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LIFE IS TOO SHORT FOR EXCUSES

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by [Kristin Marand](#)

Local boudoir photographer [Teri Hofford](#) is an open book. In that book she will teach you how to love and empower yourself and she won't put up with any excuses – life is too short for excuses.

Follow the winding wooden hallway to a quiet corner inside 70 Arthur St; the intimate space resembles a studio apartment more than a photography studio. There's an iron framed bed, a claw-footed bathtub, racks of lingerie, an office, a seating area and traces of glitter everywhere. This is where women come to shed their self-doubt and document their confidence. They bare their souls when they bare it for the camera.

In a world where everyday photography defines our existence, Teri noticed that women are often the ones taking photos; which means that there are few pictures of her.

“You have a thousand pictures of your children and your dog and your house, but you have no pictures of yourself?! This is b@#\$&!.t.



Rarely ever is there a nice portrait of just the woman by herself and that's sad," say Teri.



She also knew from her own experience that plus size women are further



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underrepresented in pictures for a variety of reasons ranging from self-confidence to posing and framing issues (no, you don't just shoot a bigger woman from the waist up).



In September of 2014 Teri undertook a project to illustrate that there is no singular kind of beautiful body. She put a call out for participants for a five-minute boudoir shoot and was overwhelmed with the almost 100 responses she received from both Winnipeg

and Regina.

“So many women wrote emails back to me after the experience saying you don’t know how much my confidence has changed and just the fact that I came in and I got naked or semi-naked in front of a stranger, technically... that’s so powerful.” Teri realized that if she could impact someone’s confidence in that way in five minutes, imagine what she could do with a half or even a whole day.

” This is where women come to shed their self-doubt and document their confidence.

The biggest misconception about boudoir, Teri says, is that it has to be for someone else for you to want to do it. There was a meme floating around the internet a while back in which a sculpture of a woman posing for the male gaze was titled ‘beauty’ while the sculpture holding a cell phone, posing for a selfie was titled ‘vanity.’ “So it was saying, it’s ok for a woman to be beautiful for a man but it’s not ok for a woman to appreciate her own beauty?” Teri questions.



Boudoir is more than semi-clad ladies having taking sexy pictures taken for their partners. “I get a lot of women that feel the

need to justify why they’re spending money on themselves, and I hate it. I want to stop it”

When women come to Teri, they need to understand that boudoir is about self-love. She provides her clients with all the information they need pre-shoot, to feel strong, sexy and authentic: “My people are the ones that do it for themselves. They don’t need an excuse other than they want to feel good, or they do feel good and they want to celebrate it, or they want to document their journey.”

Boudoir is a luxury experience not unlike a day at the spa: “It’s a nice pampering experience for lots of women. A lot of my clients are moms, I get a lot of caretakers; psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, nurses, teachers... they give and give and give and give and never take, so I’m glad to do that for them.”

And like a day at the spa, Teri’s clients leave her studio glowing, but it’s not just from the pre-shoot pampering. When a client leaves



her studio they walk a little taller and take Teri's 'Boudie Babes' code of conduct out into the world. "You have to promise me that once

you're done your session that you will go forward and you will not judge women, you will not call out a woman for being a bitch, or a slut, whatever word... Things that we do without even thinking about it. 'Cause if we do that it gives men the right to do it as well which is unfortunate." Teri likens her impact to a drop of water that creates ripples in the lives of the women she's worked with: "It's so cool that as one person I've been able to touch those people who then go on to affect other people" she says.

” see yourself as more than just a body



The 2014 project also marked the beginning of Teri's work with The Fort Garry Women's Resource Center. Last June, Teri organized a gallery show featuring works by female artists on the theme of Body Positivity and

Empowerment. The proceeds from that show, as well as a percentage from every shoot go to the non-profit organization. "They're a resource centre which means that they do not give stuff to people, they offer resources to people which means that people have to sign up for the classes. So there's some responsibility on

the women and their families to want to better themselves and empower themselves. But people have to want to put the effort in. I'm a firm believer in people have to be responsible for themselves for whatever they are in." She also holds the occasional fundraiser for the centre and is set up to accept donations both monetary and daily necessities.



Teri's near future plans include expanding her boudoir practice through travel across North America. She is also working

on a variety of educational programs for women. The first is a site for photographers to teach how to pose and communicate with plus size women. She is also creating a workshop called Brand Babes to help women entrepreneurs own their authenticity to be able to market themselves. She's also working on a book/coaching program to help women who need more than just one photo shoot to reinvigorate their self-esteem. "I'm giving you resolutions and resources. Tools and tricks and things that you could do to help get your self-esteem, your confidence back and see yourself as more than just a body" she explains.

Teri says that if you can't afford or decide not to book with her, that's cool; "Just taking that first step just to even come in for a consult is huge. Whether or not they book with me that tells me that they're getting stronger in their confidence which is just that start to them being awesome... Overall my message is that these women are changing their lives and getting empowered. I know I'm not the only one that can do that."

To learn more about Teri, visit her website, <http://www.terihoffordphotography.com>