



Beauty and the belly

Celebrate your growing baby and changing body in three unique ways. BY LISA EVANS

BELLY PAINTING

When Emma Kwasnica was pregnant with her fourth child, she wanted to do something to celebrate what would be her last pregnancy. She chose to decorate her belly with henna, in a design she called “tree of life”. Drawn by Vancouver henna artist Nicole Pilich, the design was chosen to represent the placenta. Then studying to be a midwife and child birth specialist, Emma was fascinated by the placenta. “On the fetal side, all the veins of the placenta are on the surface and it does look like the print of a tree,” she says. “I wanted the symbol of what was on the inside to come on the outside of my belly.” Emma held a henna party with 15 other moms when she was 40 weeks pregnant. Her guests all had henna trees drawn on the backs of their hands to celebrate the new life growing inside Emma. She credits her belly henna with empowering and energizing her at a time when she typically would feel exhausted. “If you get it done towards the end of your pregnancy, you can feel good about being huge,” she says. “I was sad to be going into labour this time because the tree would be deflated.” The tree design lasted a couple of days after her daughter’s birth and Emma says she enjoyed watching the print change shape and fade as her belly shrank.

BELLY CASTS

Nadine Proulx had suffered two miscarriages before finally becoming pregnant with her daughter, Milah, and wanted a souvenir of her first successful pregnancy. “I was taking pictures every week, but I really wanted to have a tangible memory of how I looked when I was pregnant,” she says. Using plaster bandages, Nadine wrapped her belly and breasts, creating a belly cast. She painted her daughter’s name on the final product and hung the keepsake on the nursery wall. The cast is not only a beautiful memento of Nadine’s pregnancy, but is also a piece of history she shares with her daughter. “Every time Milah sees it she says ‘that was me when I was in your belly.’” Sometimes Nadine takes it off the wall and puts it on to remind her of the changes her body went through. “It’s amazing to see how your hips grow larger when you’re pregnant. I put the cast on and think ‘Was I that big?!’” Nadine loved her belly cast so much she decided to make a business out of it. She now runs Belly N Me out of her Ottawa home, making personalized belly casts and selling home belly cast kits.

BOUDOIR PHOTOGRAPHY

Gaelle Vuillaume-Susty wanted to capture her pregnant body in photos but wasn’t happy with the traditional ones she saw in studios. She came across Toronto boudoir photographer Rosa Wang, who puts a sexy twist on traditional maternity photos. Maternity boudoir uses soft lighting and lingerie that focuses on the belly while playing up mom-to-be’s curves. The boudoir element allows women to embrace their sexy side in a classy and sophisticated way. “It’s a little more sensual than just wearing a tube top or a T-shirt (which are typically worn in maternity photos),” says Rosa. Dressing in lace and soft fabrics provided the self-confidence boost Gaelle needed. “I gained a lot of weight during my pregnancy and didn’t feel sexy anymore,” says Gaelle, who was 32 weeks pregnant with her son, Alex, when her photos were taken. The photos changed that! O

Are you having a baby?

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