9-2016

Henna Tattoo Project

Kim Bernard
University of New England

Follow this and additional works at: http://dune.une.edu/air_kbernard

Part of the Art and Design Commons

Preferred Citation
http://dune.une.edu/air_kbernard/1

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Artist In Residence at DUNE: DigitalUNE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Artist in Residence: Kim Bernard by an authorized administrator of DUNE: DigitalUNE. For more information, please contact bkenyon@une.edu.
Henna Tattoo Project

During my first few days as Artist-in-Residence at the University of New England, I decided to kick off my semester with a Henna Tattoo Project to give me some quality one-on-one time with the student community. Little did I know how popular henna is with the college crowd.

Students arrived with some familiarity of the beautiful markings of henna tattoos, also known to some as Mehndi. I started off by explaining that this body art was developed in the Middle East and India where it is now used in preparation for celebrations like at weddings and religious holidays in many cultures.
My intentions with the project were to give students an opportunity to understand history, customs and traditions of another culture. As well as the botany, chemistry and biology of this natural dye. Since UNE has exceptional science departments, the students were able to teach me much about the science of henna. I encourage students to choose a design, symbol or imagery that would have meaning or significance to them personally.

I explained that henna is first grown as a flowering shrub before added to other elements and able to produce a dye.
Applied as a gooey substance, the henna mixture is made containing 1/4 cup henna, 1/4 cup lemon juice, 1 1/2 tsp sugar, 1 1/2 tsp essential oil with term.

The lemon juice acidity helps break up the henna leaves and also helps preserve the hydrogen atoms in the mixture. When the mixture is then exposed to oxygen it will darken the dye. The sugar acts as an essential oil that helps keep the henna sticking to the skin along with the added moisture. The henna will seep into the skin over time, which is why we allow it to dry and flake off on its own. Eucalyptus or lavender also aids in the process to temporarily dye the skin.
The darkness of the dye depends on many different factors. For example, some mixtures may have an increased level of dye content, as well as individuals' skin having an increased alkaline level making it darker or different parts of the body may absorb the dye better.

Pictures of all the tattoos have been posted to the UNE Libraries Facebook Page.
A small overview is below.
UNE A.I.R. Kim Bernard: Henna Tattoo Project

Fall 2016