

TOM

*Kindly
Join us
Friday,
8 p.m. for a special
preview showing of
recent original drawings
and for the
first time in America*

TOM OF FINLAND
*(personal appearance by
the artist courtesy of
EONS Gallery, Los Angeles)*

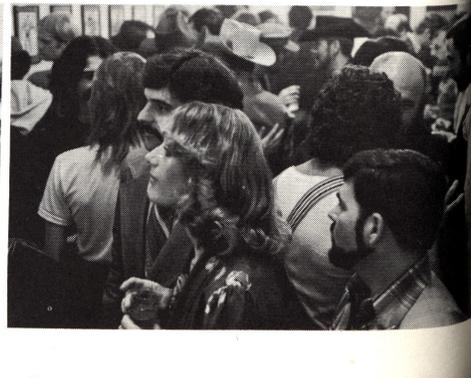
FEYWAY STUDIOS
1287 Howard St.
San Francisco

Invitation admits bearer and one guest

AMERICA WELCOMES TOM OF FINLAND

TOM DRAWING COURTESY
OF EONS GALLERY, L.A.

PHOTOS BY EFREN RAMIREZ



Interview Tom Of Finland

WITH
ROBERT OPEL



Opel: *You are a man whose images have been widely circulated; perhaps you are the best known artist in the Gay sub-culture. Have you always been an artist?*

Tom: I dreamt about being an artist, for a long time it was only a dream, I wasn't sure I could make it work, but for the past five years now I'm able to make it as a professional.

Opel: *When did you first create the images that we know as the Tom of Finland Men?*

Tom: I got my inspiration from pictures I saw in American body building magazines. I was very excited by them. I found the American type so attractive I started to draw them.

Opel: *Do you feel sexual about your work?*

Tom: Yes, otherwise, it wouldn't work. If I do a commission about a situation that really doesn't excite me, I notice that the work is bad. From the beginning I drew from my fantasy world because the real world didn't provide me with what I needed in the way of sexual stimulation. Even today when all things seem possible, when I draw I record my fantasies. When I first started to draw I felt embarrassed because I thought, well everyone can see through my drawings and know exactly what's going on in my head. But I've gotten over that and I draw exactly what I want to and I draw those situations that excite me.

Opel: *You seem to have touched some universal space because a lot of people seem to get off on the same ideas.*

Tom: I was surprised because they were very personal and to find out that a lot of other people had the same ideas, it made my work worth something and made me continue.

Opel: *Do you live in Finland now?*

Tom: Yes, this is my first trip to America.

Opel: *But your work isn't seen in Finland?*

Tom: No, pornography is illegal and the images I create are considered to be pornographic.

Opel: *Could you be prosecuted in your own country if you became visible as an artist there?*

Tom: Yes, so I am known by very few people as an artist.

Opel: *Where did your drawings first appear?*

Tom: A friend of mine in Finland got a copy of Physique Pictorial and he saw some drawings in that magazine and he told me that I should send some of my work to them and they might publish it. This was in 1957. So I sent some pieces

to Bob Mizer who was the publisher and he ran them. He also gave me the name Tom of Finland because he couldn't pronounce my name and he thought his readers would be confused by a Finnish name. So I use this name professionally.

Opel: *A lot of your work consists of stories, a series of drawings that form a scenario. You are a great storyteller.*

Tom: Well that seems to interest people. I started doing this because there were some people who approached me who wanted a story depicted in 20 or 30 pictures; and I liked this very much so I began to draw stories from my own fantasies.

Opel: *A series that I like is the one that involves circus performers. Beautiful men trapeze artists who fuck with each other in the air.*

Tom: I always found men who worked with the circus to be very exciting. They had beautiful physiques. I wondered how it would be if they were fucking with one another. So I made them fuck one another.

Opel: *Mostly you draw men, but I have seen some women that you've done. Do you like to draw women too?*

Tom: I would like to draw women more, but I am homosexual and I am turned on by men. I just don't have the same stimulation when I draw a woman.

Opel: *Do you get a hard-on when you draw these images?*

Tom: Yes, oh yes.

Opel: *Do you come when you do the final drawing in one of these very sexually exciting stories?*

Tom: No, I hold off because I have to keep going; drawing more pictures.

Opel: *I've jacked off many times to your images, and I know a lot of other people who have come all over them; you've given a lot of people some intense orgasms, which may be the very best thing you can do for someone.*

Tom: I try.

Opel: *There is a certain sense of exaggeration in your work. Do you really know many men who look like those you draw?*

Tom: No, many people have told me not to exaggerate so much and I have tried to go back to drawing more normal figures but I noticed when I tried to do this there was no reason to draw. Today the photography is so good and the bodies of the models are so fine, I don't find a reason to duplicate that or compete with that. I deal with fantasies, directing attention to certain areas of the body; but sometimes I feel that I exaggerate too much.

Opel: *You draw great asses.*

Tom: I love asses, and so I do them very well.

Opel: *Does it excite you to come here and have a show of your work and meet people who are turned on by your images?*

Tom: Very much, it is very important to me to know that people are excited by my work.

Opel: *Your men, even in the more intense Sado-Masochistic situations always seem to be having a good time when they are fucking.*

Tom: I like to see people enjoying what they do. The men in my fantasies always enjoy each other. In one series the police force one of the men to have sex with them but he eventually gets the policemen to do it without force because they all like it so well.

Opel: *Most of your work that appeared in America was not authorized by you; is that right?*

Tom: That's right. Most of the work was reproduced from magazines that appeared in Europe and Scandinavia and I received no compensation for that. I have some commissions now from people in America for which I will be paid. And I have some representatives here and we have done a calendar together for which I receive a percentage from the sales.

Opel: *Are you going to continue to draw the same images or are you considering some new directions?*

Tom: I hope to leave all this one day and begin something new.

Opel: *How many pictures have you drawn since you first started?*

Tom: Well, I didn't keep a count when I first started but there are about two thousand. I have been doing the same thing for 20 years now and I need to grow. I need to make something new. I'll make a flower for you.

Opel: *Wonderful, I'll have it made into a tattoo.*

Tom: You won't be able to have it made into a tattoo, it will have too much color. Our relationship has a lot of color and I would express it in this.

Opel: *I'll have Cliff Raven do it. The idea that you exist, Tom is quite exciting. I'm happy to know you and I'm very glad to have this time with you, and to share it with the readers of DRUMMER.*

Tom: Thank you. The people here have been wonderful. I finally get to meet all the American men who turned me on so much in the photographs I have seen. They are very special to me.