



## Owning Your Beauty

*Welcome to the fifth installment of The Womanly Arts Unplugged, an 8-part virtual tour in honor of our upcoming course, [Virtual Pleasure Boot Camp](#)! In this article, Mercedes, a Mastery and Boot Camp Grad from New York City, joins us to teach about the Womanly Art of Owning Your Beauty!*

### Mercedes, Age 38 – Actress, Dancer & Executive Assistant



Owning Your Beauty is about really knowing and loving who you are, your soul, your body, your mind, and every part of you that makes you, YOU.

It's about accepting your flaws, your imperfections, your inadequacies, and loving all those parts fully.

It's about feeling your beauty, without relying on what anyone else thinks.

This art has allowed me to put myself first, to love and value myself in the fullest way possible.

Like almost every woman I know, I was never proud of my body. Society, and that nasty inner voice would tell me, “My legs are too big, small chest, my butt’s not round enough.” I think we’re taught as women to be at war with our bodies, so this Art is really about overcoming all of that, rising above societal standards of “fake beauty,” and really seeing and loving exactly who we are.

This tool allows me to push all of those thoughts, worries, doubts out of my head, and it reminds me how truly divine I am, how special I am, that we are all divine and special, and that we all have something unique to offer. It’s made me accept and love the person I am. Every woman is beautiful.

No matter what size your breasts are, how tall you are, thin you are, old you are — you are beautiful. The Art of Owning Your Beauty is about reclaiming yourself, reclaiming your power, making peace with your body.

Because, when you're at war with your body, who wins?!

## What were your early messages and challenges around being beautiful?

I grew up in a multi-latino family, so everyone in my family was a different shade. My grandmother was very light, my grandfather was very brownish, my mother was tan. Everyone was lighter than me. So growing up, color became an issue for me, I always thought that because I was dark, I wasn't pretty enough.

I'm not sure where I got the message that dark wasn't beautiful. Thank goodness for my Uncle; I remember he told me I was the perfect color, and that everyone who poked fun at me was just jealous. I was probably around 9 years old at that time.



But growing up, especially in my adolescent years, I started comparing myself to my friends, trying to measure up to the “cool girls.” Thinking back, the insecurity I carried about my own beauty wasn't coming from the boys — it was from other girls.

I had one cousin in particular who was so nasty to me. It was classic mean girls. And the more attention I got from the rest of our family, or boys, the nastier she was. Now, I can see she was jealous, but I remember my self-esteem really hinged on the way she treated me. I saw that the less attention I got, the nicer she would be to me. So I started to hide and play small. She was popular with the other kids, and I remember thinking “I don't know why she hates me so much!” (By the way, we are now the best of friends — just had to get through that gnarly pre-teen tension!)

I think that's one of the most tragic things about our society, and it's something Mama Gena teaches about so brilliantly — women are pinned against each other, driven by their own low self-esteem, and all the limits that were handed down by the women before us, and all the images we see promoting one kind of beautiful.

## Tell us how your story with The Womanly Arts began...

Before I came to the school, I was a struggling actress and I had just broken up with my boyfriend of three years. I was feeling suffocated, stifled and stagnant. I needed to spread my

wings in a major way. I was in my early 30s and still living at home with an ailing mom; I was stuck in a corporate job that was sucking my creativity right out of me, and I was suffering from extreme low self-esteem. I was searching, trying to read all kinds of self-help books, going to therapy, trying to find the meaning of my life. Nothing seemed to be working.

I actually heard about Mama Gena's for the first time from a close male friend of mine. He had told me about an event where he was surrounded by amazing, diverse, fun-loving, genuine women. He said their energies were out of this world and these women were all beautiful internally and externally. He told me they are called Goddesses and he felt how empowered they all were and how wonderful they made him feel. He told me that this place was right up my alley, and I should check out SWA online. A few days later another female friend of mine saw Mama Gena on TV and was so intrigued, she got us her book to check out together. I was so astounded that both of my really good friends (who didn't even know each other at time) mentioned SWA, I knew it was a sign for me to check it out. So I went to an Intro, heard Mama Gena speak and knew I was home. I immediately signed up for class that Fall and the rest is history.

I remember when I first learned about the Art of Owning Your Beauty, I couldn't wrap my head around loving me. I knew it was possible, I had seen other Sister Goddesses who had done it, women of all shapes and sizes and colors. But the idea of truly loving every part of me, truly knowing and owning my particular brand of beauty...seemed impossible.

If this is where you're at, know that it IS possible, and it's worth it. It is so rewarding once you own the essence and beauty of who you really are.

I remember one period when I really struggled with this Art was during a rough relationship. I had met this guy, and fell head over heels. He made me feel so much, so wonderful, so passionate — the beginning of our relationship was such a great high. As we continued to form our relationship, he became my everything. He was so attractive, women couldn't stop staring at him, and he definitely had a wandering eye as well.

I wasn't practicing this Art very well at the time, and so I started to internalize that I wasn't enough. I started to feel ugly, and I couldn't even remember what it was like to feel beautiful. I constantly compared myself to my boyfriend, who was so gorgeous, and all of the women who wanted him. I started doubting myself, gaining weight, and shutting down. I didn't even want to look at myself in the mirror, and my self-worth was just really bottoming out.

Thank goodness for Sisterhood! A Sister Goddess called me out, invited me to a Mama Gena's event, and helped plug me back into my power. Just being in that room with these women, who loved themselves inside and out, made me realize that I was doing myself a serious disservice, and it was time to turn it around.

