



UNDERCOVER DISGUISE METHODS FOR INVESTIGATORS



*Quick-Change Techniques for Both
Men and Women*



Arabella Mazzuki • Raymond Siljander • Simon Mitchell

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By

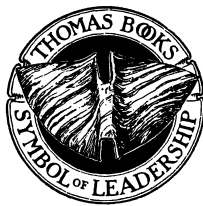
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With Contributions by

Wes and Diana Branton

With a Foreword by

Diana Branton



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*To the memory of my loving father
A.M.*

*To the memory of Benjamin F. Knudson, Lt. Colonel
United States Air Force Office of Special Investigations
R.S.*

*To my loving wife Sarah and her friends who assisted with the
writing of this book
S.M.*

FOREWORD

On Valentine's Day of 2012, two average-looking, middle-aged Caucasian men with neatly trimmed goatees and sunglasses walked into a check-cashing establishment in Queens, New York and identified themselves as detectives. Their dark blue jackets bore the department logo along with the typical bold letters declaring "NYPD" and around their necks dangled detective badges, strung from a lanyard. Edward Byam and Akeem Monsalvatge were not cops, however, and after threatening one of the clerks at gunpoint, using pictures of her home to ensure compliance, they quickly made off with \$200,000 in cash.

At first sight, this story seems to be a typical armed robbery. However, the devil is in the details: Not only were the two perpetrators not policemen, they were not Caucasian. In addition to their uniforms, the two men wore hyper-realistic, Hollywood-style silicone masks that disguised their apparent age and race. It took a considerable amount of time for the authorities to figure out that they were wearing masks, and once that had been established, more valuable time was lost before it emerged that their white suspects were actually African American. Through an anonymous tip, they were able to trace the masks back to the mask makers . . . us. That's when we got a call from the FBI.

It was sobering, to say the least, to learn how our product had been misused. We make silicone masks primarily for film, television, theater and attractions. We did not anticipate adding criminals to the list. Fortunately, due to the custom nature of our product, one look at the photo was all it took to trace the purchase back to Edward Byam. While gathering the data and emails for the FBI, we even uncovered a thank-you-email/testimonial from Byam: "I'm sending this message to say I'm extremely pleased by CFX' work on the mask. The realism is unbelievable." In retrospect, he should have signed it "Exhibit A." They were tried and convicted in August 2013.

It bears mentioning that in a world where information is available at the speed of thought, innovative disguise technologies such as silicone masks,

which were once relegated to the unattainable world of Hollywood spy movies, are now a reality that is accessible to anyone, anywhere. One quick Google search will demonstrate that this armed robbery wasn't the first time advanced Hollywood techniques have been used and abused by criminals. Clearly, the bad guys are incorporating it into their strategy, which means that law enforcement should be incorporating it into theirs. Whether or not you choose to employ disguise in your work, let this story be a cautionary tale on the importance of remaining educated to the many possibilities that continue to emerge as advancements are made. The brave men and women charged with protecting our nation's borders and defending the streets need to be reconditioned to expect the unexpected in a world where magic is seemingly real. Anything achievable on a movie set can feasibly be achieved in the real world by anyone ambitious and motivated enough to seek it out.

It's in our human nature to fall victim to the "human buffer overflow," which is what happens when the agreed-upon, accepted reality reveals itself to be the spurious opposite; such was the case with the above race-bending police-impersonators. When we see an elderly man walking down the street, we don't entertain the possibility that he may be a young woman in disguise, do we? Our minds are not prepared to consider a discrepancy of that magnitude to be a possibility in everyday life, so when it happens, if it happens, our brains choose not to see it at all. If on the lookout for a 22-year-old Caucasian male with a Mohawk and neck tattoos, how often would you scrutinize anyone outside of that description? A more relevant question might be: Guess how many Caucasian masks have been made recently with a Mohawk and neck tattoos.

