

Bold Creativity



Lora Arellano

Photo by Jilja Kuzmenko, courtesy of Lora Arellano



Arellano



With over a million Instagram followers, Rihanna as a client and her own make-up line, Lora Arellano has built a major career—the confluence of hard work, perseverance and creative prowess executed at the right time.

This first-generation entrepreneur loves a bold lip. She lives in red lipstick—the crux of her edgy, rockabilly vibe—and launched an entire company with audacious lipsticks as its cornerstone product. Arellano brought vibrant matte lipsticks to the market at a time when they couldn't be found at any make-up counter. This adventurous leap propelled Arellano into the limelight.

There were a number of pivotal moments in Arellano's journey. There was the moment she first realized she wanted to be a make-up artist and begged her dad to let her go to make-up school. There was her fierce resilience to learn everything she could when she got in. There was her five-year stint at Nordstrom at Topanga Canyon Mall where she met best friend and co-founder of Melt Cosmetics, Dana Bomar. There was their fortuitous brunch where they came up with the idea to start their own brand. And there

was the moment Arellano quit her job at Nordstrom to launch her brand. Yes, there were many pivotal moments. But one thing is for sure, all the right moves were made at all the right times.

But—

Things didn't always just fall into place. Arellano forced her career to move forward. "There was definitely a moment in my career that my path to becoming a successful artist seemed stagnant," Arellano explains, "and I feel like every artist goes through it, where it seems like you put in work and are not being recognized. For a few years, I stopped freelancing and got into retail, but after a couple years of doing that it left me very uninspired. I realized make-up artistry was my passion and I decided to get back into the swing of things and refocus my energy and time on being just that, being a make-up artist."

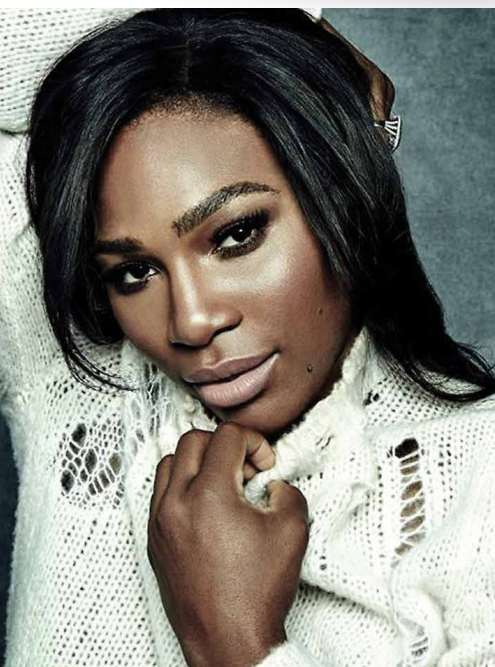
Once Arellano gave make-up artistry another chance, letting the universe know

this was indeed her path and that she was determined to succeed, it started paying off. "Just a few years later," she says, "I was traveling the world doing what I love, working on magazines, music videos, commercials ... My dream had come true."

But building a brand wasn't without faith and financial risk. Bomar and Arellano invested their life savings into starting their own company. They had no investors, and, in the beginning, they weren't taken seriously. Nonetheless, with perseverance and vision, Melt Cosmetics launched in May 2013 with five shades of matte lipsticks. They sold out that same day. And this was when no one was wearing blue lipstick or sporting gray hair. But



FROM LEFT: Photos by Ruven Afanador, Corinillian Laypold, Max Abadian and Yu Tsai



Melt changed that, practically overnight, and today, this is a widespread trend.

Another component of Arellano's success, which she started doing long before others, was driving her business via social media. In their show *Lipstick Empire*, produced by Stage 13, Arellano talks about how some older companies don't know how to do that, so they are "definitely watching us." As they should be. Melt's Instagram now has 2.7 million followers.

But the girls are savvy and careful when they release new products. Social media and personal touch has always been a secret (now not so secret) weapon of Arellano's. "I've always used social media as a way to further my career, and it's *always* worked," she says.

Arellano's instincts and unique perspective on the industry have helped her bridge the gap between brand and client, and her personal touch and accessibility via social media have played a key role in her success. Her down-to-earth nature has also played a part in her allure. Fans can

peek into her world where she employs family members, hangs out with good friends and talks about what "grinds their gears." Arellano brings a face to the brand and uses her personality as a way to connect with consumers/fans.

Social media success is what led Arellano to work with Rihanna, who became one of her biggest #fangirls on Instagram. RiRi actually reached out to Arellano personally. Not only does Arellano now work regularly with the mogul on music videos and tours, but has amassed a top-notch client list, which includes celebrities such as Serena Williams and Ciara.

Future goals for this make-up pioneer include continuing to work with her celebrity clients on the road, maintain Melt's position as one of the largest independent brands in the industry and, ultimately, put Melt "in every handbag."

Who knows how far this ambitious entrepreneur is headed, but she reminds us: "Sky's the limit and this is only the beginning." **MA**

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