



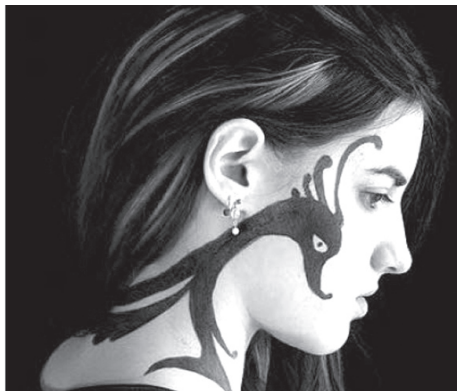
## Natural Body Art Comes to the Grand Strand

Local artist, Lael, works in Henna. An internationally certified henna artist, Lael recently moved to the Strand and plans to introduce the ancient art of Mehndi—the application of henna to the body to produce intricate and beautiful art—to the area. Mehndi resembles tattoo work and is long lasting but not permanent

The henna plant grows in hot, humid regions, and its flowers are used in some of the most expensive perfumes in the world. When mixed with various other natural ingredients, henna leaves create a reddish-brown dye with many uses. Henna traditions are ancient, perhaps more than 9,000 years old. Henna is mentioned by King Solomon in the Bible, and Buddha recommended that all women, including his mother, use henna. Cleopatra was known to have used henna extensively to enhance her beauty, and the mummy of Ramses II had henna-colored nails and was wrapped in cloth dyed with henna.

Pure natural henna has medicinal uses as well. It makes the skin stronger and more resistant to dryness. It is effective against ringworm and other fungal diseases, and because it is mildly anti-inflammatory, against psoriasis and eczema as well. Rural North African people still use henna twigs as tooth-picks to keep gums and teeth healthy. The art of henna application, referred to as Henna (Arabic) or Mehndi (Indian), famously adorns the hands and feet of Indian brides, but is not exclusive to the Indian culture. The art has roots in African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Pagan cultures as well, each having

embraced henna in its own unique way. Since designs created in henna are non-permanent, henna has been practiced in many cultures whose beliefs prohibit tattooing, and although Henna and Mehndi are used in some religious practices and customs, it is not sacred or religious in nature. Instead, Mehndi is celebratory, and generally considered auspicious to those who wear it.



Throughout time it has been associated with weddings, pregnancy, births, healing ceremonies and other special occasions.

Henna art has a long history yet remains fresh as it is rediscovered by new generations. Western culture has adopted and adapted Mehndi traditions, and it has become a popular trend among both men and women in the US. Non-traditional designs tend toward a mix of traditional and contemporary styles, and may include picture symbols, religious and spiritual ciphers or script from other cultures. Some choose designs purely for aesthetic rea-

sons, though many want designs with meaning and intent. Masculine designs are generally very simple and are more often applied to limbs and torso, whereas women more often adorn hands and feet. The potential variety in design and application is limitless.

However it is used, Henna art offers an opportunity to provide special moments for yourself and others, to share designs with your companion, for your eyes only, or as a celebratory Henna party with friends. Henna can even be used to try out a body design before committing to a permanent tattoo. The ancient history and traditions of Mehndi makes adorning your body with henna feel like walking in the footsteps of history.

Lael also uses other safe and natural media to create non-permanent face and body art. Zardosi, for example, uses glitter, gilt and colored cosmetics, and Harquus, a black facial ornamentation of North Africa and the Middle East, is also used in the motion picture industry to mimic tattoos. The patterns of Harquus, tattooing and Henna often mirror one another, and are often intended to be mutually enhancing. Lael also does face and body painting and “glitter tattoos.”

Pure Henna is considered safe for skin application, and reactions to it are rare. When 100 percent pure, henna stains skin a color between orange, red, burgundy, brown or coffee, and lasts about a week or so. Note an important exception and caution: “black henna” is never 100 percent henna, and is not safe. The black dye is commonly paraphenylenediamine (PPD), a synthetic coal tar dye, and can cause serious reactions and harm and should be avoided. While PPD is not the only ingredient used to make black henna (and other chemical dyes like it), none stains as fast or as black or lasts as long as PPD. If an artist tells you their “henna” will stain in an hour or two and last for more than a week, they may be using PPD, so beware. As a certified henna artist, Lael knows many ways to darken 100 percent henna that are completely safe and PPD free.

For more info, contact Lael at (843) 685-7331 or email [lunachik2@yahoo.com](mailto:lunachik2@yahoo.com).