

**diary
of a
Body
Painter
PRELUDE**

**by Paul
Roustan**

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DIARY OF A BODY PAINTER

P R E L U D E

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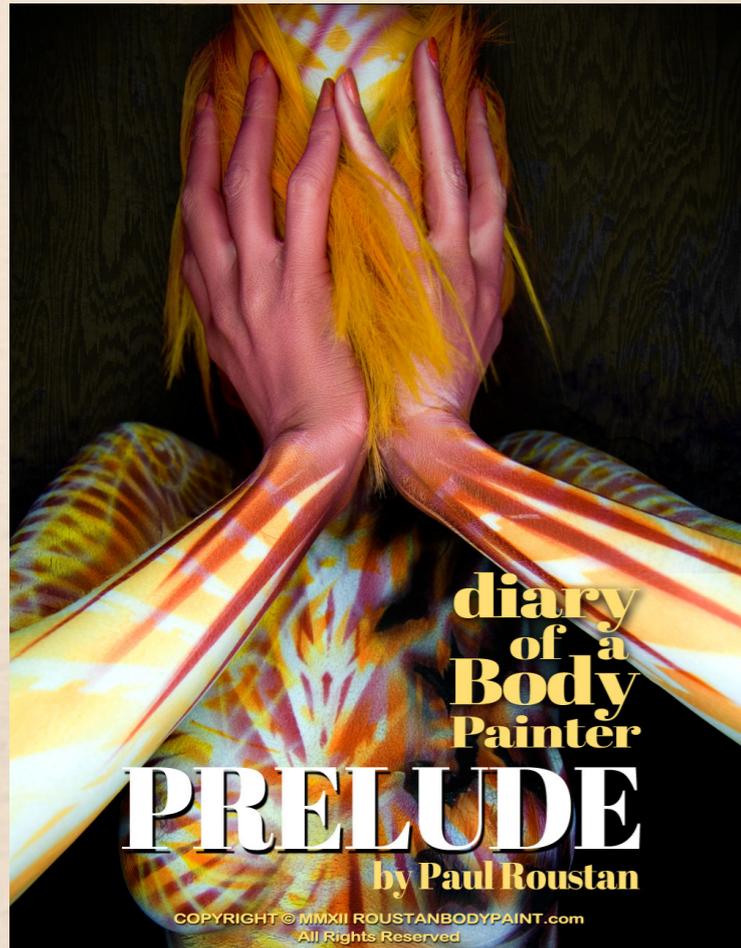
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by Paul Roustan

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ABOUT ME



A born native of Chicago, IL, I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2002. After moving to Rhode Island in 2004, I completed a Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2006.

2004 turned out to be a game changer for me after being laid off from two graphic design jobs. I accepted a third, but ended up backing out. Instead, I took a leap of faith setting out as a freelance illustrator/airbrush artist to liberate myself of the dependence of employers.

In 2005, I ended up getting a gig doing editorial illustrations for an adult magazine. I pitched an idea to the editors to paint a model for one of their photoshoots, presenting it as if I knew what I was doing, though I'd never done it before.

They agreed, and I gave it a shot. The first body painting turned out to be a success, and I found myself instantly addicted to the art form. I consider myself a very impatient artist, needing to complete the work within hours, as opposed to weeks. So body painting, with its inherent time limitations, happened to be a great fit. It seemed, as if, I found what I was meant to do. And so I never stopped.

At first, I collaborated with a variety of photographers to capture my work. By 2008, I purchased my own equipment and began photographing it myself.

My work has been used for corporate, private, television, and nightclub events worldwide, client list includes but is not limited to, Playboy, Bacardi, Tupperware, & Absolut. My work has garnered numerous awards and also been featured in fashion shows, parades, photographic workshops, TV shows and publications including, Spike TV, Sabado Gigante, the Chicago Sun-Times, the Providence Journal, Playboy Magazine, Airbrush Action Magazine among others.

My current goal is to push the art form away from the commercial realm, and elevate it into the fine arts. My body paintings are currently displayed in many galleries and private collections around the world.

Find out more information about my work at:
<http://www.RoustanBodypaint.com>

PORTRAIT OF A POET



Whenever I paint people I like to apply a concept that reflects the model and his/her personality. I feel it is a great opportunity to celebrate who he/she is. Otherwise I am simply objectifying the person by adding some random design to his/her skin.

Having already painted Roxanne three times, I had learned a lot about her and we had become good friends.

By this time, I understood her to be a very passionate person, wise in her soul, and a hopelessly romantic poet. I wanted to convey these things visually in a body painting. So I prepared a concept using heavy symbolism to represent the conflict that exists in romance.

The magic of this photo shoot was in the experience. Roxanne and I are always far away from each other, so we don't get to collaborate as often as we'd like. But whenever we're near, even if it's still three hours away, we try and get together.

She mentioned planning a visit to NYC, and immediately I began organizing a way to meet with her. I needed to find a way there, and I needed to find a place to paint and photograph her. On my budget, the options were very limited. I managed to find a friend who would let me do the entire photo shoot in her apartment.

Unfortunately a week before Roxanne's arrival, my friend had notified me that she had to leave town that weekend. All of a sudden, I had nowhere to produce the project.

Meanwhile, I had been pining over a NYC photographer's work for years, Gary Breckheimer, always admiring his style, method, and technique.

