FACE OFF’s Brea Joseph was eliminated from the Syfy show for a makeup that was deemed not realistic enough. Ironically, as we found out in our interview with Joseph, realistic wounds are this artist’s bread and butter.

FANGORIA: Can you explain what your regular job is?

BREA JOSEPH: I own a company that supplies makeup artists to military, law enforcement and medical agencies for training. A lot of what we do is military; before the men and women go into actual combat, or get shipped out to Afghanistan, they go to training camps where they do simulated scenarios. They have role-players who speak the language, and villages set up to look like whatever town it is they’re going to, so that they’re not so shocked when they’re actually in live combat. We provide crazy medical injuries, broken bones, body parts and wounds.

FANG: So it has to look very realistic, is what you’re saying.

JOSEPH: Yes, or it won’t even be allowed on the field. We work with actual medics who see this stuff first-hand. They’re the ones who come to us and tell us what they need: “I need five people with so-and-so types of injuries…” We have to do those, and they send them into the field. So they have to look very realistic.

FANG: What’s your background, makeup-FX-wise?

JOSEPH: My background is basically doing trauma almost my entire career. I got into the acting part of it; I was acting and singing throughout my childhood. I was a role-player at one point, and I’d get the makeup done on me. And I just thought it was really cool, because I’m into art. I can draw, I’ve always painted, my mother’s a painter, my brother’s a painter. So when I got involved in that and saw the special effects makeup, and that it was something in the arts but something cool and different—that kind of got me right away. This is sort of a new little niche for special effects. It’s stuff that people don’t normally get to see, and it actually saves lives. That kind of turned me on to it, and I started my own thing, and it took off really big from there.

FANG: It’s always interesting to find out what the FACE OFF contestants do to make a living. It seems like a really diverse group this season.

JOSEPH: Yeah, that’s what’s cool about it. You get to see everybody’s palette—they even had tattoo artists and body painters. That’s what makes the show really neat. They have something for everybody in there to relate to.

FANG: You do FX in the context of realism and real-life experience. Are there also have makeup artists, or films, that influence you, or spur you to pursue film work?

JOSEPH: Yeah, there are all kinds of different things. Fantasy movies I saw growing up as a

kid—LABYRINTH, DARK CRYSTAL. Tom Savini, he’s an influence because he does gore. So I look up to him as a makeup artist. [FACE OFF judge] Ve Neill is another inspiration, just because she’s a female who has been so successful in the “man’s world” of effects makeup. I could go on and on.

FANG: Are you a fan of the horror, fantasy and sci-fi genres in general?

JOSEPH: Yeah. Sci-fi, of course, just because of the creativeness of it. Seeing the crazy things people can come up with. And gore, obviously, because that’s the world I’m in and what I do for a living.

FANG: Being a horror fan, all my friends think I’m a fan of books full of car-accident photos and footage of real surgeries. And I have to tell you, the real stuff makes me pass out. I can’t take it.

JOSEPH: [*Laughs*] So you get lots of books of medical photos for Christmas or something?

FANG: Yeah, I have friends who work at second-hand stores, and they’re always, “Here’s a book about surgery!” You’re doing the makeup version of it. Are you hardened to it in real life?

JOSEPH: This is going to sound crazy: I’m kind of numb to it now. When I’m in the field…you have to imagine. Imagine a war movie taking place in Afghanistan somewhere. Imagine the props, the look of it. That is what I sit in. So to me it’s like, I’ve been so desensitized and traumatized at the same time, because I’ll be in the field doing this. I’m right there when all the training is coming down. Me and my friends joke around. We’ll be in what we call the

“bloodhouse,” where we make all the body parts. We’ll be eating lunch, looking at pictures, trying to recreate body parts and wounds. I know, it sounds so weird. There are times where there will even be heads and body parts lying around [the house], and my mom’s like, “Brea, you cannot leave that stuff lying around the house. That’s not normal. Other people don’t find that normal” [*laughs*]. I have to tell myself that, too, at times.

FANG: You have kids, yes?

JOSEPH: Yes, I have a daughter. She just turned 2. She’s my little handful, but I love her to death.

FANG: So she’s going to grow up with all this stuff around her. Not just horror movies, which of course FANGORIA advocates, but super-realistic trauma FX. Are you concerned about that?

JOSEPH: No! She’s actually really creative. She’s the “Z” in my company, KBZ FX . She’s always back there with us, painting the stuff. I know that sounds crazy. She calls it “painting owies.” “Mommy, I’m painting owies with you?” We put her with clay sometimes, and give her a little plate, and she’ll sit there and do what she thinks is sculpting and painting.

FANG: If she’s 2 now, she must have been really tiny when you left to shoot FACE OFF. That must have been a hard decision to make.

JOSEPH: It was, but I knew at the same time it was a good opportunity for us. It was a good opportunity for me to further my career. Of course it was hard, and I missed her. But it was for the best. It was a cool opportunity, and she was well-taken care of. I knew it would be OK.

FANG: What was the toughest part of being on the show?

JOSEPH: The time. The pressure to come up with something, start sculpting, get it done and have it movie-ready given that time—and knowing the world is watching you, to be honest.

Knowing that things you say, or things you do, are going to be analyzed, and some people are going to like you and some people aren’t…figuring out that you are going to be broadcast to millions of people to analyze you as a person.

FANG: Let’s talk about when your model got sick during the “Rock Your Body” body-painting challenge. You must have been exhausted by the time you finished painting a second person.

JOSEPH: Oh gosh, yes. And we even had to wait for the next model to get there, and the stress of being up from the night before—it was just too much. And I know it came across maybe that I was more concerned about my painting. But I swear I was very concerned about the model. He was fine, he ended up being OK. I think he had a gig or something the night before, so he hadn’t really slept at all. So I think that, combined with standing…I don’t know, he passed out [*laughs*]. Hey, I guess it makes for great TV, right?

FANG: When he went down and they took him away, were you involved in heavy discussions with the producers about what was going to happen? Or did they just come in and tell you what the solution was?

JOSEPH: They didn’t know what to do, really, to make it fair. They didn’t come right in, so that was stressing me out a little, because I didn’t know what was going to go down. Then I guess they came up with that eventually. “You’re going to have to paint it again.” But you know what? I’m kind of glad, because it pushed me. It’s a show, it’s a competition, and hey, this is a part of it. This could happen. And it made me stronger, and now I know I can do a body-paint in 12 hours. My first body-paint ever, mind you. So that was kind of cool.

FANG: And the judges liked it, as I recall.

JOSEPH: They totally did. And it looked awesome. I was really proud of what Matt [Valentine] and I did.

[redacted]