We will never truly expect such trickery to be lurking around every corner. Being suspicious and doubting the validity of every gender or race we pass on the street would lead to madness at the very least, so our sanity-preservation mechanism prevents us from entering that rabbit hole. We simply "don't go there." Exploiting the knowledge of this human vulnerability is precisely what makes a well-executed disguise such a powerful tool when combined with appropriate psychology and cunning. It enables one deceptive, pretexted reality to pass effortlessly in front of our eyes, misdirecting our attention, while another reality slips quietly past, with no one the wiser.

As special effects artists and mask makers, we make new faces every day for people to wear in place of their own, whether they're in the form of monsters, animals, or humans, young or old. We've made a living out of creating fiction and passing it off as reality, blurring and crossing lines in a seemingly careless violation of nature every time we step foot on set, but even we know that our work is only as good as its delivery—costume is only half the battle. It's not enough to simply look the part; you have to mentally transform and become the role. Byam and Monsalvatge knew this. Their disguise was not the

cause of their undoing. Fortunately, for law enforcement, the masked duo were not expert strategists. They left a paper trail a mile long.

Truth be told, there is little difference between the actor on set and the agent in disguise. Success of execution resides squarely on the performer's ability to bring the character to life. Of course, with an actor, success or failure will make or break a career. In law enforcement, the stakes are infinitely higher, one misstep can potentially cost a life.

The road to master of disguise is a difficult and exciting one, fraught with equal parts danger and intrigue, but fortunately, you don't have to go it alone. The book you now hold in your hands will serve as a roadmap through the disguise terrain. Novices and masters alike will find in these pages invaluable wisdom, advice, and guidance previously unavailable in such a concise format. The authors have removed the mystery and made short work of carving out a path for anyone looking to hone their craft in the art of disguise, ensuring success for all who are daring enough to pursue this road less traveled.

Diana Branton
Composite Effects/CFX
April 2015

Wes and Diana Branton are both lifelong sculptors and between them have 18+ years of experience as Hollywood Special Effects (F/X) veterans known primarily for their work at Composite Effects/CFX, the Baton Rouge-based global leader in silicone mask production, of which Wes is a co-owner and Diana is the Creative Director. Their work can be seen in productions such as *CSI: Miami*, *2 Guns*, *Smothered*, *Wolverine*, *Search Party*, *Breaking Dawn*, *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter*, and *Universal Soldier*, among many others. Together they have driven CFX' innovative brand of hyper-realistic human and fantasy masks into the spotlight by securing licensing partnerships with highly sought-after entities such as Marvel™, HBO's *Game of Thrones*™, & Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*™. Diana is a regular speaker at technology conferences and Film Festivals internationally and has appeared as a guest on *Inside Edition*, *Spike's All Access*, *TimeWarp Japan* and *The Playboy Morning Show*, and both she and Wes have been quoted in national publications such as *Makeup Artist Magazine*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Daily Mail UK*, *Huffington Post* and *Action Figure Insider*. They have recently focused their efforts on instructing dedicated investigators & agents in the fields of law enforcement and intelligence in the art of clandestine and quick-change disguise.

PREFACE

Recent years have seen unprecedented technology advancements. However, investigation and intelligence agencies still need field personnel; they need feet on the ground. To be effective, investigators and clandestine service persons need strong tradecraft skills that include the ability to disguise themselves.

This book presents undercover disguise methods that came into focus in the clandestine services of World War II, evolved during the Cold War, and today features modern innovations. Here the reader discovers the latest disguise technologies, traditional and innovative methods not taught by police academies or included in college law enforcement and criminal justice curriculums.

Customary purposes for disguise include avoiding recognition, support a pretext character and the corresponding undercover operation, prevent somebody accurately describing the agent, and to thwart physical surveillance. Naturally, some disguises are quicker to implement than others and some are more believable. Some disguises withstand prolonged close-up scrutiny, whereas others are suitable only when viewed briefly or from afar.

Disguise is as much about behavioral science, social psychology, people's perception, and dramatic acting as it is about looking different. A disguise creates the look, but only a quality performance can bring the character to life and make it believable; appearing different tricks the eye—performance deceives the mind. Changing clothes, applying facial makeup, and putting on a wig and eyeglasses changes a woman's appearance and that tricks the eye. Changing apparent social station deceives the mind. Appropriate attire, accessories, and deportment can make a woman look like a medical doctor or a factory worker. Likewise, a man can look like a tradesman or a suit-and-tie professional. This book addresses these issues.

Without special training, field agents can apply many of the disguise methods presented in this well-illustrated book, which features an international

flavor by virtue of the authors representing the United Kingdom and the United States.

A.M.

R.S.

S.M.

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 - Silicone prosthetic fabrication/casting—Diana Branton
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DISCLAIMER

The authors and publisher assume no responsibility for a reader's misuse of or unsatisfactory experience with any products and methods discussed in this book. Readers must conduct themselves according to circumstances, follow product manufacturer instructions, and they must exercise the maturity, intelligence, intellectual acumen, and generally good sense that are prerequisite to being a competent investigator or intelligence agent. They must think with clarity and wisdom. Readers lacking such qualities should not experiment with or attempt to apply the disguise methods discussed in this book.

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Each is the same individual.
Images courtesy of Wes and Diana Branton of CFX.

Chapter 1

HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF UNDERCOVER DISGUISE

All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you, they will kill you. But first they must catch you, digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed.

Richard Adams, *Watership Down* (1972, p. 37)

INTRODUCTION

Undercover disguise is as much about behavioral science, social psychology, people's perception, and dramatic acting as it is about looking different.

Undercover disguise goes far beyond wearable performance art—skilled acting is required. This is true whether a disguise sustains a two-minute undercover drug buy or a six-month-long industrial undercover investigation. Indeed, to succeed, a disguise must trick both the eye and the mind; disguise must impair observer cognition.

Recent years have seen unprecedented technology advancements. However, investigation and intelligence agencies still need field personnel; they need feet on the ground. To be proficient, investigators and clandestine service persons, collectively referred to in this book as agents, need strong tradecraft skills that include the ability to disguise themselves. Once in disguise, agents have entered the realm of the

performing arts. They are actors with the only issues being their audience, purpose, and duration.

This book presents undercover disguise methods that came into focus in the clandestine services of World War II (1939–1945), evolved during the subsequent Cold War (1945–1991), and today features modern innovations. Here the reader discovers the latest disguise technologies, traditional and innovative methods not taught by police academies or included in college law enforcement and criminal justice curriculums.

An undercover disguise is a veneer, a superficial appearance. The veneer creates the look, but only a quality performance can bring the character to life and make it believable. Indeed, disguise is as much about behavioral science, social psychology, human perception, and dramatic acting as it is about looking different. In all respects, disguise must impair observer cognition. Furthermore, familiarity with the clandestine arts is essential. Antonio Mendez (1999, p. 120), explains that, “Successful deception involving disguise was as much a matter of planning, demeanor, and attitude as of visual appearance.” Christopher Reeves (2014, n.p.) explains that, “Acting is being, and one of the greatest challenges facing any actor is producing realistic, non-self-conscious behavior on cue while being observed by an audience.”

Agents who need to look like a different person must, to a reasonable extent, be a cosmetologist, special effects makeup artist, wardrobe/costuming specialist, actor, behavioral scientist, social psychologist, and so on. They create a pretext character and then become that fictional personality, a task that requires understanding themselves, the subject, and the operational objectives. In all instances, an impeccable performance is required because they work in a world that is unscripted, unpredictable, unforgiving, and often dangerous.

Readers who feel the information provided here is too cloak-and-dagger must dismiss that notion because clandestine tradecraft methods exist for a reason. Mediocre agents produce a substandard work product and, worse, they are vulnerable to adversaries, some of whom are highly skilled, tenacious, and dangerous. Both circumstances should provide the incentive to be as accomplished as possible.