



PHOTOS COURTESY BEAUTYCOUNTER

Above: Beautycounter founder Gregg Renfrew

COUNTERCULTURAL: **BEAUTYCOUNTER'S GREGG RENFREW** RECEIVES SNOW ANGEL AWARD

By Hayden Seder

The United States has not passed a major federal law to regulate the safety of ingredients in personal care products since 1938. This has led to more than 80,000 chemicals allowed on the market in the products we use every day—sunscreen and bubble bath for our children, men's shaving cream, our kitchen soap. Even more shocking is that products like these can be marketed as “natural,” “organic,” or “preservative-free” when the product may be none of those things. Studies indicate that many serious health issues such as asthma, cancer, and infertility can be directly linked to exposure to toxic chemicals like the ones in our personal care products.

If this simultaneously surprises and terrifies you, you're not alone. Gregg Renfrew felt much the same before she started her company, Beautycounter, a brand that works to create safer, high-performing beauty products while actively lobbying for regulation in the beauty industry. This commitment to human and environmental health makes her a worthy recipient of Sun Valley Film Festival's Snow Angel Award, given for outstanding advocacy

work on social and environmental issues.

Launched in 2013, Beautycounter is more than a brand, it's a movement. A certified B corporation, Beautycounter is committed to high standards of transparency and accountability in an industry that's severely underregulated. The brand is a direct retailer, selling their products online as well as through a network of Independent Consultants, putting them in direct contact with their consumers. Their website is full of information for those new to the brand, including their mission statement, what kinds of things you won't find in their products, and what makes the company unique. “We believe people have the right to know what's in their products,” explains Renfrew. “Armed with information, people are better able to make informed choices on behalf of themselves. We look at commerce as a vehicle for change.”

Before starting her company, Renfrew established The Wedding List in 1997, a bridal registry company later acquired by Martha Stewart in 2001. She also worked as a retail



“We are the face of clean beauty.”

— Beautycounter

Founder Gregg Renfrew

“We called it ‘Beautycounter’ because we were trying to redefine the beauty experience and go counter to the beauty industry. We were building a new beauty type,”

— Gregg Renfrew

consultant with companies such as J.Crew and Bergdorf Goodman, and was CEO of Best & Co for two years. It was in 2006, when she watched the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, that she began to think about beauty products and their connection to environmental damage and human health. “The film was a real wakeup call,” Renfrew recalls. “It was the first time that I became aware that we were doing things that were detrimental to the earth.” Renfrew saw friends and family around her getting sick in varying degrees—from different forms of cancer to friends with fertility issues to children with allergies and asthma. “I believed something had gone terribly awry and made the connection that the things that were bad for the earth were also detrimental to our health.” After doing an immense amount of research including reading books, working with green chemists and leading institutions, and funding research, Renfrew came to some staggering conclusions regarding the lack of regulation of the numerous harmful chemicals allowed to go on our bodies. She immediately started implementing changes in her household such as taking her shoes off at the door, getting rid of non-stick pans, and more. But in terms of beauty products, she couldn’t find any that were both high-performing and made with ingredients that are safer for human health. Enter: Beautycounter.



Opposite page: Beautycounter's Countermatch Collection. Above: Beautycounter's trip to Washington, DC, with their consultants in May of 2016 to lobby Congress for more health-protective laws.

“We called it ‘Beautycounter’ because we were trying to redefine the beauty experience and go counter to the beauty industry. We were building a new beauty type,” explains Renfrew. One of the first steps was to figure out what *wouldn't* go into their products. The European Union had set a good example since they had already banned 1,300 products at the time of Beautycounter's launch while the U.S. had only partially banned 30. “We got rid of those products,” says Renfrew. “Then we banned an additional few hundred to create our

Never List™—a list of approximately 1,500 ingredients we never choose when formulating our products.” Since starting the company, Renfrew has continued to commit herself to educating consumers on the troubles of the beauty industry and to put safer products into the hands of all. “Ultimate success to us is changing laws and the industry forever,” says Renfrew. “All American citizens will have access to safer products—that's our end goal.”