

DRUMMER INTERVIEW

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Leather and BDSM Drawings by Domino:

“My thrill is drawing aggressive, ripe, dripping, wet, funky masculinity.”

DOMINO OF NEW YORK SUMMER OF '78

reported by **A. Jay** with **Jack Fritscher**

- This entire interview "Domino of New York" is also available in Acrobat pdf.
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AUTHOR'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT INTRODUCTION



DRAFT VERSION



Reported by A. Jay, written February 1978 by A. Jay and Jack Fritscher, published in *Drummer* 29, May 1979. A. Jay and I were fuckbuddies, and friends until his dying day, and always collaborators. The last drawing he created before he went blind he drew for me, and I will always love him for that final symbol of our creative partnership. For details of how we worked together to create *Drummer*, see my “A. Jay Obituary” in *Drummer* 107, August 1987. This article is very typical of A. Jay’s generosity to other artists. While he was long-established, he still went out of his way to publicize emerging artists, who were never to him competition, so much as collaborators in inventing the new male images of gay liberation. I myself felt the same way about other writers: all were welcome in *Drummer*’s pages.

A photograph of A. Jay, shot that summer of 1978 in New York, appeared in *Drummer* 23, July 1978, page 87, with A. Jay’s report on bars and clubs like the Mine Shaft and the Ramrod, titled, “How I Spent My Summer Vacation; or Pigging It in New York,” which he wanted by-lined as “Harry Chess” which was, of course, the name of his hero in his continuing comic strip.

Continuing true to our roots—here with Domino—I have tried to preserve memories of both A. Jay and Domino himself. I first met Domino in New York at the opening of his one-man show, “Domino: Original Drawings and Prints,” Stompers Gallery, 259 West 4th, on December 15, 1978. In 1998, I received permission from Domino’s estate to turn 50 of his individual drawings into a permanent gallery on video, to give an overview of what his work looked like, as well as reveal who were some of his models, including Richard Locke (died September 25, 1996), and my bodybuilder lover, Jim Enger, whom

Domino drew in my bedroom on 25th Street. Jim Enger was also a model for Tom of Finland when Jim Enger was previously the lover of Chuck Romanski, the Colt model known as Clint Lockner (died June 17, 1993). Tom of Finland drew Enger and Romanski together in uniform. I've always counseled people to work with a variety of artists and photographers because each one will interpret the same subject so differently. For instance, it is interesting to compare Jim Enger interpreted in drawings by Domino, by Tom of Finland, and in photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and by me in my on-going series documenting "American Men."

Domino's arrived at his name by rolling "Don" and "Merrick" off his tongue.

The Domino Video Gallery: Tops Who Will Fuck You Up, directed and photographed by Jack Fritscher, 60 minutes, Palm Drive Video, 2002. Legendary SM culture critic, Victor Terry, wrote in *Checkmate* magazine a review *The Domino Video Gallery* which is reprinted immediately following this feature article.

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**The interview was written in February 1978,
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Notes from Manhattan. New York was into the fifth day of a heatfuck, the day I [A. Jay] first met Domino. It had all been arranged thru a friend of a friend. I was to get the first look at his portfolio of trips. We had finally agreed, after a dozen phone calls back and forth, to circle-in at an apartment on West End Avenue. I knew nothing about him but his drawing so I wore my heavy-duty brass cockring. Expectation made me semi-hard.

Domino opened the door. Firm grip. We checked each other out. Domino: lean like a fox, black eyes, dark beard and HAIRY (a definite plus!). Some small talk. Then he unzipped his portfolio and pulled out his first piece. His drawings were HOT! RED-HOT!! The kinda stuff that makes the tip of your cock wet. My balls sweated under that ring of brass. More drawings of hot men in hot sex scenes. My dick slipped down the leg of my jeans!

Domino's head is right next door to Rex's. Both draw men playing so heavy you can almost hear the dirty talk. In some drawings, Domino inks in the dialog balloons of verbal abuse. In the world of Domino, armpits stink, nipples and hairy pecs are dripping sweat. The grubby jockey shorts are ripped and pulled down to the ankles. The head-cheese juices the inside of the ripe jockstraps. The forced blowjobs and gang-fucks reek with erotic detail. Domino slams sex drawing home! Beer-gut sex. Toilet slime, hotel sleaze, and subway piss. Leather. Boots. Guns. Top pumping bottom. All in glorious

black and white!

DOMINO/SPRING '79

Time passes. Things get in the way! I'm slow. My notes are not even ready for *Drummer* when Domino triumphs in New York. One of his pictures is worth a thousand of anyone's words. Finally, *Drummer* catches up to him in all of his glorious erotic visuals. It ain't easy being the newest leather artist in town! Etienne and Tom of Finland are hard acts to follow, but Domino's wild drawings on the gallery walls of Stompers have caught New York's collectors of male erotica right in their horny crotches! Surprise! Domino's first show has been a hit. His first portfolio and catalog have become collectors' items. Domino's drawings are showing up on the most unlikely coffee tables around town!

Dissolve the New York scene to South of Market, interior, Robert Opel's Fey Way Gallery, 287 Howard Street, San Francisco. Time: March 24, 1979. Preview night of Domino's West Coast show. The "sold" stickers are all over the wall. Domino strikes again. His work sells to eager collectors. Even the South-of-Market hard-core leathermen are turned on. And when you turn on that crowd, baby! The world is raunchier for it.

As living proof, here's four Domino drawings. Their sizzle ain't heat you can shove just anywhere in a fucking mag. Domino needs space. So here he is, world. HERE'S DOMINO!