I said to myself from here on out, I'm gonna love myself no matter what and stay plugged in and practice the tools. Rooting into the Art of Owning Your Beauty, when I felt anything but beautiful, was so essential to becoming the woman I was meant to be.

## What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to practicing the Art of Owning Your Beauty, and how do you work through them?

In a world where girls are taught that Barbie is the ideal beauty, it's rare to grow up as a woman without a negative body image. **Body image and the Art of Owning Your Beauty are so closely related.**

I used to hide certain parts of my body, because I believed they were not beautiful. For me, I used to always wear long sleeved shirts because I wasn't fond of my arms. Or my butt! Everyone else in my family is very well endowed in that department, and I always felt I was lacking. I'd wear long shirts to hide it.



I even would judge my toes for being the wrong shape. Practicing this Art helps me to love my sweet little hammer toes. : )

**I used to think, "I'll feel beautiful once I lose weight."** I lost and gained a lot of weight thanks to that false belief. Through practicing this Art, I realized that the weight would never come off until I loved myself wherever I was.

The thing is, no matter who you are and what you look like, you can find things to deem wrong about your appearance. Here's a really sad example: I've been following Korean pop lately, and there is this trend where women are having plastic surgery to create eye lids & change their eye shape because they've been told that that's beautiful.

Everywhere around the world women are changing their looks based on what society deems "beautiful." That is just so sad!

The good news is, you can turn it around — **every woman has a unique beauty, and it's just about learning how to shift the attention to what's right.**

What I love about practicing the Art of Owning Your Beauty in community, is that we see that beauty comes in absolute variety. And what's gorgeous about a woman is her ownership and self-love that emanates from everywhere.

Especially with younger girls, it's so important that we encourage them to love what they see and who they are, that being different and unique is a good thing.

**I think another thing that gets in the way of Owning Your Beauty is that many of us are actually afraid of our own beauty, which is related to being afraid of our own power.** In a culture where women are trained to be in competition with each other, and there is so much cattiness between women, it can be tempting to hide and shy away from attention, for fear of

losing friends, or fear of the responsibility that comes with shining your light. Through practicing the Art of Owning Your Beauty, I've definitely learned that it doesn't help anyone to dim my own light. If women judge, it's just because they aren't loving themselves fully, and the best thing I can do is stand in my own light and invite her into hers.

One thing I find is really helpful to bring me back into kindness and acceptance around my beauty is asking myself, "How would you treat a friend?" However you would take care of a friend or sister — the things you would say to her to soothe her — that's how I treat myself. I wanna be my best friend and treat myself the best that I can — we all have limited time here, and I don't want to waste it.

I desire a world where every woman stands for herself and each other in this way. Where we can look at one another, inspire that in each other without feeling less-than or jealous of what we think we lack. What if we were united in owning our beauty, embracing everything about us and loving it, taking ownership of our essence? Oh, how lovely it would be, and such a different world.

## How do you practice this Art, as part of your daily routine?

It really is a "Practice," not a "Perfect"! I find I do need to keep reminding myself to connect with my own voice that knows my beauty, and to live from that place (while tuning out the constant negative messaging we receive from society and the media).

To do this, some of the biggest things are **staying connected** to the Sister Goddess community, surrounding myself with other women who are really in ownership of their divinity and gorgeousness, lifting other women up, and receiving their love.

Also, I practice the tools and return to the exercises (many of which I learned for the first time in Boot Camp)!

There is one exercise in particular, where I really **take time to look at myself in the mirror when I'm getting ready in the morning, and admire what I see**. This feels strange at first, especially when you're used to avoiding your own reflection, or picking out flaws whenever you do look in the mirror. Trust me — it changes everything.

The minute I notice myself getting insecure or I start to recoil from feeling my best, I know it's time love myself up. I immediately start to say **Womantras** I've created like: I am beautiful, I am lovable, and I am perfectly imperfect.



So, really, **the Art of Owning Your Beauty is truly an inner game** — how you're talking to yourself, how you're looking at yourself. That said, I also practice this Art in external ways, adorning my body to enhance and reflect my unique beauty.

**I nourish my body with movement and food.** Whenever I eat healthy I feel healthy, and when I dance or move my body, I get out of my head and tap into a deeper place.

**I practice radical self-care** as a way to truly own my beauty. Self-care and the Art of Owning Your Beauty are so closely related as well. I pamper myself, get my nails and hair done, and treat myself to massages. I make sure to do a little self-pleasuring, too!

I also **gift myself things that make me feel beautiful**, like my favorite perfume, a sexy hot dress & shoes, wonderful eye-popping accessory, lip gloss, and those kind of things.

Especially on those tough days, I really amp up my practice in this Art. On the days when I least feel like it, that's when I pull out the really sexy underwear, and put on that red dress. Adorning myself how I desire to feel, enhancing my beauty, helps me to see it and feel it when I need it most. **When I push my edge with amazing outfits, it makes me feel juicy and in my power** — and when you feel that way, it just keeps growing.

— SG Mercedes

---

## Now it's your turn.

Take a moment to reflect on The Art of Owning Your Beauty, in your life. What are your practices in Owning Your Beauty? How do you express your beauty internally, and how you adorn yourself externally? If you struggle with this art, where are you at? What is the one thing you'd like to experiment with to move towards love and acceptance?

**Want more?** Check out Virtual Pleasure Boot Camp, an 8-week deep dive into The Womanly Arts. The program includes live teleclasses with Mama Gena, carefully crafted weekly exercises, and a thriving online community. [Click here to learn more](#), or call 212.787.2411 X 1 to speak with a course graduate.