I thought wouldn't it be cool if we could meet up with him? And maybe use his space? I just needed to ask.

I figured, what's the worst thing that could happen? I'd get a 'No'.

No big deal.

To make a long story short, I got a resounding, 'Yes!'



I had peaked his interest, and he wanted to be a part of it, see it happen, and maybe photograph it as well.

Roxanne, also a fan of his work was excited to hear the news.

So, the weekend arrived and it was joyfully surreal, like having a good beer amongst friends.

When the painting was finished, and I had completed my photography (previous page & below), he was inspired to do his (pictured left). He took her out into the public streets of New York City and photographed her amongst the bustling people on the sidewalks, and against a collection of graffiti on walls and doorways. Out of all of his vast experience this was the first time he had ever photographed a body painting.

The entire combined process for the three of us was filled with laughter and exploration, easily one of the greatest creative experiences of my life. Maybe Roxanne's romantic nature simply rubbed off on me. Or maybe it's just what I live for.



If you visit my website, www.RoustanBodypaint.com, you'll find an assortment of body paintings displayed in various ways. Most often my work is displayed via photography and video. The videos often show the result in motion, or the actual painting process via time lapse.

I learned that this was a necessary method of documentation as a result of people questioning whether or not my work was real or digitally manipulated.

While I do not oppose digital manipulation, and respect it as an art form in its own right, I do try and keep my images as true to life as possible. So any post processing is usually limited to traditional dark room techniques, minor skin flaw correction, and contrast adjustment. But, I do want people to know that when they look at my photos this is pretty much what it looked like in person.

When I originally planned to start video recording my work, I kept forgetting to bring the video camera amongst the bundle of other items I needed to complete a body painting. I ultimately upgraded my camera to the Nikon d90, which at the time, was the first DSLR to have built in HD video capability. Now, I just needed to bring one camera.

When I make my time lapses, I set the image to photograph at the smallest jpeg quality, because the smallest jpeg is still higher resolution than HD.

Every once in a while, I unfortunately forget to revert the camera back to its highest quality state for photography. This body painting was one such case, photographed entirely in low quality jpg.

While the images look fine on screen, I generally always aim to produce large format prints of the images. This requires the highest possible quality my camera can produce.

Looking at the images, I was saddened by the fact that this simply could not happen. The quality is just too poor for large format prints.

So, I did what any curious photographer would do. I explored post-processing techniques to see if I could produce an image that would work.

These are the results.





By aging the photos, I conceal the graininess of the low quality jpegs, and actually turn the final image into something a bit more aesthetically pleasing.

I suppose the point is, all is not always lost.

RAINBOWS AND UNICORNS



If you know my work, you are very familiar with the model Scar, who at this moment, I've now painted fourteen times. Her and I have done a wide variety of body paint concepts including the ridiculous.

Whenever I paint, I aim to do something I'd never seen done before, or at the least, try and improve it by taking it to the next level.

Scar had once asked me to paint a unicorn on her. Typically, something like that wouldn't interest me. However with her, because of our excellent chemistry, I tend to always go with the flow, and thought...

'Well, I've never done that before... okay.'

And so we did. All for fun.

Less than a year later, we were trying to come up with a body paint concept for a specific event. She excitedly exclaimed,

'Paint RAINBOWS on me!'

With my regular disinterest in repeating the same ideas twice, I replied,

'Naw, man! I already painted rainbows on you, with that Unicorn.'

And I jokingly continued,

'The only way I'll paint rainbows on you again is if you are vomiting them.'

