title. It just happened to be the first competition she had ever entered and earned her the Body Painter of the Year prize at the UK Face and Body Art Convention. She told *Illusion*: "I had been to the convention a couple of times before as an observer. However, this was an opportunity to show off my painting skills and I was over the moon to win it."

The theme for the event was 'Wild in the Jungle' and Zoë's stunning image of a leaf cutter ant painted across the torso and thigh of her model was one of the highlights of the show. She remembers seeing monarch butterflies swarming around a tree trunk on a natural history programme and surfed the net searching for images. After some preliminary sketches the main theme began to evolve, which was encouraging since the model was booked for the following day.

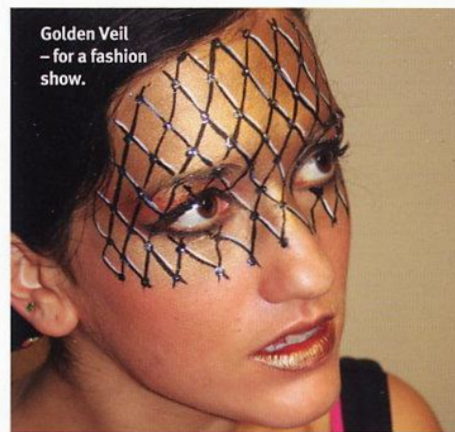


Wild in the Jungle.

She went on to explain: "Looking at the body shape is a great way to form a design and I wish I had done this before the day of the painting as I would have been able to finalise my sketches. I learned this technique from Carolyn Cowan who I attended a workshop with in 2005. She is very charismatic and had done the body art in Duran Duran's 'Rio' video in the eighties, the first time I had seen body art."

"If you're going to do this type of work, invest in a good digital camera with a strong flash. Getting photographs is important because once the art is gone, it's gone."

The model chosen for the UK Face and Body Art Convention was making her debut so Zoë had to be particularly sensitive given the glare of public attention. She explained: "Working with models that have not done it before, I find it best to start with their back or their limbs. They can then get



Golden Veil - for a fashion show.



Black Fire Peacock Butterfly.

used the feeling of being painted and it gives them time to relax and adjust before they need to undress. It takes a special kind of person to model for this type of work and I found a gem. She was relaxed, calm and strong so could hold positions. Her demeanour kept me relaxed and enabled me to paint more easily."

After six hours of painstaking work, Zoë was delighted with the finished product but not so pleased when her photographer failed to show up. She had to rush to a garage to buy a film for her trusted Canon SLR camera and learned a valuable lesson. She said: "If you're going to do this type of work, invest in a good digital camera with a strong flash. Getting photographs is important because once the art is gone, it's gone."

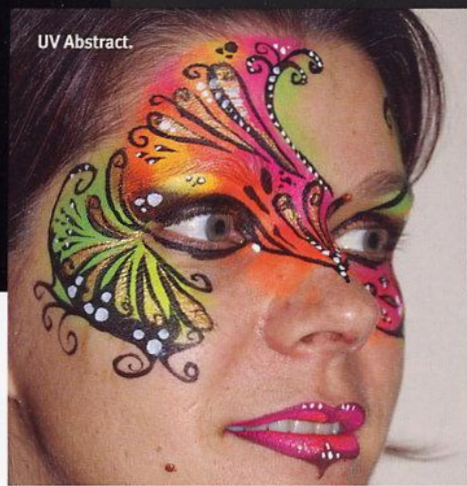
Zoë originally taught herself to face paint with the help of an instructional video, and then continued to practise tirelessly as well as attend workshops. She took a conventional route into the industry, working at corporate family days, restaurants and parties. It was at one such party that she got her first chance to paint a full body. She said: "Someone just asked me whether I did human statues and it turned out to be my first body painting assignment!"



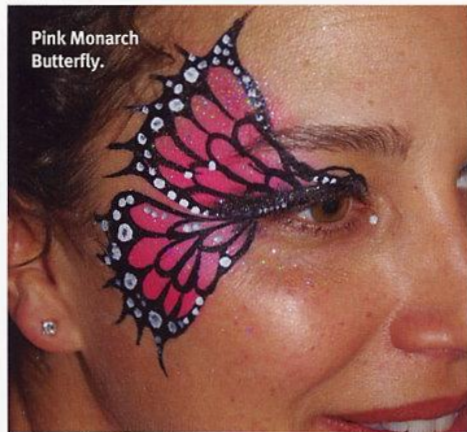
Zoë with her trophy for Body Painter of the Year.

Jungle Texture.





UV Abstract.



Pink Monarch Butterfly.



