

Sex, truth and photography

Couple shares
'portfolio'
of intimate moments

BY PAUL GESSELL

Pornography directs the eye toward anatomical parts peeking out of clothes. Art is more concerned with emotions tumbling out of souls.

And so, with that in mind, take a look at the intense and revealing new photo essay *April and Erik*, created by Tony Fouhse, one of Ottawa's most talented commercial and art photographers.

Fouhse's photos of April Kibzey and Erik Bandenburg engaged in some very intimate moments are being exhibited at La Petite Mort Gallery in the ByWard Market from Sept. 18 to 24.

The photos are not pornography. Neither are they saccharin boudoir photos. You know the kind: Fog-filter portraits of the surprisingly wrinkle-free missus wearing sexy lingerie, a new hair-do and a come-hither look.

The far more intense, sweaty photos of *April and Erik* were shot in the couple's bedroom in their apartment near the Merivale Road shopping strip. The images involve nudity and implied sex. But the photos are far more about the emotions of the pair than about their favourite positions.

Fouhse allows us to peer into the minds of the couple. We see the dynamics of the twosome, their strengths and vulnerabilities. We see a couple in love

The photos of April, 40, and Erik, 25, do not offer the stereotypically perfect, air-brushed bodies one normally finds in X-rated magazines or films. We do, however, get reality.

Both April and Erik are in the construction industry. Both wear the scabs and scars from workplace mishaps. In one photo session, April was nursing a cracked rib from a fall. Her ability to move and assume certain positions was limited. Everyone had to improvise for the photo shoot.

As well, April notes that she is not as young as she used to be, has cellulite and bears the marks of childbirth. In the beginning, she was worried about that history written on her body. But soon she learned to be unconcerned.

"Some of the photos I looked at and said, 'Oh, I'm fat,'" April recalled in a recent interview at the apartment she shares with Erik and a growing number of cats. "But I'm 40. I'm a woman. I've had three live births. I look pretty good, considering."

Fouhse met the couple about a year ago through a mutual friend, La Petite Mort director Guy Berube. Fouhse was looking for two people willing to share their most intimate moments with his camera. April and Erik were game.

"He wanted something that looked risqué but isn't porn," April says. "We said 'We'll do anything, but we're not doing porn.'"

Adds Erik: "We just went with his flow."

Both April and Erik say they are pleased with the photographs. Erik calls them "a portfolio of our intimate moments."

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Photo exhibition

What: April and Erik

Where: La Petite Mort Gallery,
306 Cumberland St.

When: Sept. 18 to 24

Information:

www.lapetitemortgallery.com;
613-860-1555

Sex: Complex relationship captured

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The two also say the photographs are great souvenirs of a particular time in their life together.

"I'm really happy the photos have been done," says Erik. "Hopefully, I'll be with April forever and we'll always have that to look back on."

April agrees: "Tony is a fabulous photographer."

Fouhse says he was unsure exactly what he initially wanted to capture with his camera when he met the couple. He did not want to create pornography but some illusive something else.

