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The Korea Herald > Entertainment > Arts



## [Herald Interview] Body painter Emma Hack creates illusion in camouflage body art

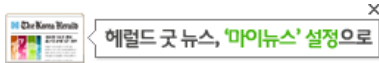
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Australian artist Emma Hack paints on a model's body until it perfectly aligns with the intricate, colorful patterns of the wallpaper behind the model.

In other work, she perfectly adjusts the contours of her models to match the detailed patterns of flowers and animals.

The artist's work -- captured in photographs -- have been exhibited in major cities around the world, including New York, Hong Kong and Singapore. She is holding her first solo exhibition in Korea at Savina Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul until Oct. 30.

Hack rose to international fame in 2011, when she collaborated with Belgian musician Gotye on his music video "Somebody That I Used to Know." The music video, which has amassed more than 803 million views, features Gotye body-painted by Hack to match the color block patterns of the background wall.

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- 1 '현금만2억5천' 70대노인 '수표도2억 있다..
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- 5 [속보] 빚, 정부에서 신용 상관없이 1억 ...
- 6 "빚갚지마" 최대8천만원 지원해줘.
- 7 "부업"으로 남편보다 300 더 버는 주부....
- 8 40대 유부녀 남편몰래 'OO'하다 걸려...
- 9 뽕뽕일으키기 하지만, 의사도 놀란 복근...
- 10 여교사, 생계위해 가족 몰래 밤마다.. "경...

- 1 탈모 "이것"하니 2주만에 새끼머개 딱차
- 2 [속보] 빚, 정부에서 신용 상관없이 1억 당일 지...
- 3 "수지 로렉스" 완판, 한정수량 재입고 주문폭주!!
- 4 "42억 벌었습니다" 주식고수 SNS인중 "후...
- 5 "비염,축농증" 끝내 치료법 밝혀져.. 업계발칩!
- 6 여배우 돌발 발언 논란 "주식 1억 한 번에...
- 7 40대 유부녀 남편몰래 'OO'하다 걸려...
- 8 만성비염, 코플랜 "위험" 하루한번 '이것'해야 ...
- 9 "빚갚지마" 최대8천만원 지원해줘.
- 10 잦은,방귀,가스,트림" 오래 못산다!? 충격!



"Vreeland's Cockatoo - Birds of a Feather" by Emma Hack (Savina Museum of Contemporary Art)

For the opening of her Seoul show, Hack conducted a seven-hour live performance during which she recreated a lotus painting by the 18th century Korean painter Kim Hong-do with a Korean contemporary dancer on July 22 at the museum.

"The painting I created with artist Kim Hong-do was an honor to recreate. The result was beautiful and my model was perfect as the lotus," the artist said in an email interview.

Former makeup artist Hack took her makeup skills to a new level when she won a body painting championship in 2001. Inspired by a German model and artist called Veruschka, who depicted herself body-painted against a series of rustic wall settings, Hack began painting on bodies based on wallpaper designs by the late Australian interior designer Florence Broadhurst.

"I love the oriental and Australian designs of Florence Broadhurst. I feel connected to this style of painting and find oriental mythology very interesting. I have traveled throughout Asia and love the motifs and designs," said Hack.

The Savina exhibition features a total of 49 photographs by Hack that represent major series by the artist from 2005 to 2010. In the "Wallpaper" series from 2005, Hack made her models stand out visually by leaving a few parts of their bodies unpainted, which had the effect of resembling fashion photos. She began to hide her models by completely blending them into the wallpaper backdrops in the following series.



Emma Hack draws on a model during a live performance that recreates a painting by the 18th-century genre painter Kim Hong-do on July 22 at Savina Museum of Contemporary Art. (Savina Museum of Contemporary Art)

In her "Birds of a Feather" series, the contours of her models are difficult to make out against the



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- 1 뿔뿔일으키기 하지마, 의사도 놀란 복근...
- 2 ★대명리조트 "만기환급형" 특별 분양!
- 3 LPG차량 "5년 렌탈" 후 공짜로 가져가세...
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- 6 ▶삼척 대명리조트 "만기환급형 회원권 ...
- 7 탈모 "이것"하니 2주만에 새가닥게 콕차
- 8 양화대교에 '꽃길에' 40억 뿌린 20대女...
- 9 잦은,방귀,가스,트림" 오래 못산다!?!충격!
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strong, bright flower-patterned backdrops. Upon closer inspection, the models can be seen holding exotic birds such as peacocks, cockatoos and crows.

Hack frequently features birds in her series as an environmental statement that emphasizes harmony between life and nature. In her 2009 "Native Mandala" series, she featured Australia's best-known animals, such as kangaroos, lizards and cockatoos, held by her models who are perfectly blended into the wallpaper.

Looking at the final images, it's hard to estimate how many hours have been put into the body camouflage painting they depict. But the work process is very labor-intensive, and requires the artist and the models to stand from eight to 15 hours. It takes a lot of patience for a model to stand still for many hours while the artist applies paint with brushes and checks to see that each brushstroke matches the wallpaper through the camera lens.



"Oriental Bouquet Cradled Finch - Utopia" by Emma Hack (Savina Museum of Contemporary Art)

"Fatigue from the models as well as myself and working with animals and birds always offers a challenge. I do enjoy challenging myself though, it's important for growth as an artist," she said.

Hack prefers to work with models she has worked with before, as they know what to expect from the long creative process. She has a few models in Australia she works with regularly.

"The first few hours pass then we break and chat. It helps to know the girls well. It's a good catchup and they are keen to do a great job for me, so it's never a boring time!" she said.

By Lee Woo-young (wylee@heraldcorp.com)

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