

OTTAWA CULTURE AT GROUND LEVEL

guerilla

Beautiful subversion in Inked Kenny

Monday, March 16, 2009

Guy Bérubé is feeling a little bit misunderstood.

Though he is comfortable being known for the controversial and often sexual showings of art at his La Petite Mort gallery, Bérubé feels the perception that he is merely out to shock viewers is simply not true.

He's quick to point out, for instance, how beauty, not brazenness, was the chief criterion when putting together *Inked Kenny*, a selection of "kink" photographs by Toronto's Kenny Lee that is sure to raise some eyebrows when it opens on Friday, April 3.

"I chose to show the beauty, not what makes us uncomfortable," said Bérubé, pointing out that Lee's body of work contains images much more graphic and challenging than those selected for the show here.

To ensure that the month-long exhibit would be "tempting to the average Joe," Bérubé co-curated with his intern, Xan Woods. "I wanted someone new to the [kink] scene to describe it from the inside," he explained.

Woods' task, therefore, was to get to know Lee on a personal level and then help conceive of a meaningful way to interpret and present the work.

"His real interest is in exposing an individual's raw energy," Woods said of Lee. "His most powerful photography is emotional." "Kenny has said that he wants to open the door to kink—to inspire people to be open-minded, to acknowledge their desires rather than ignore them," Woods continued.

If that's the aim, La Petite Mort will be aiding the cause. Regardless of whether viewers are enticed or shocked, *Inked Kenny* is the type of show that's almost impossible to ignore.