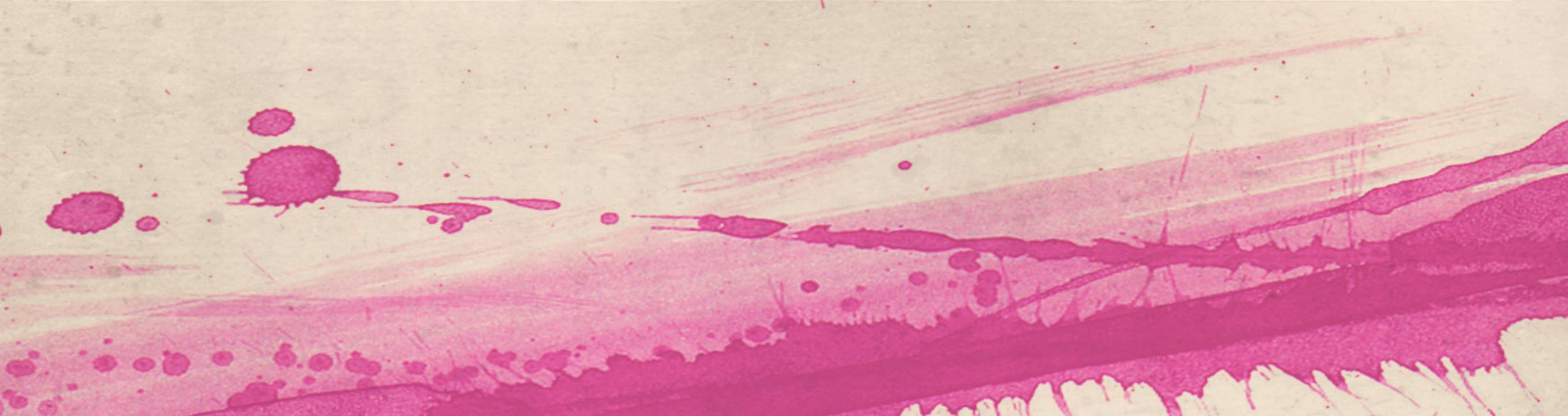
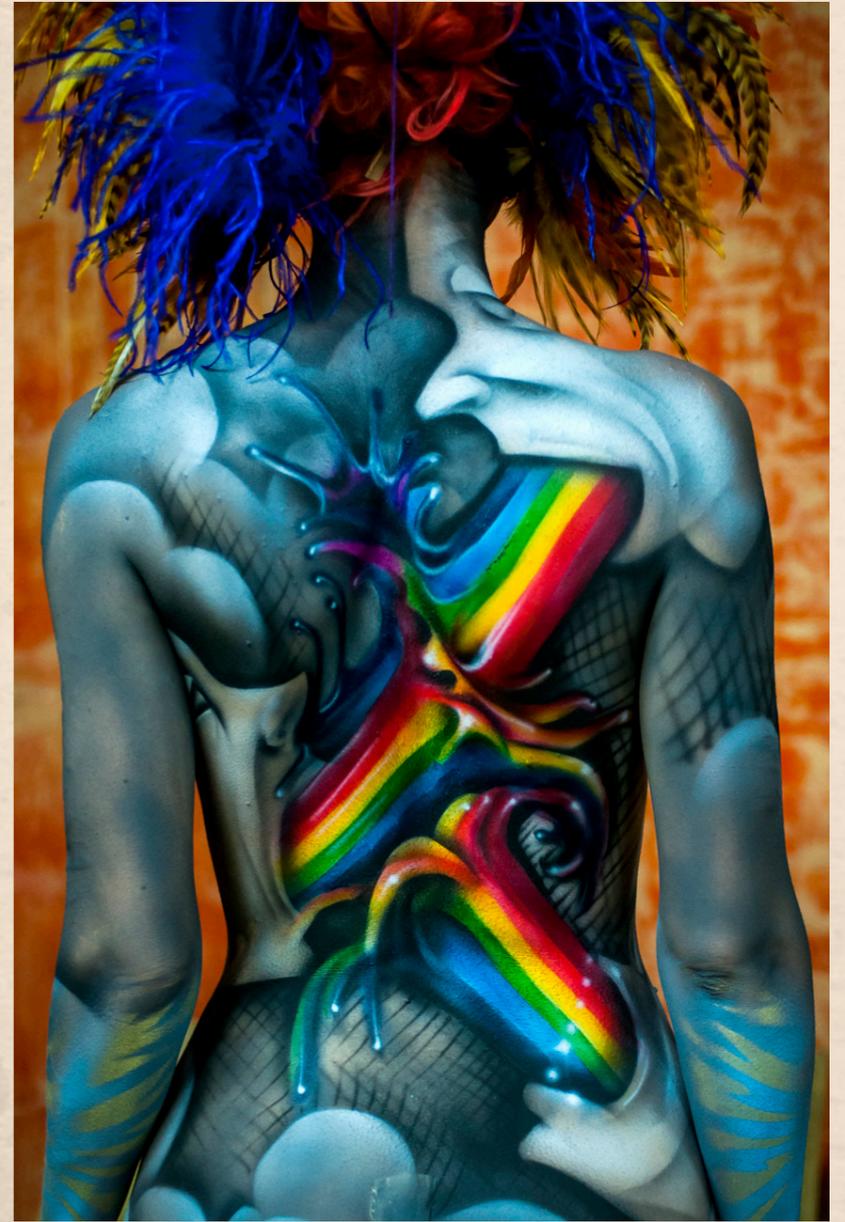
She exclaimed,

'I'll totally do that!'

I looked at her, considered the fact that I'd never seen anything like that done prior, and said,

'Alright!'

So we did.



Scar and I traveled to Seattle for a project in late 2012. Having never been, and knowing that was the location of Bruce Lee's grave, I made it a point to visit the site.

Bruce Lee has been an idol of mine for many years. Not just because he is a bad ass when it comes to martial arts, but more so because of his philosophies that he applied to his artform.

The primary and most notable philosophy that he preached was the idea of 'Mind Like Water.' A Buddhist Zen philosophy encouraging inner peace and spirituality that can be applied to, well, pretty much anything in life.

