



Africa #2



Spain

# Body Painting

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Photos © Ayman Lotfy  
Paintings © Riham Elsadany

The art of body painting is one of the oldest skills, existing in most if not all cultures, because people have always been eager to record their stories and memories. In some civilizations they did it on walls. But in other societies, they did it on their bodies: this is known as tattoo. And in cultural terms, tattoo has become an expression of people's lives, a symbol or even an image of what they really liked, recorded on their own bodies.

The history of body art started a long time ago, when ancient people from cultures around the world started to paint on their faces and

bodies, or used permanent tattoos celebrating different events

The art of photography and individual photographers found painted bodies to be a very rich subject for creative shooting. Paint is utilized to decorate bodies and faces and these paintings expose different variables of different cultures, living styles, and behaviors of people. And it is exactly this, which enriches body painting as a subject for a photo shoot.

Different artists, who specialize in body painting, along with many photographers found a



*Far East*

perfect unique technique that could be used on the human body to represent their artistic ideas. This was how body painting changed from a decorative or celebrative art into a creative art. And artists



*Hawaii*



*America*

and photographers have created a new dialogue, a dialogue between painting and photography. This dialogue incorporates different elements, the body, the paints and the lighting.

That fact that photography is thought of as a documentary skill is the main obstacle faced in merging these two arts: numerous artists and painters don't understand photography in an artistic sense; thinking that photography is just a tool for recording events and happenings and they don't perceive the measures of a good photo or why one photo is nominated to win a prize. They lack perception of composition, center of attraction, exposure, framing, lighting angles, etc.

Fortunately enough, we find most photographers of the world understand each other's work and are capable of realizing how to judge a photo image. This is usually because they speak the same language, as they all have a common



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*Egypt*

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understanding of the rules of photography. And although this new art has merged fans of both arts, we find that most fans of photography art are photographers themselves. But, one cannot deny the fact that this new art, modern body painting has reduced the gap between photography and painting and caused people to understand photography as a type of fine art.

Bearing in mind the points mentioned above, this photographer started a journey to attempt to merge fans of both arts—painting and photography—for the purpose of exhibitions, with the result that viewers who loved painting became interested in photography. The initial idea was to use the model's body as a canvas and paint over the model's face. For the photographer, it was very hard to achieve the right expressions from the models. The goal is to maintain photographic rules, while keeping in mind the ideal image desired. The lighting must be



*Scandinavia*



*Rome*



Campoudia

adjusted to achieve the final artistic representation of the arts; painting and photography mixed together. To do this right the atmosphere for the photo shoot must be set up. The model must properly understand



Arabia



India

the mood and the expected outcome of the shoot. A dark room is prepared and music is provided to set the atmosphere. A small spot light is used, which enables the model to act and come up with different expressions, while wearing the painted mask.

As a result of these efforts, the Egyptian Minister of Culture and the head of the Fine Art Sector in Egypt has shown interest and admiration for this new kind of art and has asked for an exhibition of photographs, which would represent nations of the world. The exhibition is displayed in the New Cairo Airport Terminal #3 in Egypt as a welcome for all visitors in a newly artistic way. The nations of the world are represented in the portraits. It was decided to use portraits rather than full body art, as the face, though more difficult, is more expressive. Styles and cultures were studied and the result was 14 portraits exhibited at the new Cairo Airport. ■

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