



# AWAKEN YOUR WORTH

Gianni Scumaci is on a mission to encourage hairdressers to recognise their own value. *HJ* sat down with the renowned stylist to find out more

**F**rom cutting hair aged 10 in his family's barbershop in Lincoln to working on global fashion campaigns and travelling the world with esteemed fashion photographers, it's fair to say Gianni Scumaci has achieved phenomenal success so far. His career trajectory, which has often taken him outside the traditional hairdressing sphere, has given him a new perspective about the industry he loves. Here, he explains why he feels compelled to awaken the self-worth of hairdressers.

**Why is the hidden intelligence of a hairdresser so important to you?**  
I've done a series of talks around this

topic because I believe recognising the intelligence of hairdressers is key to moving the industry forward. I use the word 'hidden' because I think it's often concealed – not just from society but from hairdressers themselves. I believe it takes a highly intelligent individual to run a salon and give people back their self-esteem on a daily basis. To create hair for the runway or to read between the lines of an advertising brief, as well as putting your own stamp on it, takes a high level of emotional, aesthetic and creative intelligence. It's time to change how we view ourselves as hairdressers because it affects how society sees us.

**Why did you think of yourself as an outsider in the industry?**

In the past I would go to hairdressing events and feel like an outsider and I didn't understand why. I'm a third-generation hairdresser and I love the people in our industry. I realised it wasn't that our intelligence wasn't being recognised by society – it was that our intelligence wasn't being recognised by hairdressers themselves. I started to gravitate towards the fashion world and working on editorial campaigns for magazines. I felt like the people in the fashion world respected their craft in a different way to hairdressers.

**Why do you think some hairdressers have low self-esteem?**

In my experience a lot of hairdressers saw themselves as not being good enough at school. The education system has a hierarchy of subjects with maths and science at the top, followed by languages and humanities, while the arts sit at the bottom. A lot of hairdressers learn in a visual way, but schools teach in a linear way. If you are a visual person you aren't going to retain information and do well in an exam. When I came out of school if you didn't succeed academically you became a hairdresser, beauty therapist or a bricklayer. These jobs had a stigma attached to them and I don't think that's changed as much as it should have.

**How can we change this perception?**

It needs to start with hairdressers themselves. I want hairdressers and barbers to take a step back and reframe who they are. When I have direct contact with hairdressers at lectures, seminars or my educational sessions it changes their perception of themselves. I believe salon owners have a big responsibility – those close to retiring need to engage with those who are starting out. How can we expect a person coming into the industry to have high self-esteem if the people at the top don't? I want to work with different platforms and partners to spread that message. Hairdressing is a £7 billion industry in the UK but we don't value ourselves as such.

**How can we help those starting out in the hairdressing industry?**

We need to understand where the problem begins. Children aged 13 choose their options at school and they are told by teachers and parents that hairdressing isn't a serious career choice. It's my job to change this perception. I visited a school

recently to talk about hairdressing careers and they were all focused on the immediate benefits such as how much money they would earn and how glamorous it looked on social media. I asked the students what they would like to give back in five years' time. I explained the social function of hairdressers – how we improve our client's self-esteem and make them feel like the best versions of themselves – they didn't realise that's what hairdressers do. We need to make sure those starting out understand that our industry changes people's lives.

**Have you always had a high sense of self-worth?**

I wasn't academically successful at school, but I could cut hair by the time I was 10 and I had an interest in music and photography. I found that having these abilities helped me to understand my own value. Academic achievement is often the only intelligence that's recognised in society. I think this is why hairdressers are so keen on competitions and winning awards. They strive for the recognition they didn't get at school.

**What do you hope to achieve with this movement?**

I was told a story about a dinner party where a doctor, lawyer, architect and a hairdresser were seated together – when the hairdresser revealed their job no one knew what to say. I genuinely believe the social function of a hairdresser is on par with what society would label a professional job or career. My goal is for the next generation of hairdressers to be able to present themselves at a dinner party without there being any silence. I'm not professing to make hairdressing more than it is, but it is important to reframe the position we have in society. **HJ**

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS****1990s**

Aged 14, Gianni was touring the UK performing on stage at hair seminars and in 1999 he became the youngest ever creative director at Sassoon.

**Early 2000s**

He created the Fanni haircut that dictated the look for fashion brands such as Gucci, Jil Sander and Gap. In 2003 he was published in *i-D* magazine.

**2005**

Gianni created his first British Vogue cover with Tim Walker and he worked on campaigns with Juicy Couture.

**2009**

He was introduced to iconic photographer David Bailey who he continues to work with. A year later he became Joico international vision director and published his first book in 2011.

**2014**

Gianni is regularly booked internationally for public speaking events on topics such as the hidden intelligence of a hairdresser.

**GS EDUCATION IN SHORT****What is unique about GS Education?**

The industry tends to invest in technical education but expects hairdressers to learn communication skills through experience. I want to teach people how to elevate their technical and communication skills.

**Why have you launched online videos?**

The videos supplement my in-person courses and I strive to teach in all the different learning languages – listening, watching, talking and repeating.

**READER VIDEO OFFER**

GS Education is offering *HJ* readers an access code to view the new Connection step-by-step videos for free for one month.

Go to [gianniscumaci.com/education](http://gianniscumaci.com/education), click the subscribe here button and use the promo code **GSHJ**.

\*1 month offer from 28 May to 27 June 2019