

## Artist in the News

## Tom of Finland

### TOM OF FINLAND AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

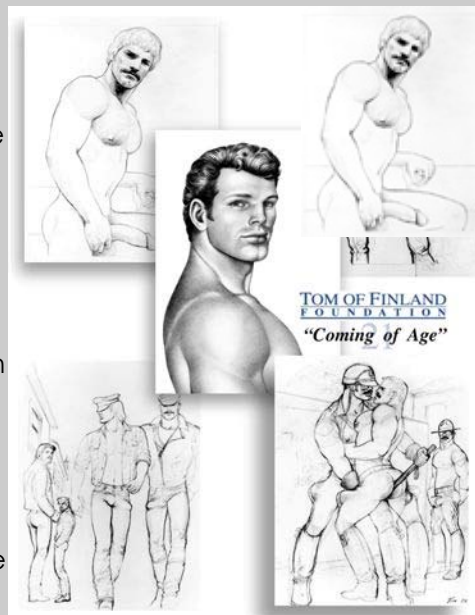
Five works by Tom of Finland have been purchased by the Judith Rothschild Foundation, to be included in a collection of 1,500 significant drawings being compiled by the Rothschild Foundation, to be gifted to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 2006.

Tom (Touko Laaksonen) was born in a small village in Finland, first came to public attention in 1956, when *Physique Pictorial* magazine began to publish his drawings. In the ensuing years, his hyper-masculine images of men, often

in explicitly erotic situations with other men, achieved the status of icons in the gay male community. His work is credited by scholars with significantly influencing the way the culture viewed gay men, as well as how gay men viewed themselves. Tom became well known for his meticulously detailed pencil drawings, many of which are now in private collections. Recently, his rough sketches have become increasingly popular among sophisticated collectors. The Rothschild acquisition includes two finished drawings and four sketches, and ranges from simple portraits to sexually explicit group images.

Though Tom's work has been acquired for the permanent collections of a number of museums - including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Kiasma, Finland's Museum of Contemporary Art - the Rothschild purchase is different, according to Cliff Benjamin, director of The Western Project, the gallery which represents Tom's work. "This will cause a shift in perspective," he said. "The inclusion of Tom of Finland in this collection means he will no longer be an 'outsider' but will rather be recognized for what he was: one of the historically significant artists of the twentieth century."

Durk Dehner, cofounder, with Tom, of The Tom of Finland Foundation, and currently its president, rejoices at the news. "I think it's timely that this is happening as the Foundation approaches its twentieth anniversary," he said. "My only regret is that Tom didn't live long enough to see his 'dirty pictures,' as he used to call them, take their rightful place among the foremost art works of his time."



Images: Tom of Finland