

CAREER PROFILE

Karen Betts

Managing Director of the successful Nouveau Beauty Group of companies

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Here we talk to Karen Betts, permanent make up pioneer and Managing Director of the successful Nouveau Beauty Group of companies, which includes the well known HD Brows, Nouveau Lashes, Nouveau Skin Therapy and Nouveau Contour brands about her career in the professional beauty industry.

What made you choose this career?

As a child I always loved to draw and was fascinated by my mum's magazines that contained images of ladies that had been completely transformed by a new hair style or the application of make up, I used to sit for hours drawing people and creating hair

and make up styles for them. At 16 I trained to be a hair dresser and make up artist and offered a mobile service as soon as I got my driving licence. I worked every hour available and soon had a large enough client base to take the steps towards opening my own salon. Opening my own salon turned out to be the best decision I ever made, it was whilst managing this that

I rented a room to a conventional tattoo artist and my passion for drawing was reignited. After the salon closed I would sit for hours and watch people have some of the most elaborate designs inked onto their bodies. Then one day my closet friend came to me and told me she had been diagnosed with cancer and her biggest fear was losing her eyebrows.

Something just clicked inside me that day, I was not content with just being a pillar of support and I questioned if people can train to tattoo such ornate body art onto someone's skin surely people could learn to tattoo facial features such as brows. That is when I started my research and discovered a micropigmentation course in the States. I trained to do permanent cosmetics and body art in 1996 with CD International and went on to complete an international training certificate at the Lemor Institute in America.

I have spent the last twenty years honing my skills from around the world and today, I not only have six private clinic locations but also work in hospitals alongside NHS and private medical staff to offer treatments to cancer patients on the road to recovery. I am also consultant to many professional and charitable bodies such as The Breast Cancer Haven, Alopecia Society and since 2012 The Katie Piper Foundation.

Realising a gap in the permanent cosmetics industry for high quality training, I established Nouveau Contour in March 2001 to offer training and supply permanent cosmetics equipment. Nouveau Contour is now the UK's largest permanent make up training academy.

What is the best thing about your job?

I feel privileged everyday that I have a skill that can help rebuild so many people's confidence and nothing I have achieved beats the look on a clients face when I have restored a feature that they have lost through illness or an accident.

Whilst a lot of my clients are memorable in their own right, 2 clients over the last few years have really pulled at my heartstrings and tested my capabilities. The first is a lady named Julie who was born with a cleft lip. Julie's cleft lip has affected her confidence for as long as she can remember, aware that the shape of her lip had held her back and prevented her from making the most of her life. I wanted to give Julie the perfect lip shape she had always dreamed of. To restore a cleft lip using permanent cosmetics requires a real level of skill that does not come over night, but I am happy to state that Julie was overwhelmed with the results. "Karen created the lip shape I had been

looking for my whole life". Her smile and the big hug she gave me at the end of her treatment spoke volumes and I am not ashamed to say, made me cry.

The second lady many people will recognise as her recovery from a brutal acid attack in 2008 was documented in the TV series 'Katie Piper – My Beautiful Face'. I was honoured when I was able to help Katie. Over a twelve month process, I was able to recreate Katie's lips, brows and eye definition. Over time our personal and professional relationship developed and in 2012 I was announced as the official and exclusive permanent make-up consultant for The Katie Piper Foundation.

Tell us about the charity work you do?

I support a number of charities and feel very privileged that I am now in a position to be able to offer treatments complimentary to people who can really benefit from my skill or that of my employees. The Katie Piper Foundation is such a plausible organisation and well known in the UK for their charitable work which aims to make life easier for people living with burns and scars. Katie's ambition is to help others in their quest to feel confident again in spite of their scars; the ethos of the charity mirrors my own personal beliefs and I am delighted that my skills are potentially going to help so many people. The feel good factor you get when you watch someone's face light up after his or her treatment is just amazing!

What does a typical day for you involve?

I am up very early and immediately turn my laptop on to do a few hours work managing my 8 brands before catching the train to one of my 3 training academies in Yorkshire, London or Milton Keynes. I absolutely hate to waste any time so once on the train the laptop is back out and I work until I reach my destination. I then either prepare for a training class or a full days clinic where I perform on average 10 permanent cosmetic procedures a day. Then it's back on the laptop working on training manuals, special offers, and budgets. I could go on and on, but in essence I work constantly all day every day till either my partner or very patient assistant takes my laptop from me so I can eat. If there were 8 days in a week I would work them all.

What has been the best moment of your career so far?

There are so many satisfying aspects to my job but ultimately, helping women to get their confidence back after what has been a very traumatic time is very close to my heart and the career satisfaction both I, and those I've trained, get after treating someone who has had to experience an altered body image due to illness or an accident is incredible. Most people do not realise 70% of your facial expressions depend on your eyebrows so therefore what many of us take for granted can actually give someone else their identity back.

What does the future hold for you?

I intend to keep spreading the word about the positive effects medical and cosmetic tattooing has on people's confidence and self-esteem, I want everyone to know what this treatment is or to at least of heard of it. I will continue to educate the public and associated professionals by delivering seminars and workshops, holding press events, and continuously developing my Nouveau Contour permanent cosmetics training syllabus to make sure all my protégées are trained to the very highest standards. I don't intend to stop until I have banished the myths surrounding medical and cosmetic tattooing and to any critics I advise they visit my website and see for themselves how much of a positive, life-changing treatment permanent cosmetics can be when you put yourself in the right hands.

Whilst not directly related to permanent make up I am so excited about the up coming launch of Make Up by HD Brows in February. So much hard work and investment has been put into developing the range, my co director Nilam Patel has worked tirelessly recruiting some of the best make up artists in the industry, holding focus groups, testing products, this mixed with our great business acumen and the collaboration with a global leader in cosmetic design and manufacturing has resulted in a stunning range that we are so proud of and can not wait to share with our customers.