

To each human I have had the privilege of connecting with this past year,

Thank you so much for giving me a little glimpse into the way you perceive beauty in our world, and how you see yourself as beautiful. Each one of these Beauty Statements hold a sense of enchantment and a sense of expression that each of you shared so graciously. Through this collaboration we've created a human telephone, a spider web effect. You had your experience, you shared it with me creating another experience. You've MOVED me. You've TOUCHED me. You've INSPIRED me. YOU truly have helped me transform my insecurities and fears into my magical powers, for this I am forever grateful.

The Deep Fiery, Burning Passion

It was 2007, I was 13 in 7th grade, we took a course on careers. I decided I was to be a hairstylist.

It was 2009, I was 15 a freshman. A girl in small town that liked girls and boys -- humans. Mean words, confusion. Lost, insecure, wanting to disappear and vanish.
?

It was 2011, I was 16 a junior. I took an english class where the first semester was about exploring ourselves, our experience in life and the second semester was about taking all of that and creating something beautiful to give back to the world.

It was 2012, I was 18 I started beauty school to follow my 13 year old declaration. Quickly I was dumbfounded with the drama and superficial-ness of the industry... Grasping out in front of me, "But-but-but I just wanna do hair!"

It was 2015, I was 21. I thought, "What the hell is this industry that I am a part of?" I needed a break. Do I really want to be a part of this mass execution of self-worth?

Fast forward a few months, I was sitting in the sunshine stretching my dancing legs and I had a thought... What if I created something to combine the holistic approach of beauty and the visual/ physical self-expression blending the inner and outer beauty? It was in that moment The Beauty Project was born!

Fast forward

In March 2017, I was 23. I signed myself up for Momentum, an artist immersion and transformational growth program in Santa Cruz, California, with the intention to really dive into a deep fiery, burning passion I've had for a couple of years, The Beauty Project.

I had so many ideas of what I wanted and could do with this project -- combining all of the things that I love to do -- art, dance, hairstyling, talking, self-expression, self-love, self-care and self-worth, while wanting to blend inner and outer beauty because, I feel, that they are not separate -- they go hand and hand.

I had wanted to do this project for a couple of years, but my self doubt, feelings of uncertainty, self-hatred, and unworthiness held me back and weakened my power. I didn't feel like I could actually do it, for I had tried before, didn't completely follow through and failed by giving up. I knew in my heart that this project was going to be one of my contributions to our planet, yet it felt too large for little ol' me.

My own stories of not being good enough were keeping me from stepping into this. I felt deep inside my heart all of the possibilities and all the directions that I could go with this and yet, in this, there was still a massive piece of confusion, a place where I was stuck. I felt that even though I was calling it "The Beauty Project," I didn't even understand what beauty was, I knew what I *thought* it was because of what I have been told. But I didn't really *get* what it was.

How was I going to arrive where I wanted to go when I didn't even know what beauty was? How was I going to do all that was imaginable and even more when I had ZERO experience with facilitating any of this. Well, I thought, I have this incredible support and accountability program locally and I can start talking to people, and I can start talking to people. I'm good at that. I knew I could talk to people to see where they stand with their understanding of beauty, self-love, self-care and self-worth. I would take take one step at a time, one conversation at a time, one interaction at a time. I chose to make that very question itself my actual project. I then embarked on a journey that would profoundly impact the quality of my life that I am living.

My goal for the year: to interview fifty people about what beauty is to them, what it's like to be in their body, and how their relationship with beauty has changed or evolved over time. Then have them create a beauty statement: "Beauty to me is..." and "I am beautiful because..." and to take their photo. So, I did exactly that. This book is fifty people I interviewed and had declare what beauty is to them..

*

In the beginning, I felt pounding in my heart -- I was *finally* doing it. "It" being: exploring the blend of inner and outer beauty. "It" being: exploring this deep fiery, burning passion inside me. I, Jillian, and all that I am, was going along for a year long ride into the unknown! I started small. I started interviewing the people in my

Momentum program and my friends that I knew would “get it”. I remember my first interviews being highly structured. I was literally just reading the questions off of the page. I was nervous and unsure of what I was doing, but those who chose to be involved were incredibly patient and kind through all of the questions. The next few interviews felt about the same. The next twenty were a bit easier, one question at a time, one kind, loving, generous person at a time, allowing me to get inside their being about a topic that was intriguing and puzzling to me.

I was shifting into and starting to embody this project and program. Soon, I needed to change my place of employment to be more aligned with all that I was learning and becoming. To my surprise, this new salon extremely synergistic with The Beauty Project and Momentum, integrity, kindness, striving, thriving in and standing for inner and outer beauty. All of it was aligned, and I was literally living my dream. Working in my dream salon, dancing every day, living by the ocean, and exploring The Beauty Project. It was astonishing, I couldn’t believe it. I literally could not believe it. How was this *my* life? How did I deserve this? Something was still wrong and I began to feel emotionally exhausted. I was still resisting something and my self-doubt was beginning to really drain me. Soon, I didn’t feel like I was in a good place in my own life to be having these interview conversations. What about *my* self-love? What about *my* self-care? What about my own beauty? I remember walking away from these interviews, unfulfilled, frustrated and disappointed with myself.

