

Beauty is not only skin deep for Emma

An unusual artist will be showcasing her talent at Henley Festival this summer. **Caroline Cook** found out more

AT FIRST glance the canvas on the wall shows a bird of prey, staring out from an intricate wallpaper background.

But look a little closer and you'll notice the eyelashes on the model standing serenely behind.

The captivating wall hangings are the work of Australian skin artist Emma Hack, who spends between eight and 15 hours painting her models into their background.

"You look at it and see the bird straight away and then you realise it's standing on something and it's a person's arm," she says, speaking to **24Seven** from Australia.

"They are quite beautiful to have on your wall and you see all these small idiosyncrasies in the work."

Emma, who will be bringing her enchanting artwork to Henley Festival this summer, first became involved in skin art after face painting children when she was at school.

She said: "I was doing some



One of Emma Hack's stunning 'skin' paintings which will be at Henley Festival

Picture by Emma Hack

make-up artistry and my teacher saw my talent and said 'why don't you start painting down the body'.

"I was always interested in fashion and thought I would start painting clothing. It evolved from there."

Her earlier work, like 2004's Cabaret Collection, featured nude models painted into their clothes but her art has evolved to become more

illusionary with the Birds of Prey Collection in 2011 and her latest, Mirrored Whispers.

"There are some things I don't realise when I'm painting because I'm trying to do it quickly," says Emma. "When I hang it on my wall I just fall in love with them because of the little things happening in them that I didn't realise."

For each piece Emma paints her models' bodies, an art that requires them to stand still, sometimes painfully still, for hours on end. "The longest was the first one of the wallpapers, that took 19 hours," she says with her friendly Aussie twang.

"My models that I use are regulars that I have worked with before so they are kind of used to it and they

know there's going to be a lot of pain involved and standing still.

"But once you get on a roll it can go quite quickly.

"A lot of them will push through even when I know they're feeling a lot of pain. And being able to get that picture at the end; it's the most important bit for them to look peaceful and that's the hard thing.

"They are amazing people because I don't know if I could stand still for that long."

One of Emma's models was singer Wouter 'Wally' De Backer, better known as singer/songwriter Gotye who stayed at the top of the UK charts for six weeks with the single Somebody That I Used to Know.

In the video Gotye and singer Kimbra are painted in a series of patterns which evolve through animation.

"The director Natasha Pincus said she had this idea and I said I had been wanting to do that myself for ages," explains Emma. "She sent me Wally's music and I loved it.

"His voice is piercing and I thought I would really like to work with this guy. He's a sweetheart, very easy to work with. When you work with well-known people it can be difficult but he was very giving and let us do what we needed."

Visitors to Henley will be able to watch Emma at work with live skin painting demonstrations during the festival.

■ Henley Festival runs from Wednesday, July 4, to Sunday, July 8. Other performers include Sting, Lulu, Ollie Murs and Katherine Jenkins. For details visit www.henley-festival.co.uk.

How to dress like a duchess

One of Kate Middleton's favourite designers is launching her first bridal and evening dress collection for the high street. **Laura Herbert** found out how to dress for her big day

NO MATTER what the occasion, some women always want to look and feel glamorous.

The celebrity culture sees A-list celebrities and film stars pictured at Hollywood award ceremonies dressed in beautiful designer gowns – which, sadly, come with a designer price tag.

But now, Jenny Packham, designer to the stars including Berkshire's very own Kate Winslet, is giving us all the chance to dress like an A-lister thanks to her new collection, exclusively at Debenhams.

The high street store launched Jenny's 'No. 1 Jenny Packham' spring/summer 2012 collection last

month with a range of dresses, shoes, handbags, jewellery and accessories.

"I was very much inspired by the film noir as I get a lot of my inspiration from films," explains Jenny. "For Debenhams it was more feminine and glamorous. I felt it was time I could do a collaboration and it has been a really exciting challenge and to make it more commercial.

"We try to appeal to a broad range of people, from prom dresses and Ascot, to wedding parties and bridesmaids."

Jenny's high street collection offers a selection of summery floral prints to soft metallic floor-length dresses.

"I felt from a design point of view, I haven't held back and we have been able to achieve prints and textures we wanted to," Jenny explains.

Jenny has dressed many celebrities, most recently Angelina Jolie, and the Duchess of Cambridge, who is often pictured wearing a Jenny Packham creation. With the Duchess fast becoming a style icon and a champion of the high street, Jenny's collection is sure to be a hit.

"The most rewarding thing is that I can work with them on a one-to-one basis and make sure they feel fantastic and confident," Jenny says. "I always find that although people come from different cultures, women always want to aspire to something so when they walk into a room they feel confident and admired. When getting



married women want to feel that as they walk up the aisle."

As a bride-to-be, I couldn't resist the opportunity to pick Jenny's brains about the daunting task of choosing the perfect wedding dress. Like lots of women planning their big day, I spent several weekends trying on many, many wedding dresses before finding 'the one'.

"It is quite daunting," admits Jenny. "Every week I am sent bridal magazines and I open them and think 'wow, where would you start?'"

"I always say to girls to go with an open mind and pick out things you have never tried on because often people go with preconceived ideas and they are quite taken aback when they try something unusual on."

■ No. 1 Jenny Packham is available at Debenhams in The Oracle.

what's on

READING CULTURE AND SPORT
THE HEXAGON SOUTH STREET
CONCERT HALL
READING MUSEUM

ANDY ABRAHAM'S
HISTORY OF THE BIG BANDS
CONCERT HALL
THURSDAY 24 MAY, 7:30PM

BIKES, BALLS & BISCUITMEN
Reading Museum
Until Sun 28 Oct

A brand-new exhibition highlighting Reading's exciting sporting heritage.
FREE ADMISSION.

COMEDY CLUB
South Street
Fri 18 May, 8:30pm

South Street's regular comedy night returns with Marlon Davis, Iain Stirling plus special guest.
Adults Only

ALEX HORNE
South Street
Sat 26 May, 8pm

The ultimate sat-based fun-packed, thought provoking and sometimes stupid comedy show in which Alex aims to recreate your entire life.

SING-A-LONG A-GREASE
The Hexagon
Fri 18 May, 7:30pm

A sing along screening of the classic film. Brought to you by the producers of Sing a Long a Sound of Music.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
The Hexagon
Tues 22 - Sat 26 May

The Sainsbury Singers present a high-spirited musical romp that has all of New York dancing the Charleston.

THAT'LL BE THE DAY
The Hexagon
Thurs 31 May, 7:30pm

Prepare yourself for a party as the nations favourite rock 'n' roll variety show returns by popular demand with a Brand New Production.

WWW.READINGARTS.COM

BOX OFFICE 0118 960 6060