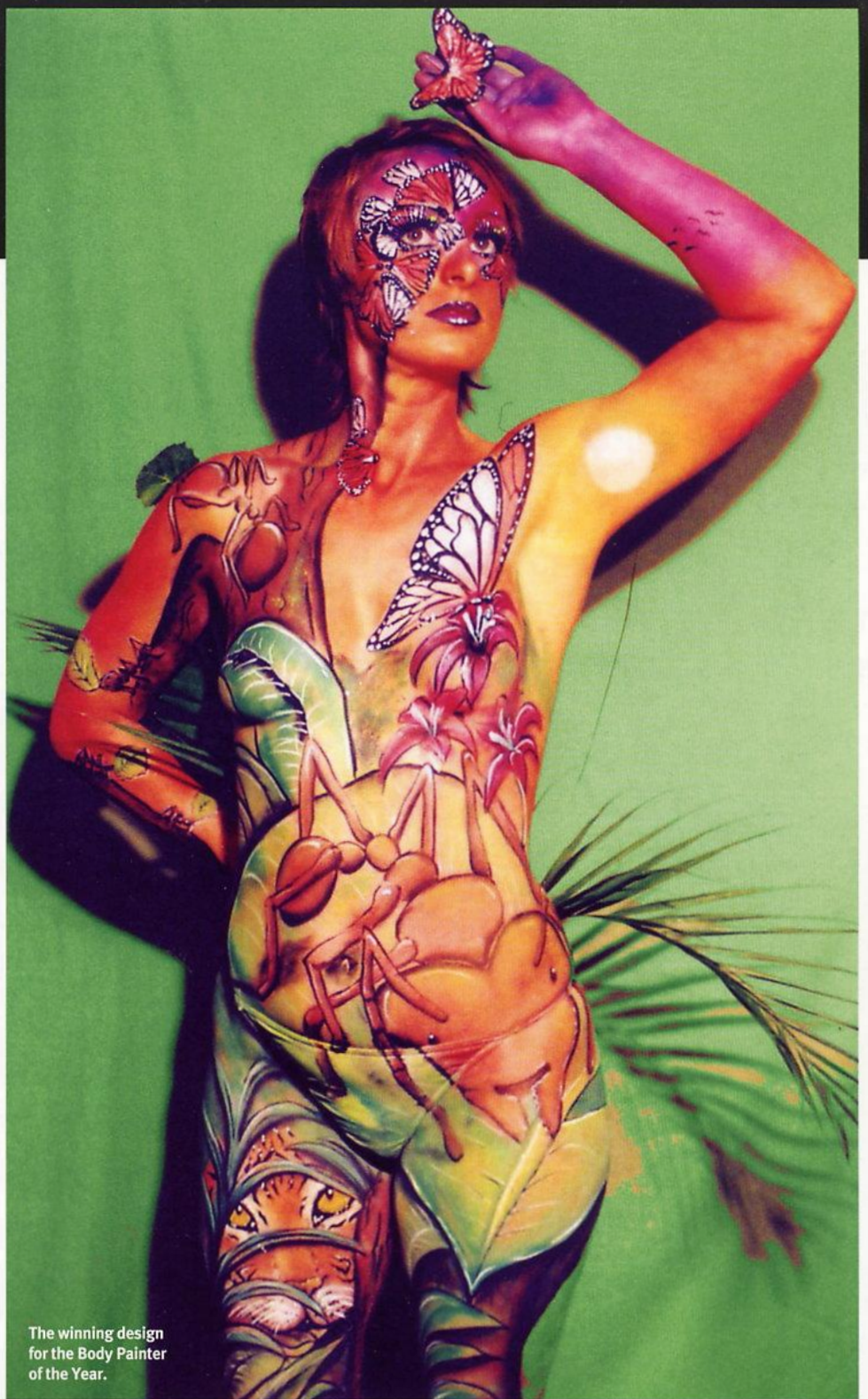
Green Eyes – for a fashion show.



Halloween Fun.

Zoë's art is influenced by the music and fashion of the seventies and eighties. The eras of disco, punk, glam rock and the new romantics feature heavily in her work. At 20 and unemployed, she watched a Barbara Daly make up course on television. Daly's work included Princess Diana's make up for her wedding day as well as the flamboyant look of pop star Toyah Wilcox. From the programme, Zoë learned how the face was structured and how make up is used to accentuate features.

When Zoë paints faces, she draws upon her make up skills as well as the painting techniques she has learned during her career. She said: "Just adding colour around the eyes and lips makes



The winning design for the Body Painter of the Year.

such a difference to the appeal of many face paint designs. Ultimately it's fantasy make up, which is why I add matching lips and dramatic eyelashes." Among Zoë's most enjoyable events are fashion shows and product launches as they often allow her to combine cosmetic make up with face and body art.

Now back at work, Zoë is using techniques that she learned at the convention and feels more confident after her win. She explained: "The butterfly with the black frame was a mix of Lynne Jamieson's triple sponge loading, blending techniques and the use of white on top of a design. The frame came from the Wolfe Brothers' tribal class where I particularly liked the fire strokes they taught.

Painting at the event this year made me feel more involved. I learned so much and would recommend competitions to anyone. The most exciting thing is I have been invited to body paint or give a class at next year's show."

Zoë has recently started teaching workshops and is enthusiastically passing on her experience to others. She admits she is slowly beginning to realise her worth as an artist: "Last year I did three days at Elstree studios for a kids' TV programme and yet, after all this experience, I was still finding it hard to promote myself. It felt big headed but then someone in sales gave me some good advice, 'don't sell yourself, sell the experience'. I am now setting up my own website, www.aboutfaceuk.com."