Bruce Lee says,

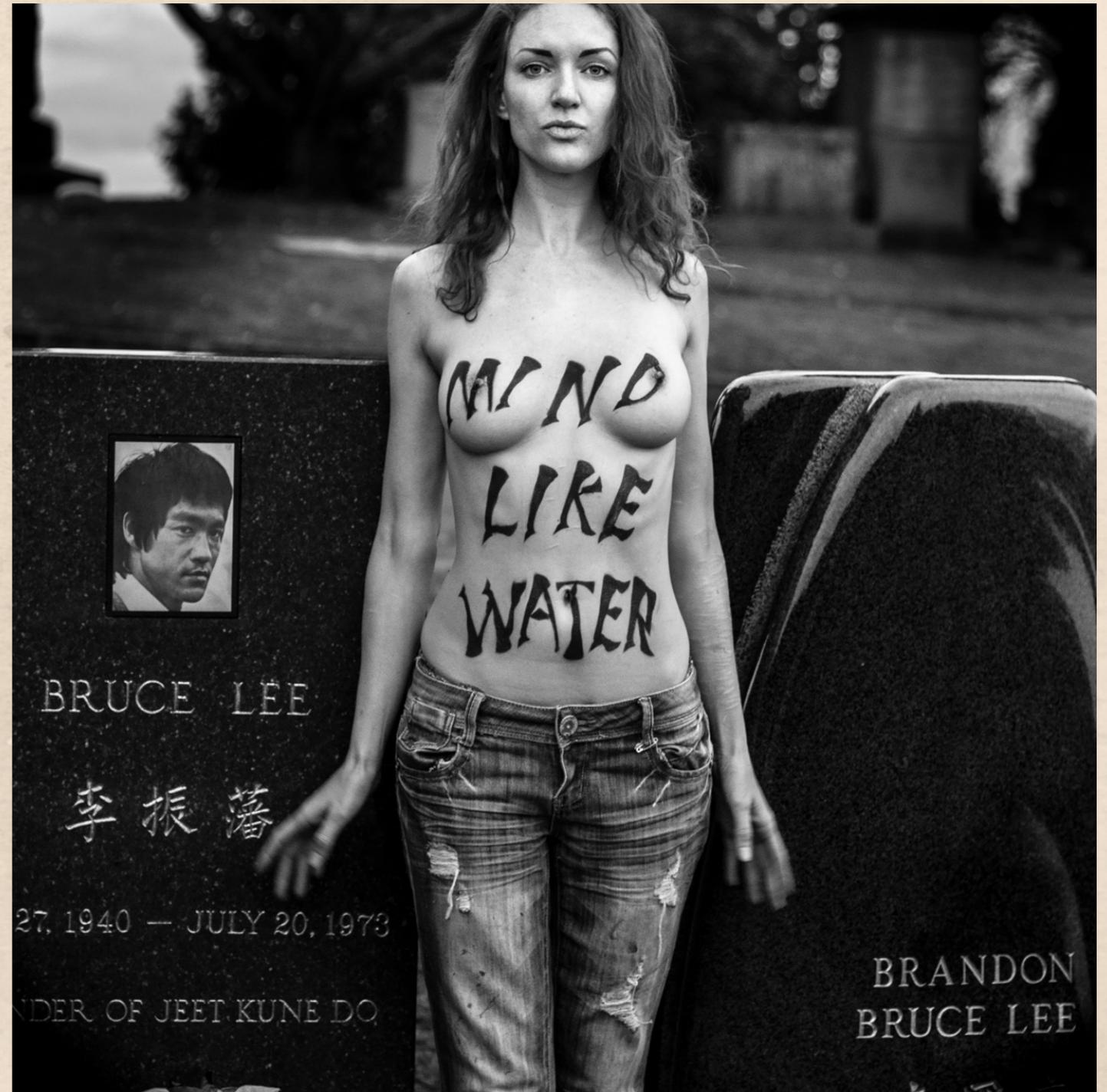
"Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water.
If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup.
You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle.
You put it in a teapot it becomes the teapot.

Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water my friend."

I have applied this philosophy to my own work and life constantly trying to achieve that state of mind. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

I really wanted to pay my respects to Bruce Lee in the only way I know. Put some paint on Scar, and photograph it on location.

While some may consider this action disrespectful of the dead (and believe me, I considered that), I ultimately felt otherwise. If I had the opportunity to show a resurrected Lee this image, and give an explanation as to my meaning, I think it would be something he'd graciously appreciate.



In retrospect, I wish I had painted something a little bit more extravagant for him. But I couldn't shake the desire to keep it simple. After all, less is more, right?

FOUNTAIN ART FAIR 2012



The first time I showed any of my work in New York City was at the Fountain Art Fair in early 2012. There was a wide variety of emerging artists and galleries and an abundance of beautiful work. I was representing Gallery ML in Philadelphia, a gallery devoted to body painting.

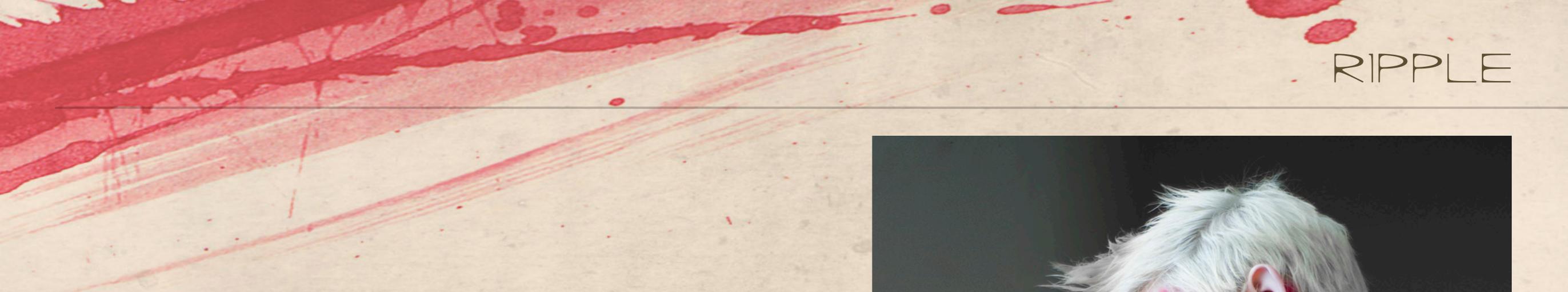
We decided in addition to our wall hung photographic canvases, it would be beneficial to have live painted models roaming our setup and the event.

