



## La Beaute Est Partout

*It's the hashtag on her van, it's her mantra, it's her mission.*

For the nomadic makeup artist, it's been a year since radically changing her lifestyle to fit a Dodge ProMaster van. Julie Plante is Canada's first makeup artist who lives in the very same van she provides beauty services in.

Glancingly — sun kissed hair, a perpetual tan and peacefulness that presumably comes with coastal living -- one could easily mistake Julie for a Californian surfer gal. Otherwise, with the smile of someone who's found the spice of life, her French reveals her. 7 years ago, as the social media coordinator for Lolë, she was recruiting brand ambassadors. Julie shares, "I was meeting very inspiring women with projects, dreams and ideas and they realized them. At one point, I said to myself, 'well if they can do it, so can I.'"

Julie dropped everything to study beauty and become a makeup artist. She went on to be represented by a talent agency and was a brand ambassador in Quebec for Sally Hansen nail polish. Her all-in attitude and attention to detail translated a childhood dream into a career with a clientele of cool kids, blushing brides, musicians, comedians and politicians. Yet something was missing; she had a house but not a home.

"Julie before the van...." She pensively chuckles and explains, "I was then living in a condo [...] I had no belongings in my condo, I didn't invite friends too often. I didn't feel at home, I even did the interior design. The only place I would feel home was on my terrace outside. If I wasn't there, I was working, doing sports or other activities. I was like do I really need a place like that? Do I really need to be in this environment?" For years Julie had been wanting to find a way to combine all her passions -- travel, sports and beauty — and she'd always done things differently.



Searching up #vanlife on Instagram will open up a rabbit hole of utilitarian mobile interior design and breath taking views. Regardless of whether it's a Volkswagen Westfalia, a modified yellow school bus, or a new van like Julie's, all owners adhere to minimalism. The point of van life is to escape materialism, the mental clutter, and time waste that comes from managing possessions — the simpler life is, the more enjoyable it is. Marie Kondo, creator of the critically acclaimed Konmari decluttering method and host of her own Netflix series speaks of a different school of minimalism. The Konmari method focuses on only keeping things that spark joy. In her book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, she writes, "The question of what you want to own is actually the question of how you want to live your life."

When Julie began spending more time in the van her father helped convert, she made a life changing decision. She began to declutter her condominium to sell it — the process revealed itself to be one of personal growth. As a sports junkie, artist and fashion designer, she had accumulated so much over the last 7 years. Julie reflects "I needed to question myself: What are my favorite things? What do I need? What are my essentials? That made me know more about myself." The shift in environment brought a new energy to Julie and her social life. Exchanging a spacious condo for a small home resulted in more company and joy.

Having created an environment that was reflective of her needs, she felt connected to herself. Thinking back, she recalls, "Everything that would come to me, would fit with me because I was connected to myself and who I am." Julie's van isn't empty; it's filled with things that bring her joy.



Julie's Chihuahua rescue, Betty, is the best co-pilot.

It sounds impossible to be both a minimalist and professional makeup artist, with the beauty industry promoting consumption, and even normalizing the hoarding of products. Yet, Julie simply declines PR packages and freebies from companies. "People will look at me like I'm special -- 'We give you something for free and you refuse it?'" Julie continues, "I explain that I live in a van, so if I don't need it I'm not going to accept it. I don't have the space for that...I prefer that they give it to someone who needs it."

The space itself is Scandinavian in design but eclectic in its fixtures with contemporary art patterns on walls, fabrics with welcoming textures, and handmade jewelry on display. Julie is always accompanied by her senior chihuahua, named Betty, who enjoys napping on the laps of clients. The exterior of the van features a colorful, abstract vinyl logo, and clients often share their creative interpretations of it with Julie — similar to a Rorschach test. Stimulating creativity in others is a large part of her motivation:

"It starts with the [van] logo, and then they get in the van — a whole new experience to use their creativity, to adapt themselves to this new environment. They have tons of questions about how I make that, about my lifestyle, so they use their creativity for that. It's all about creativity and beauty, to change the perception of beauty."

Beauty as a creative outlet, healing, and empowerment is something La Muse Caravan hopes to share with the world. Julie left Montreal this past November to embark on a 6 month humanitarian road trip. She is currently in El Salvador, making her way down to Nicaragua. Her goal is visit as many women's support groups and shelters as she can, providing facials, manicures, other treatments to women in need of a day of self-care.



I remark, "You're one of the women you use to interview; you're one of them." She shares a laugh, the kind that expresses she can't believe it either. It's a comforting laugh; she's aware of how surreal her story must sound. It's not weird, but it's not common to rid yourself of all your belongings to travel a hemisphere in your home, and workplace on wheels -- with a chihuahua. It's a risk, a sacrifice, a privilege. It's the kind of thing a cousin does, the kind of thing one says to others when it's a shitty Monday morning: 'Let's sell everything and travel the world in a van.'

*Julie did it.*

