

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Tom of Finland: 100 Years, an online exhibition celebrating the centennial of the artist's birth. Featuring never-before-exhibited drawings in pencil and pen and ink, as well as Tom's personal collages, the show will open online in the gallery's Online Viewing Room at DavidKordanskyGallery.com on Tuesday, April 14, at 8:00 am Pacific Time and remain on view through May 12, 2020.

Tom of Finland (Touko Laaksonen, Finnish; b. May 8, 1920, d. November 7, 1991) has long been recognized as one of the 20th century's great visual innovators. As he confronted the stigmas and stereotypes that long burdened homosexual desire, his depictions of empowered gay men fully enjoying their sexuality proved liberating on social and aesthetic levels alike. The sheer range of his influence on the culture at large is immeasurable. His work assumes a key role in the art historical discourse (Tom's drawings are in the collections of institutions like The Museum of Modern Art, New York and regularly appear in museum shows throughout the world), while also occupying a place in every corner of the popular imagination.

Showcasing the breadth of Tom's material strategies, the exhibition will include not only prime examples of the artist's heralded finished drawings, pen and ink renderings, and preparatory sketches—renowned for their detail and their revolutionary representations of the male body—but also mixed-media collages that highlight his critical eye and research practices. The diversity of the work on view is a fitting celebration of the 100th birthday of a figure who created a genre in which sex, politics, aesthetics, and history play equal roles.

100 Years provides viewers with unique opportunities to observe the scope of Tom's working methodology. Exquisitely rendered pencil drawings like the rare Untitled (Cover for Kake Vol. 15 – "Violent Visitor") (1971) reveal the virtuoso qualities of the hand that generated some of his most immediately recognizable scenes. The artist's published stories, including his 26 Kake comics (1968–1986), were the forum in which Tom gave his fantasies the fullest range, and the covers, in particular, were reserved for images that were designed to be iconic, eye-catching, and arousing. If their publication was associated with the burgeoning countercultural and underground comics movements, the detailed compositions reveal connections to Classical and

Renaissance art, demanding that they also be read in relation to the sweep of the Western tradition.

Such hijacking of hegemonic institutions is one of Tom's trademarks. His narratives and the pencil and pen and ink pictures that illustrate them are filled with cowboys, policemen, bikers, and repairmen who buck their traditional roles by engaging in all manner of creative couplings. The mixed-media collages on view find him combining appropriated photographic imagery from magazines into thematic reference pages: studies of anatomy, posture, and expression. In some instances, he embellishes a printed image with his own fetishistic flair via hand-drawn interventions. Here the building blocks of Tom's aesthetic are presented in tangible material form, as are the voraciousness of his intelligence and the pointedness of his humor.

Over the course of his career, Tom's work reflected societal changes as they appeared in fashion, commercial design, technology, and architecture. Because of the concentrated and consistent nature of his project, the peripheral variations that creep in become telling indicators of the ways in which the world was changing over the decades. For all of his many influential qualities, Tom was above all responsive: to his own desires, to the relationships and bodies he observed, and to his materials.

The preparatory drawings included in 100 Years offer an incomparable register of this responsiveness, and to the transformation of a personal, desire- and passion-driven artmaking impulse into an encompassing vision that has inspired people and artists of all kinds to follow the libidinal force of their own bodies and minds.

In 2015, Artists Space, New York, organized The Pleasure of Play, the most comprehensive survey exhibition of Tom of Finland's work in the United States, which traveled to Kunsthalle Helsinki in 2016. Other solo and two-person exhibitions devoted to the life and work of Tom of Finland include Tom of Finland: Love and Liberation, House of Illustration, London (2020); Tom of Finland – The Darkroom, Fotografiska, Tallinn, Estonia; Fotografiska, New York; and Fotografiska, Stockholm (2020); TOM House: The Work and Life of Tom of Finland, Mike

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Kelley's Mobile Homestead, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2018); Sealed with a Secret: Correspondence of Tom of Finland, Postimuseo, Tampere, Finland (2014); Bob Mizer & Tom of Finland, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2013); and Kulturhuset, Stockholm (2012). Recent group exhibitions include Art & Porn, ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus, Denmark, and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2020); Camp: Notes on Fashion, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2019); Slash: In Between the Normative and the Fantasy, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga, Latvia (2015); Keep Your Timber Limber (Works on Paper), Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2013); and We the People, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York (2012). His drawings are in the public collections of Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; Art Institute of Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among many other institutions.

The Tom of Finland Foundation, dedicated to preserving Tom's legacy and supporting erotic art since 1984, operates out of the Tom of Finland House (TOM House), the artist's former shared residence and now a Historic-Cultural Monument in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles.