

Under the skin

Body artist Emma Hack looks beyond the human form for inspiration in her new show, reports PATRICK McDONALD.

HOW does a body artist move beyond the limitations of the human form? That was the challenge facing Adelaide painter Emma Hack after five years of exhibitions. Body art, by definition, would seem confined to the contortions and configurations of its only canvas: the human figure.

Hack – who won international acclaim and first prize at the UNESCO World Congress Professional World Body Painting Championship in Hong Kong in 2001 – has decided to stretch those boundaries.

Her latest exhibition, *body art.05*, seamlessly melds the male models with painted, wallpapered and computer-generated surrounds: a shift from more conventional body art in which people are painted as characters or other creatures.

"I wanted to take my artwork a step further," Hack says. "I built my career doing more commercialised pieces. These are more on an art-based level. I'm starting to find the human figure restrictive because it is the same shape all the time."

The idea behind doing the wallpaper images was that they did blend into the body.

Then, almost like a fashion designer, I wanted to sketch outside the body. "She is also looking at expanded."

ing the body itself. "I'd probably have to get into prosthesis next time." Where previous exhibitions have explored a single theme – such as food or flowers – this time Hack has worked with four different Adelaide photographers to create five distinct series of works.

"Even though the concepts are basically naive, I want the photographers to 'own' them in their own particular way. I chose particular photographers to shoot particular styles which would suit them," Hack says.

Her *Wallpaper* series drew inspiration from 1950s model Verushka, who was painted in camouflage against a rustic wall.

Working with fashion photographer David Solin, Hack chose 1950s wallpapers by late Sydney designer Florence Broadhurst – whose life is the subject of a forthcoming documentary by Gillian Armstrong – as a backdrop. "I prefer something slightly more kitsch."

Commercial photographer Jacqui Way added her own post-production computer touches to create the circular surrounds for the *Womb* series. "Jacqui and I working together are really girly – we are very feminine and that shows in the images," Hack says. "We just put the models inside per se so we could have the round shape – then she has manipulated pretty much everything in it."

Master of photography Adam Brizzoni captured the colour-glittered *Painted Nude* soloettes while Hack worked on the clay and feathers *Quill* series with art-based photographer Andrew Dunbar. The *Still Life* fruit series, also shot by Dunbar, is a natural progression from Hack's *Petals* exhibition.

After 10 years of professional revelation from a children's face painter and makeup artist to body art, Hack says she "has a preconceived idea before I step into the shoot".

A Polaroid photograph is then taken of the model posing, over which Hack sketches her design before applying the actual body paint: "Then we slowly take progressive images to get where we want." For this exhibition, she worked with just three Adelaide models: Emily Butler, Rebecca Lawrence and Tegan Rogers.

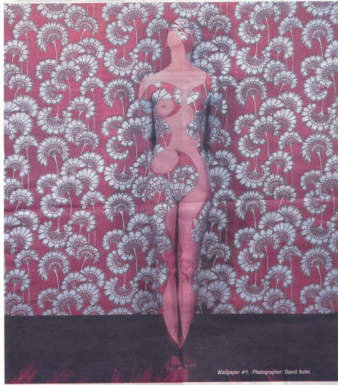
"The girls have also added their influence to each of the pieces." Later this year, Hack will travel to work with Belgian performers Micheline van Haften and Frederik Caelen in Europe and explore overseas opportunities.

Emma Hack's *body art.05* exhibition is at The Cat Cafe, Kent Town, from July 12 to August 27. Images will also be online at www.emmahack.com.au

Above: Emma Hack's *Womb #1* and *Womb #2*.
Photographer: Jacqui Way.

Right: Emma Hack paints model Emily Butler.
Picture: GARY NOWELL.

Still Life – Pomgranate.
Photographer: Andrew Dunbar.



Wallpaper #1. Photographer: David Solin.



From the *Quill* series. Photographer: Andrew Dunbar.



Still Life – Figs. Photographer: Andrew Dunbar.



Painted Nude #1. Photographer: Adam Brizzoni.