



Paintertainment

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Find Out Who **YOU** Are...and **BE IT!**

by Gretchen Fleener

I know I'm dating myself here, but when I began face painting, I had no computer, no smart phone (or cell phone for that matter), and no internet. There was no Facebook, no YouTube, no Instagram, no Twitter, no Blogger. Not to mention that I had to haul my paint gear uphill both ways in a foot of snow with no shoes to get to and from gigs. Okay, okay, that last one may be stretched a little. But, while today I am SO very thankful for the wealth of sharing and support we are able to draw from online, at the same time I feel for some of the new painters out there.

These days with social media, it is SO easy for new face painters to compare themselves to everyone else out there. One look at just one of the unending list of face painting Facebook groups can leave even the most talented artists feeling sub par. I see so many artists striving to be like this painter or that painter, advertising what big name painters they have "studied under" at conferences and workshops, etc.

Which brings me to this bit of advice I'd like to pass on to painters, new and veteran:

Try everything, strive to get better, but still: Find out who YOU are. Find your own style, your own niche, and strive to become the best you out there. Do you rock at cheek art? Then work it! Don't let those who are afraid of cheek art convince you that "real" face painters only do full faces. Aren't into the latest craze of stencils, one strokes, or big bling clusters? That's okay!! If you've tried something and determined that it's not for you, then you've added one point to the description of what makes your style your style. That's not to say you shouldn't try new things...but if you don't love a particular technique as much as your favorite famous super hero face painter, it's OKAY! Your artistic style is as much about the techniques you use as the art you create, and only you can make those decisions.

In this high tech world where we can solicit the opinions of hundreds of professionals worldwide with the click of a "post" button on Facebook, my advice to aspiring face painters is to actually TRY everything, at least once. Try pay per face...try hourly gigs. While taking my word for it may save you some headaches, you'll learn more if you try working for free, for tips, or for a reduced rate for charity. Work in the heat, and work in the cold. Try a word menu, and try a

"Today you are **You**, that is truer than true. There is **no one alive** who is **Youer** than **You**."

-Dr. Seuss

picture menu. Try out several different brands of paint. Try some outdoor gigs and indoor gigs. See what happens if you don't do contracts and deposits. (okay, that's another thing where you may prefer to learn from others' experience and avoid the nightmares!) Try out fairs, festivals, birthdays, adult parties, corporate gigs, and private sessions. Paint while sitting, paint while standing. Speed paint, slow paint, paint with friends and paint by yourself....

It's only by going through your own trial and error that, years down the road when another new face painter asks for advice, you can give them sound advice based on your own real world experience. There's just something about getting advice based on experience, vs "well so-and-so does it that way so I do too."

I know that I am in a minority in that I love to do cheek art just as much as full face. I also have had great success doing SOME, pay per face gigs. However, I am not insecure in my declarations that I am a cheek art pro and sometimes work PPF, because I am open to everything, don't knock anyone for doing or not doing this technique or that, and I strive to give

everything at least a try. I also LOVE to meet, work with, and support other face painters (aka "competition"), and especially love learning from others. I've made myself branch out over the years and try one strokes, stencils, bling, and powders...all awesome tools and techniques I never would have heard about if it weren't for my new social media network!

It took me many years to become comfortable with my own thing. I try not to narrow my focus so much that I am not growing, however...I now offer plenty of full face designs, do mostly hourly gigs, etc. However, I know what I'm good at and what I enjoy doing.

I don't like using sponges, so I do everything with brushes when possible. I prefer gigs close to home, and when I don't have to miss out on too much family time. (at least at this phase of my kids' lives). Yes, I turn down work on many weekends, and no, I don't care if I lose a gig because a client doesn't want to pay my rate! I don't ever put myself into a position where I will be overworked. My bids only include however many hours or artists are necessary to work at a comfortable pace. I've acquired a lot of brushes (because I like to try stuff) but do 90% of my work with 5 or 5 brushes.

I can say all of these things with confidence because I have tried it all, soaked up all the other professionals' opinions I could, and found what works for me. I won't look down on anyone who doesn't do things like I do, because they've found what works for THEM. And that alone makes us all better painters!

Now get out there and be YOU! Be inspired by others, be open to learning, but don't be defined through comparison to others. You have something unique to give that the world wants to see! 🌟



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