Both days during the weekend, I had a different model to paint. The biggest disappointment of the event was that we had to conceal the nudity of the models with appropriate covering. I always frown upon 'art' events being so conservative in regards to nudity.

In the main area, we abided by their policies, but that didn't stop me from completing my body painting and photographing it properly elsewhere in the 69th Regiment Armory building.



Austen photographed in front of an impressive 3D mural by artist, Miguel Ovalle, Dizmology.com




hen I asked Lee what her interests were, she mentioned fashion and runway modeling.

It made me smile because when I think of runway models, they are basically walking clothes hangers displaying the art of the designer. You know nothing of who they are, where they came from, etc. Which is the exact opposite of what I try to do with body painting.

Yet, all of a sudden I became interested in letting Lee be my runway model, let her do what she does best, model the design of another, me. And with her perfect mannequin figure, it all made sense.

So, I quickly just started thinking of a decorative body paint that reflected me, and my interests. Naturally, because of its importance to me, I went with the aforementioned philosophy of 'Mind Like Water.'

I wanted to paint water. But, I didn't want to make it clearly recognizable. So, I applied the strong color combination of red and white, red representing power, and white representing calm. And I referenced the soothing pattern of the ripples in a lake photographed by Ansel Adams, adjusting everything to keep it as simple as possible, as minimal as possible, because again, less is more.



THE PAINTED LADIES



The 'Painted Ladies' houses, often recognized for their appearance in the opening credits of the TV show 'FULL HOUSE', became an interesting location for me to do a photo shoot due to my preference of doing things I'd never seen done.

In fact, when I learned the name of these houses, I was certain an image like this had already been created. But after much research, I failed to find anything even remotely close to what I was picturing.

How could that be? So obvious! There must be a photo of painted ladies, standing in front of the Painted Ladies. Of course!

So, I set out to achieve this.

My original goal was to find triplets, completely nude, painted in the same way as the image above. But that proved to be incredibly difficult, if not impossible without some serious financing.

So my idea evolved, thanks to my wife's input, of painting three drag queens instead. I exclaimed, 'Brilliant! Especially since it's San Francisco! Just need to find three drag queens. Shouldn't be difficult...'

But, it was.

I had ultimately decided to bring Scar in on this photo shoot, and try and find two drag queens instead. All the way up to the day of the photo shoot, I was unable to find one drag queen willing to do what I needed for the shot. How is that even possible in San Fran?

Finally, I had to settle for painting two other female models. And while the result was still good, I ache to complete the 'Painted Ladies' image the way I had originally intended.

So, it's looking like it will eventually be a three part series, one as above, a second with triplets, and third with drag queens.

If you happen to be a triplet, or a drag queen in or around San Francisco, and would like to be a part of this, please email me immediately at paulroustan@gmail.com.



The challenge of this type of photo shoot is extremely difficult. I live on the other side of the country. So, I needed to fly to California and generate the funds to do so. Organizing multiple models is also quite another task, but I managed to organize the minimal three I needed.

Then comes the final challenge of painting the three models, and photographing them guerilla style at an iconic public location. Things would have been much easier if I knew that San Francisco is generally more relaxed when it comes to public nudity. But, I treated the photo shoot as a 'get it done asap, and get outta there' kind of shoot so no one gets arrested.

Because of that, I ended up painting all three models throughout the night, finishing at around 6am. And then we headed to the location at around 6:30am hoping to minimize pedestrians and on lookers.

As a result of the long night and my surreal mental state, I completely forgot to set my camera properly. This final image was shot with an ISO of 2500, when I would have preferred to shoot it 200 or below. The result creates a very noisy image. I was crushed when I realized this a few hours later. But the resulting image still came out usable nonetheless.

Next time, I'll just photograph it in the afternoon.

This model, as her stage name 'Asphyxia' suggests, is very into auto-erotic asphyxiation.

I attempted to relay this idea visually and tell that story about her. I made the painting itself look like it was struggling to breath, using shapes that seem to stretch and expand, struggling like lifting a heavy weight. And I went with a color suggesting a lack of air, cold and pale.



The result came out very close to what I had intended.



Not many people realize when they look at me, that I am of mixed nationality but predominantly Puerto Rican. Puerto Ricans come in all shapes, sizes and colors, because they themselves are a great mix of nationalities. My mother, originally born in San Juan, now living in the US, is also not locally recognized as looking Puerto Rican due to her fair skin and blue/green eyes.

But one apparent truth that connects all Puerto Ricans is their tremendous pride in regards to their heritage.

This model, Cheska, is also Puerto Rican. And until I worked with her, I had yet to paint a Puerto Rican theme. So, it was a no brainer that I should paint something on her we could both appreciate.

Naturally, I included elements representative of Puerto Rico. Like the national flower, Maga Grandiflora, seen on her legs and shoulder, the 'coqui' frog, famous for making the noise it's named after, and El Morro, the Castillo San Felipe del Morro fort built to defend the port of San Juan in the late 1500s.

