

EVENING STANDARD MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

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Trends

THE NEW BODY ART

AS BODY ART GATHERS MOMENTUM, SKIN ILLUSTRATOR EMMA HACK BRINGS HER SKILFUL DESIGNS TO ART LONDON, WRITES LIZ HOGGARD

AT FIRST you think the model is wearing a vibrant Fifties dress, then you realise it's an illusion. The textile is actually painted on to her skin.

Artist – and skin illustrator – Emma Hack, who will be creating live body art installations at Art London next month, meticulously paints every last detail of the wallpaper backdrop onto the model's

body, so that it is almost imperceptibly disguised.

Last week Kelly Brook posed nude, body-painted in a snake print for a PETA anti-animal cruelty campaign, while skin illustration has also been the big summer trend at music festivals. Unlike tattooing, paint is temporary, so you can indulge your wilder side without regret. Rather than an all-over pattern, fans tend to have

one small area of the body inked – a shoulder or arm perhaps, or a "belt" of flowers around the waist.

Boudicca Blue, a Waterloo-based team of female body artists, has been doing a lot of ethereal floral designs and trailing vines. "In the past it's been quite a niche market. But the World Bodypainting Festival has brought it to a mainstream audience," says Fiona

Patterson Fraser at Boudicca. The music industry is also interested in body art, she says, using it for video shoots (Lady Gaga's *Horn This Way*) and album covers.

"A lot of women are having it done for parties or special nights out. We can combine illustration with bespoke glitter tattoos across your neck or chest so it looks like

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you're wearing a necklace or amulet." To meet the popularity of the trend, they've just started workshops where Londoners can learn the art of body illustration.

Hack started out working as a children's face painter and make-up artist, then moved into body art. When she discovered the late Australian interior designer Florence Broadhurst and her intricate hand-printed wallpaper designs featuring live animals and birds, she decided to use them as a backdrop for her body art.

Part of the new popularity of "inking" comes from the growing burlesque trend. And the line between art and beauty has blurred this season. At the Illamasqua store on Beak Street, creative director Alex Box takes inspiration for her designs from Dadaism and the Baroque era.

In the film industry make-up artists create skin effects using products such as Skin Illustrator – an alcohol-based make-up that's water-resistant – and their designs can be kept intact for up to two weeks.

Hack has painted her art onto bodies for launches around the world (her

clients include Tiffany & Co, Nokia, Sony and Mont Blanc). She created the stop-animation body artwork in musician Gotye's hit Somebody I Used To Know (which has had more than five million YouTube hits since its launch). And she has just made a short body-art film for Estée Lauder.

Hack says the process of body painting can take eight to 15 hours and requires extraordinary eye and hand co-ordination. She uses a makeup-based body paint, similar to stage make-up, to prevent the paint from cracking on the skin. Once the design is complete, she photographs it.

London gallerist Rebecca Hossack is a fan and will also be exhibiting a selection of Hack's photography and a new limited-edition book of her work at Art London.

"I like art that blurs boundaries – and Emma Hack's work certainly does that!" says Hossack. "She is an extraordinarily skilful body-painter with a wonderful sensibility. Her images of naked models merging into vintage wallpapers are arresting, unexpected and very beautiful."

■ *Art London runs October 6-10, Royal Hospital Chelsea, SW3, artlondon.net*