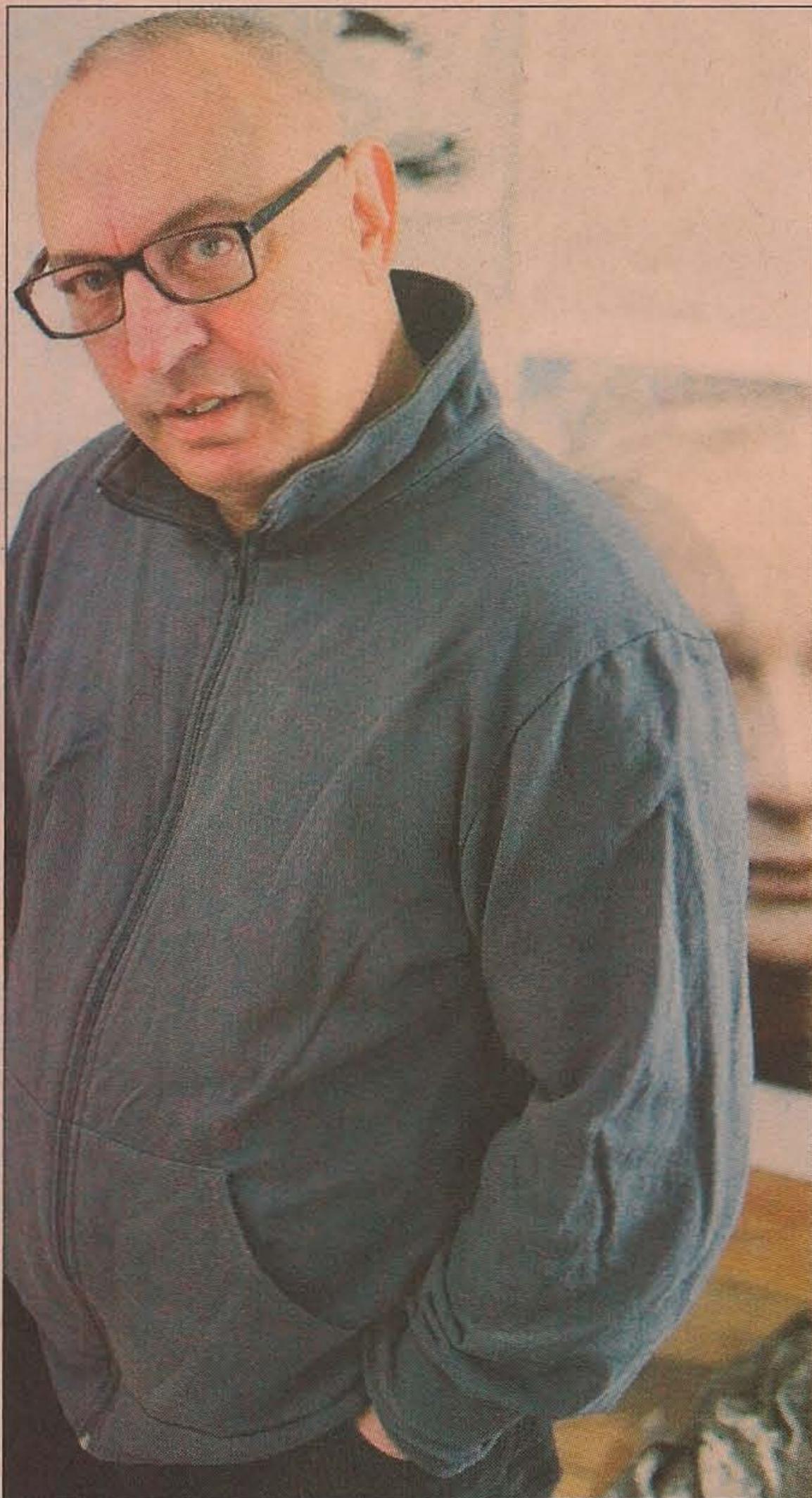
"I had no expectations," Fouhse says. "I've learned that situations and dynamics always take on a life of their own."

"For me, photography is still about discovery. I thought I'd be photographing sex. What I discovered was love, not the holding hands while walking-into-the-sunset kind of love. April and Erik's kind of love is more real than that."

Some moments in the photographs reveal sweet tenderness. But viewers will also spot loneliness, despair and black humour. The relationship between April and Erik is far too complex to fit neatly on a flower-bedecked Hallmark greeting card.

Fouhse thrives on what he calls "going to places where I feel a little uncomfortable." That can be seen in many of his earlier photographs, including a large body of work involving the kind of Americans some people might call trailer trash.

Then there is his User series, a collection of photographs of drug addicts and derelicts from the ByWard Market area. For that series, Fouhse has won raves at



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Ottawa photographer Tony Fouhse says that for him, 'photography is still about discovery.'

home and abroad from art critics, drug counsellors and addicts themselves for capturing the compelling humanity of battle-scarred people we usually try to erase from the landscape.

April and Erik say they are not nervous about their intimate photos appearing in an

art gallery open to the public. However, there are certain relatives, friends and work colleagues they hope stay away from the gallery.

"They're tasteful and nice," says April of the photos.

Erik concurs: "It's done in good taste and I don't have a problem with them."