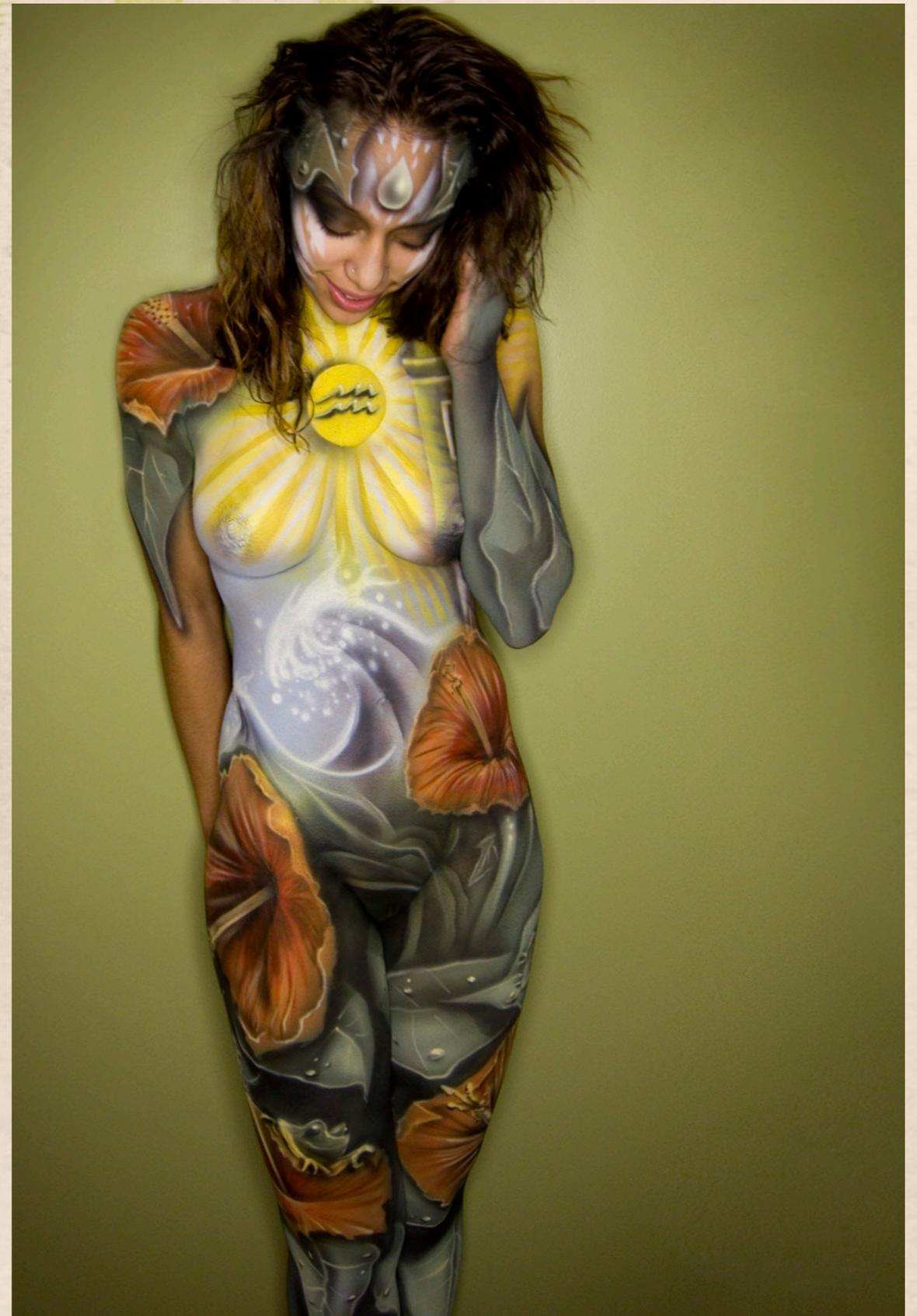
One of the notable facts behind the creation of this image was that I had originally painted a bull charging El Morro on her chest. It was to represent Spain's rule over the island for nearly 400 years until Puerto Rico became a US territory as a result of the end of the Spanish-American war.

I was very unhappy with the result of the painted bull, and I did not finish it, asking Cheska to wipe it off with a wet rag. This is a very uncharacteristic thing for me to do since I was trained to find ways to make my mistakes work. Having painted well over 1000 people, I've had no more than 5 people wipe off something I didn't like.

Days later, after seeing a photo of the bull, I felt it would have worked fine and I should have stuck with it. I wish I had remembered in that moment the guidance of one of my mentors, Gary Fasen, 'How can you know what you will end up with if you don't finish it?'

The change to adding sun rays, the Aquarius symbol (Cheska's sign), and water still worked great, but one should always finish what one starts.

Another interesting fact about this body painting is that I spent nearly three hours on her legs alone. Three hours is generally how long it takes me to complete a full body painting.



ZOMBIE WONDER WOMAN



One of the great questions of life...

If Zombie Wonder Woman approaches you, would she save or harm you?

During a sponsored body paint gig in Florida, I was put up in a hotel that was conveniently located next to an abandoned shopping mall. Two days went by and I couldn't shake the desire to do a body paint photo shoot there. It's just one of those opportunities I can't let go.

