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## Job Special: FX makeup: The art of illusion

by Manon Dumais (translated by Kevin Laforest) – August 25, 2011



Mario Soucy: "We're magicians, we create illusions"

*Do you dream of creating beauty, horror or fantasy? Why not go into special effects makeup?*

Even though he's a Genie Award winner (for *Karmina*) and has been nominated at the Prix Jutra (*Annie Brocoli dans les fonds marins*), Prix Gémeaux (*Le cœur a ses raisons*, season 1 and 2) and Emmy Awards (*The Kennedys*), Mario Soucy's name is not very well known by the public. The reason? Soucy is neither an actor nor a director. But you could say he's a magician. It was in 1992 that this autodidact, who works in film and television and for the stage (circus, fashion), launched MSFX Studio, specializing in special effects makeup, prosthetics, sculptures, etc.

And here's the good part: Since 2002, MSFX has also offered correspondence courses. "This is not a school per se," Mario Soucy explains. "It's distance education, but I'm available for technical support, to answer questions and to help students find jobs, because a lot of them don't know anyone in the industry."

Two basic courses are available, and a third one should follow soon. The first covers the creation of cuts and abrasions, burns and aging makeup; the second teaches students how to make moulds to create masks, creatures, objects and body parts. Any prerequisites for the courses? "Obviously, the artistic side is very important," says Soucy. "I'm often asked if one should know how to draw – it's not mandatory, but it helps a lot. You have to know that this is not an easy job, it demands a lot of practice and time. The key to success is determination. You have to be really motivated and self-reliant, and not let yourself be influenced."

The message is similar at Edith Serei Academy, which has been offering makeup courses since 1958. "Each student has to make his own path into the business," says Chantal Massad, the school's administrative assistant. "You have to be determined; word of mouth is often essential. What's motivating for students is that the complete program, which lasts a year, is given by teachers who are active in TV and cinema."

With computer-generated imagery becoming ever more widespread, should special effects makeup artists fear for their future? "Yes and no," says Mario Soucy. "CGI takes increasingly more space, but it's still lacking in realism. We want the wow factor and a good story. There are limits to what special effects makeup can do, and CGI can help then. Ultimately, we're magicians, we create illusions. Our first paycheque, really, is seeing the expression on people's faces when we make an illusion possible."

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