

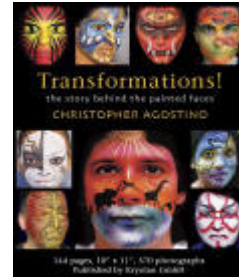
BOOK REVIEW:

***Transformations! The story behind the painted faces***

By Christopher Agostino

Published by Kryolan GmbH, 2006.

570 photographs, 144 pages, large format paperback.



In the first section of his book Christopher Agostino writes “This is a record of my personal journey from face to face and the inspirations that have guided me. I offer it as an encouragement to other facepainting artists on their own unique journey.” And that is exactly what this book is.

This is a fascinating book that in many ways is more a Master’s Thesis in Anthropology than a face painting manual. Christopher’s in-depth study of traditional, tribal and primitive art and face art is comprehensive. He covers everything from the Chauvet Cave Paintings to American Indian imagery to Chinese Opera make-up to African Tribal iconography. He explains how he researches and composes the bases of his designs with detailed explanations of how they were developed and on which culture they were based. He references extensively the work and studies of others; his bibliography cites no less that 47 different sources.

Christopher says that he makes his art performance and he spends a lot of the book explaining how he and his team work. He shows and explains how to do fast faces – a 90-second tiger is the example in the book. He also provides many paintings and stories to tell while painting them that would be excellent additions to any face painter’s repertoire to add extra entertainment and educational value.

I only counted two (or six, depending on you look at it) actual step-by-step examples of face designs. The rest of the images show how his designs progressed over the years, the application of tribal design elements and variations on themes. All of the photographs were taken over Christopher’s career of his work and that of his team of artists. The additional drawings and illustrations are wonderful additions to this colorful book.

Christopher’s explanations and illustration of his “Tribal Approach” are clear and understandable if should you have an interest in trying it out yourself.

***Transformations!*** is not a how to manual for a beginner face painter, but rather a master work of a unique and talented artist. This book is a great visual reference and I have found several very intriguing design ideas that I will be adapting to suit my own style of painting.

Christopher Agostino’s style is striking and will not appeal to the taste of everyone, but his book is a fascinating reference on the history and cultural aspect of face painting for anyone interested in the art form.

Reviewed by Shannon Fennell© December 2007