As I sat in my room imagining what could possibly fit in a location like that, it just began to appear before my eyes. I thought,

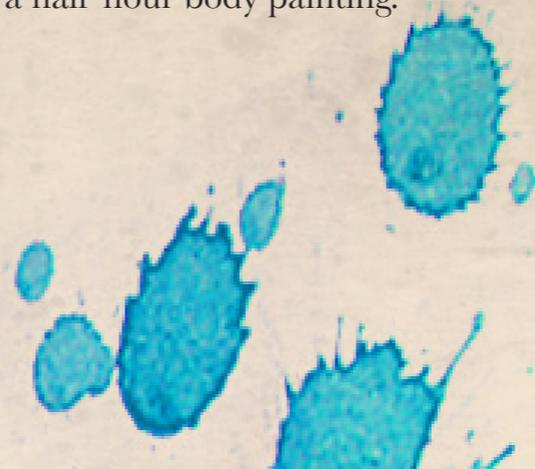
'Well, zombies are famous for being at abandoned shopping centers, but I've already painted a zombie, and it's been done a million times.'

Then it came to me...

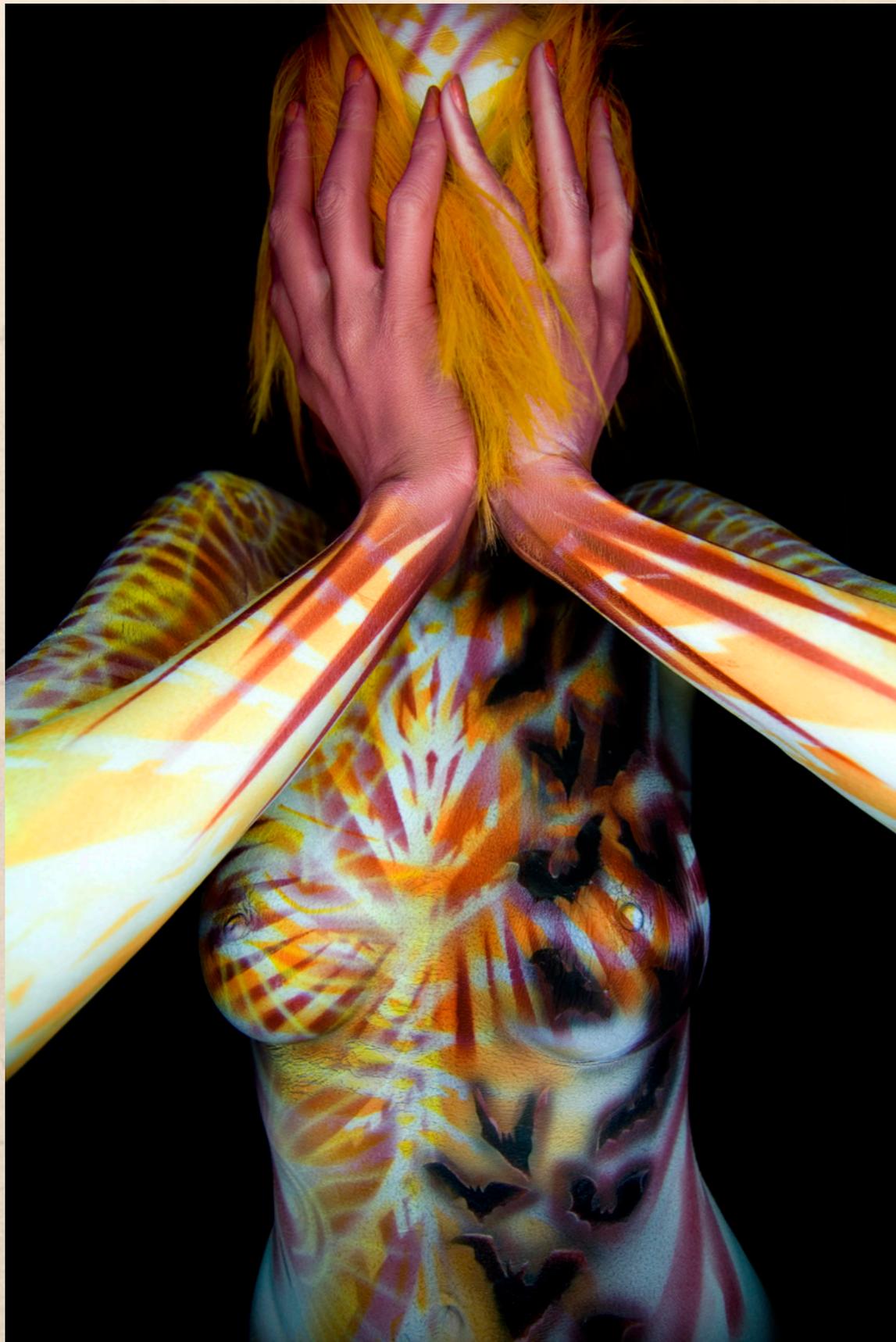
'The zombie should be Wonder Woman!'

So, with zestful excitement, I proceeded to figure out how I would achieve this in a matter of hours.

Here is the result of a one and a half hour body painting.



THANK YOU FOR READING



If you enjoyed reading *PRELUDE*, please download a copy of the
Diary of a Body Painter ebook

Alongside 80+ images, the diary contains over 25 written entries describing many more encounters with beautiful people of all forms via candid stories behind each experience.

Includes topics such as:

- Abandoned Locations
- Working with a Muse
- Painting a Playmate
- Guerilla Photography
- Sexual Tension
- Candid Photography
- Mother Nature
- And much more...

