

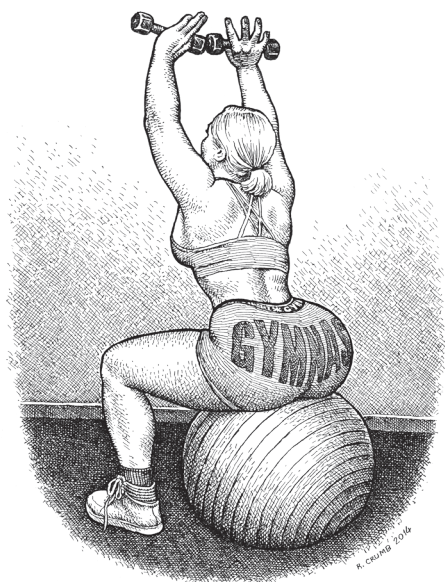
For immediate release

R. Crumb Art & Beauty

April 15 – June 2, 2016

Private view: Thursday, April 14, 6 – 8 PM

Press preview with Paul Morris and Lucas Zwirner, Editor at David Zwirner Books: 10 AM



Untitled, 2014
Page from *Art & Beauty Magazine*, Number 3, 2016
Ink on paper
12 3/4 x 9 5/8 inches (32.2 x 24.4 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present R. Crumb's inaugural exhibition at the gallery in London, featuring drawings from his *Art & Beauty* magazines. Initially published in 1996, the artist recently completed the highly anticipated third volume in the series, and the show marks the largest presentation of the project to date. This is his first solo exhibition in Britain following his 2005 presentation at Whitechapel Gallery.

One of today's most celebrated illustrators, Crumb helped define the cartoon and punk subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s with comic strips like *Fritz the Cat*, *Mr. Natural*, and *Keep on Truckin'*. The overt eroticism of his work paired with frequent self-deprecation and a free, almost stream-of-consciousness style have solidified his position as a renowned and influential artist, whose work addresses the absurdity of social conventions and political disillusionment.

Combining iconography from comic books, art history, and popular culture, *Art & Beauty* portrays a broad selection of images of female figures in diverse settings. The inspiration for the series is linked to Crumb's avid collecting of vintage underground paraphernalia including records, flipbooks, and specifically, *Art & Beauty*, a catalogue published during the 1920s and 1930s featuring semi-erotic images of life models for art lovers and aspiring painters—an early example of a top-shelf magazine.

Following a similar format as the older publication, Crumb has selected his own cast of female figures from tabloid celebrities, sport stars, life models, friends, and strangers, and accompanied them with journalistic-style commentary and quotations from other artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Paul Cézanne, and Andy Warhol. The poetic, even philosophical, prose mirrors the romanticized language of the former magazine, but becomes tinged with a subtle sarcasm and self-mockery that destabilizes the relationship between image and caption. Crumb humorously lets his own obsessions and fantasies merge with cultural stereotypes and bigotries from the past and present to create an at once personal and exaggerated typology of women.

In the works from the latest volume, presented here for the first time, Crumb continues to investigate the intersection of art and beauty through drawings based on photographs from magazines, life studies, and in a departure from the earlier issues, camera phone snapshots from city streets and selfies purportedly emailed to the artist. Women close to the artist are prominently featured, including his wife Aline Kominsky-Crumb and Eden Brower of Eden and John's East River String Band, a group Crumb often performs with, as are household names such as the tennis player Serena Williams and reality television personality Coco.

On the occasion of the exhibition, David Zwirner Books will publish all three volumes of *R. Crumb: Art & Beauty* in one book—including the artist's new work for the magazine's third issue. With a foreword written by Paul Morris, longtime gallerist and supporter of Crumb's practice, and a cover specifically designed by the artist for its release, *Art & Beauty Magazine: Drawings by R. Crumb* guides the reader through the twenty-year history of Crumb's magazine, from the earliest images of the 1990s to the most recent drawings completed in 2016. A limited edition of 400 copies with a signed bookplate will be published.

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Born in Philadelphia in 1943, **R. Crumb** moved to the dynamic Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco in 1967, and relocated in 1991 to the south of France where he currently lives and works. He has used the popular medium of the comic book to address the absurdity of social conventions, political disillusionment, irony, racial and gender stereotypes, sexual fantasies, and fetishes. Inspired by Thomas Nast, Honoré Daumier, T.S. Sullivant, James Gillray, amongst others, his drawings offer a satirical critique of modern consumer culture, and often seem to possess an outsider's perspective—a self-conscious stance which Crumb often relates to his personal life.

In 2006, the artist joined David Zwirner, where he has had two solo exhibitions. The artist's 2010 gallery show, *The Bible Illuminated: R. Crumb's Book of Genesis*, presented 207 individual black-and-white drawings from his now landmark *The Book of Genesis Illustrated by R. Crumb*. Published by W.W. Norton in October 2009, the book chronicles all fifty chapters of Genesis in a tapestry of detail and storytelling, rendered frame by frame in meticulous comic-book fashion. The momentous project received instant critical acclaim, topping many bestseller lists, including #1 on the *New York Times Graphic Books* list. Over 200,000 copies have been printed worldwide, and translation rights have been sold to fifteen countries, with published translations currently in circulation in French, German, and Italian. The exhibition was previously on view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, in 2009, before traveling to the Portland Art Museum, Oregon; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine; and the San Jose Museum of Art, California. In 2013, it was presented as part of the 55th Venice Biennale, curated by Massimiliano Gioni.

A retrospective of Crumb's work was held in 2012 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 2011, his work was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Museum of American Illustration at the Society of Illustrators, New York. A major solo show devoted to Crumb's work was organized by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, in 2007, and traveled from 2008 to 2009 to the Frye Art Museum, Seattle; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston; and the Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana, California. Other recent one-person exhibitions include the Whitechapel Gallery, London, a show which traveled the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (both 2005), and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2004). The artist was the subject of a lauded documentary by Terry Zwigoff. *Crumb* was named the best film of 1994 by the late critic Gene Siskel and won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 1995.

Work by the artist is represented in major museum collections worldwide, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Paul Morris is a private art dealer specializing in post-war and contemporary art. He has held positions at various institutions, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and The Armory Show, New York, and was the owner and director of Paul Morris Gallery from 1995 to 2007. He is a longtime friend and supporter of Robert Crumb's.