I was feeling devastated and took a few weeks off from the interviews. I was up against something, myself. I was in a battle with my Self. Yes, I was learning about beauty and other’s experiences, and it really *was* enriching. But with all of what everyone else was saying, it really made me look at myself, like really *look* at myself. Who I was being and what was I standing for? Where was the deep, fiery burning passion? I was really uncertain about myself and who I was with this project.

It was during this time when I learned that *I am* The Beauty Project. I learned that this project is not only about learning what beauty is and what it’s like for other’s, but it’s actually me, I am the project. I was learning about myself. Wow! I am The Beauty Project, and I can explore it and define it in any way that I wish to! Talk about a transformational growth program! This was a profound realization.

I set to work on the next set of interviews. 25 through 30. They were mind-blowing and jaw dropping. I felt like I was in such a whole, raw, breathtaking place. I felt like I was beginning to hold this interview container really well. I was

asking the questions when they felt in flow of the conversation rather than in the order they were on my paper. I began asking questions that weren't even on my paper, just genuine questions that I felt inspired to ask in the moment, questions that I had never thought to ask before.

*

Before I could even sit down, breathe, and take all of this in, it was time to for the Mid-Year Showing, where each of us in the program was to stand up and talk about what we have been up to, what our project is, and possibly get more people involved. I had no idea what I was going to share in front of 120 eyeballs staring at me. However, one night at midnight, for some trivial reason, I felt pissed off and angry about the beauty industry. I felt the injustice and imbalance of our culture. Through this, I transformed my anger back into that deep, fiery burning passion and I wrote a Word Dance called "The Damage That Has Been Done."

In short, this was the piece I was to share at the showing. This experience of standing in front of sixty people using a microphone was terrifying. All day long I thought I was going to vomit. I thought I that I was going to mess up in some way. My body did not feel good. I had never spoken in front of a large group of people with a microphone. I had never spoken into a microphone. Somehow, my deep fiery, burning passion transcended all of it, and I did it. I didn't mess up. I spoke my truth. Through this boldness, I began to find a new channel for my deep fiery burning passion, self-expression and freedom through my voice!

Because of the mid year showing I had ten more people sign up to be participants, I hit 35 then 40. It was extraordinary, but I was quickly reminded that this whole thing is a roller-coaster ride. I went through another low point, and I had to reach out to get some acknowledgment, to ask for help. I needed love, my project needed love. I remember my disempowering stories flooding back in. "It doesn't matter." "It's not going to actually make a difference." "I'm too small." "Who was I to think I could actually do this?" "This isn't going to make a positive impact." "I'm just wasting my time and everyone else's time." The black, downward spiral of quick-sand sucking my being in.

Somehow, somehow, the support and foundation that I had, pulled me out of the darkness, to say, "NO," to all of that because I was determined to hit my fifty interviews and explore this project through and through. The last quarter of the Momentum year, magic happened. Fire and intensity whirled about. I hit fifty interviews, started attending and participating at Word Church, and I facilitated *The Beauty Project Gathering: Embracing Cause and Effect*, where twenty

people came, talked about cause and effect and watched the documentary *Embrace*. We explored modern images and truths of female beauty, and did some deep sharing. My first shot into group facilitation was scary and rewarding, and I look forward to bringing these skills out into the world. And in result of all of this fun, this book is the gift of fifty people I interviewed and asked to declare what beauty is to them as a self-expression!

*

After fifty hour-long interviews talking to my friends, community and family about this topic, my brain was fried and almost in a state of shock. That's fifty hours of talking about beauty. A little more than two days, it was 3,000 minutes, that's 180,000 seconds of presence on this one topic. Every moment choosing to be present each human being in front of me. Paying attention, holding space for what they were so graciously sharing with me because I had a dream for my project. What an honor that each person wanted to be a part of helping me!

So, what did I gain this year? I got a whole lot more than just question answered... My being was broken open - split so wide open the growing pains in my chest must be leaving stretch marks on my heart. I stepped into a sense of my being I thought I would only ever dream of. I have gained the ability to interview, to question, to listen without interjection, to listen without needing to reply or to relate in any way, to fully hear this human being in front of me. I have gained a deeper sense that beauty really is all around us. I've gained starting the process of overcoming my fear of 200 eyeballs looking at me while I use words, my voice as a self-expression. I have gained a deeper understanding of over fifty people's perspectives and experiences. I've gained more empathy and compassion for humans. I've learned about how deeply I fall in love with each person that I meet. I learned about falling in love with myself, every single day over and over and over again, and meeting myself where I am at in each day and each moment. Then I do my best to apply that to my relationships. I gained a more direct, vulnerable, raw and real way to communicate what my Self needs and to express it through using my voice. And this itself is priceless.

In conclusion, the power and the meaning of "beauty" was diminished for me. Because of it's over-use and misuse of it in our language, it stopped being descriptive. There are so many other powerful ways to express and convey that something is beautiful. Yet through this process and project I have chosen to restore it's meaning for myself. Most importantly I've gained that I do not even need to have the answer to my question. Beauty does not need to be explained, defined or even understood...

Thank you for continuously choosing to share your beauty with our world...

*