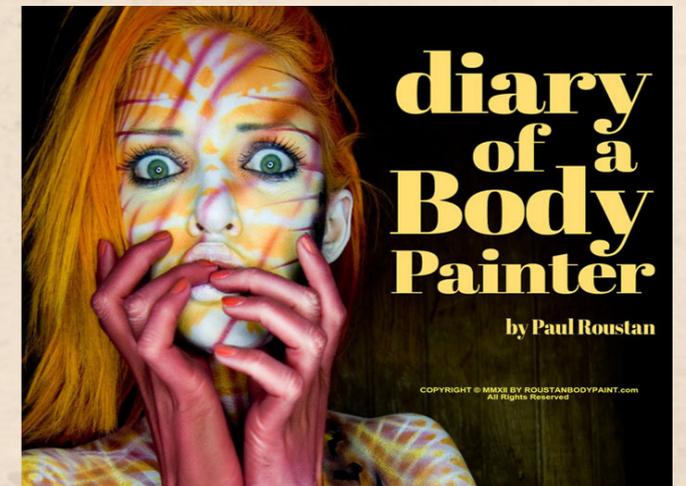


IMAGE CREDITS



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Valkyrie 2, model Tiana Hunter, photo ©2012 Roustan

Unicorn, model Scar, photo ©2011 Roustan

Rainbow Vomit series, model Scar, photos ©2012 Roustan

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Ripple, model Lee Hershey, photo ©2010 Roustan

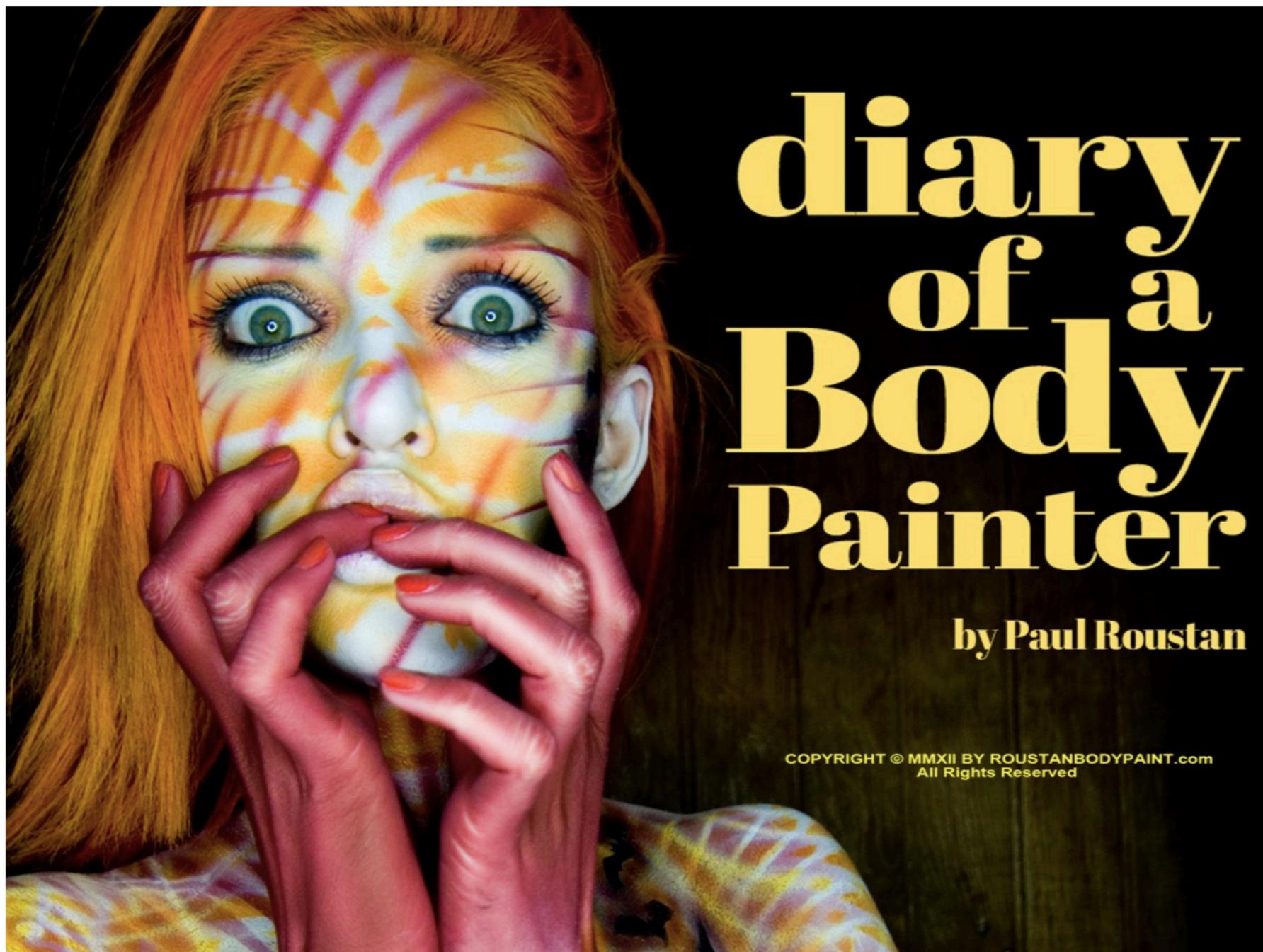
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