

THE GENIUS BEHIND TRUELUCIA

BY KATIE HOPEWELL

If you're connected at all with the creative or fashion communities in Charleston, you've likely been made aware of the new brick-and-mortar store on John St., known for its extraordinarily colorful and unique apparel products. From upcycled clothes which gracefully don abstract face vector drawings to butterfly-shaped hair clips, TrueLucia brings a refreshing vibrance to the downtown shopping scene, while also highlighting the works of local artists and creative vendors. But the physical store does not account for over half of the magic that accompanies this brand; the person behind this operation fills in those gaps with her story of bumpy beginnings turned into brand success, all fueled by an altruistic intent to make art a universal aspect of everyday life.

Gianna Lucia, founder of TrueLucia, was only 14-years-old when

she began working in Los Angeles; at the time, she was helping a family friend with their bakery, making rugelach for 60 hours a week and at \$15 an hour. Embracing her entrepreneurial spirit by the age of 15, she started her own bikini line whilst living in Florida. Lucia produced hand-sewn bikinis completely by herself and sold them to a relatively small audience. She had always known that she would make it as a creative, but was unsure of how she'd get there; this meant that no medium was off the table to her when it came to creating.

She was only 17 when she made the solo move from Los Angeles to New York City; this was a decision that was not well-received by her family members, who thusly left her to fend for herself in the Big Apple. It was that first job at 14, however, that helped her

take that leap in a fiscally safe way. “I saved enough money by the time I was 17 to live in New York City for an entire year without needing to get a job. I was lucky enough to get a job as soon as I arrived, so I never even had to touch those savings” Lucia notes.

Being cut off by her family, however, did impact her college ambitions. Despite not being able to attend college, she does assert that “being in New York City alone at 17, I was so eager to learn that I felt I no longer needed college to succeed. Everything I’m doing right now? I’m winging all of it. I see what works for me and what doesn’t. I just watched a lot of Youtube videos and I’ve read tons of books on art just to see how people do things.” The idea of “just winging it” might be a horrifying concept to those who are risk averse in their own endeavors, but it’s that attitude exactly that has landed Lucia where she is now. After moving, Gianna began by finding success in small ways, which quickly compounded, “I

started hand painting clothes and was selling them at group art shows, and in the park and subway. I was doing the full-on NYC hustle—and I loved it,” she recalls. That upward momentum was cut off fairly shortly after it began, Lucia notes: “COVID shut everything down. Galleries closed so I couldn’t attend group art shows and we couldn’t go outside.”

Rather than allowing a global aversion to nonessential items hinder her drive, she looked for other routes to continue her work. “I just started painting on denim and it kind of took off,” she notes, and her consequent move to Charleston from NYC only served to her and her work’s benefit. Lucia explains that after coming to Charleston, “I started selling at markets here and people fell in love with my stuff almost immediately. It’s been, like, seven months since then and I already have a store, which is just insane to me.”

When asked what sets her apart from other stores in Charles-

ton, she asserts that: “I’m not afraid to do something different. I love Charleston’s token style, but I don’t fit in with it. I don’t want my stuff to be liked by everyone—I want people to see it and take double takes when they do, whether [those double takes] are good or bad. Because they’re still looking at my stuff.” It’s hard to perceive anyone giving her work a look of distaste, however; the altruism behind her creations instill so much life into clothing that almost anyone could find value in it.

Gianna Lucia’s story is one of hardships overcome and encouragement to struggling creatives, “Just go for it,” she urges to other entrepreneurial creators. “I used to be so scared of sharing my art with the world—I would be petrified if I found out some-

one didn’t like my work. Now I don’t give a f*ck. But I feel like that’s what is making my brand grow because I’m just doing what I like. No one else has to like your stuff—just you.”

Although she’s already achieved a level of success that she never really imagined for herself, Lucia hopes for TrueLucia “to become more of a lifestyle brand.” “I want people to wear more color, I want people to not be afraid to wear art. Art should be more than a canvas on the wall—I want it to be wearable. ‘Wear art, be art’ is my motto because that’s what I really believe.” With all the traction she’s already gained in Charleston, since only moving here in September 2020, Gianna Lucia is sufficiently well-positioned to inspire those kinds of changes in the fashion scene and beyond.

keep up with gianna and truelucia!

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