DOMINO SPEAKS ABOUT HIS FILTHY PICTURES

Domino: (1) One must observe in nature the cocks, the buns, and the tits. (2) My ambition is to re-do Tom of Finland from nature. (3) I wish to make of hot gay porn something as solid and lasting as the art of the museums.

I'm naturally kind of tongue in cheek trading on the off-quoted dictums of Paul Cezanne, because I've spent too many hours in art-history classrooms. But I'm not too far off what my drawings mean to me in my head intellectually and in my crotch erotically.

Regarding my first point: of all the things in nature that I like to observe, the muscles and dicks and tits of male anatomy are first. I like to uncover them in my drawings by having my figures in various states of undress. When I was a boy in Minnesota, I was fascinated by the strong bodies that the iron-miners and dairy-farmers revealed through their clothes. My adult fetishes come from my teen-age thrills of slyly observing these rough working men in their leather belts and boots, jeans, flannel shirts, uniforms, rubber overshoes, undershirts. My drawings are about the fetish of clothing as well as of actual sex. I remember spying on men changing clothes in the barn, stripped to the waist, working, smoking, cleaning their guns. My thrill is drawing aggressive, ripe, dripping, wet, funky masculinity.

I began drawings as a teen just to enhance my private erotic jerkoff fantasies. I intend my drawings to cause orgasm. I kept them my little secret for years while I traveled a lot, working at a lot of jobs, actually pursuing a career as a painter. I thumbed my way from Oregon to North Carolina, from Vermont to New Mexico working at lumber-jacking to bussing dishes, from driving taxi to teaching. I wanted as much experience as possible before I settled down into a studio. I firmly believed that an artist can only paint or draw that which he knows well. So I pursued the kind of men I loved to gather a headful of visual data. The task proved to be as pleasurable as it has been

educational .

At some point, I discovered the drawings of the great Tom of Finland. It seemed remarkable that another artist was recording the same mountainous shoulders, the same tight, rough buns, the same rock-solid jaws that I was. Could this be a universal ideal? I began to absorb gay erotic art. I was seeing this same "perfect man" again and again in the drawings of innumerable other (and often lesser) gay artists. Repetition of this archetype made that "ideal" begin to lose his special appeal to me, because he existed only on paper, not in bars like a man you could actually go home with.

My sexual turn-on in actual life was more real, more unique. So I set myself the ambitious task to capture in ink the different kinds of individual sex appeal that make even ugly, or dirty, or threatening men beautiful. If I could master making rough, raw, aggressive workmen into sexual objects of desire, then, I figured, maybe I could someday match what Tom had accomplished—not with Tom's man-of-our-fantasies, so much, as with the Domino men-of-our-realities.

Sometime later came the next big revelation: that drawing the American Male was really far more vital, personal, and important to me than painting the American Scene, as I was doing professionally. Putting all of my creative impetus into the pornography launched me into the art- product that I'm now ready to exhibit. Throwing a little form and technique into these hot scenes has simply added another turn-on or two to me. Intellectually and erotically, nothing has been compromised. I'm having a good time on many levels when I do the drawings, and, if they do what they're supposed to do, they'll bring a good time on any or all of those levels to those who view them with their heads and their hardons.

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FROM THE DOMINO CATALOG

Molded-to-muscle leather jackets worn by the iron miners in his home town turned Domino on long before he was old enough to make any sexual connection between studs and leather. The miners' battered engineer's boots covered with red mud "made my heart pound long before my dick did," he recalls. So did overalls, stretched tightly over the burly thighs and asses of his farmer- neighbors. Topping the list, though, were the uniforms of the recruits at a nearby Army base. He still remembers the excitement of his first discovery of the baskets that lay semi-hidden under those crisp khaki outfits. Before long he was trying hard to capture these subtle details of macho costume and attitude in the drawings of men he'd been creating in pen and ink since he was ten.

"Hero worship hit me early," he says, "probably inspired first by my uncle, a power company lineman, whose heavy work gear got pretty closely associated in my mind with the rugged work he did and his bravery in the face of danger. Putting it down on paper became one of my main goals in life—and I'm still working at it."

The drawings on these pages show that his interest is still keen in that area.

With the coming of puberty, Domino's drawings became devices that prolonged and heightened long jerk-off sessions. The soldiers, miners, farmers, and line men ("with a few cops and Nazis thrown in," he says) were Domino's purely fantasy partners for a while until one hot summer afternoon, he remembers) "when my uncle took me along with him on a fairly routine job to treat me to the first-hand experience of helping him work. That wasn't the only treat I got that day. My uncle, a rough dark, built-like-a-brick-shithouse half-breed (Norwegian and Chippewa), apparently caught on to my turn-on

which I had been valiantly struggling to keep hidden all day. When the job was over, and only the two of us were left in the company pick-up truck, he started provoking me with sly innuendos, and a lot of crotch-squeezing until he had me really wildly horny. He suddenly asked why I was blushing, put my hand on that wonderful bulge in his Levi's, and my life was changed from that moment on! He was one hell of a teacher."

Right away, Domino's drawings took a big leap forward in the authenticity of their detail and the intensity of their mood and action, he reports, and it was evident that a lot more first-hand research was needed—and wanted. An outdoor john in a local park served as a locale for further investigation into those tantalizing lumps in the soldiers' uniforms—as well as "what to do at a gloryhole," he says. After high school the wanderlust hit, and he spent a number of years gathering first-hand experiences and collecting visual data to use in his drawings. He traveled over much of the country, usually "on my thumb, which added a real taste for the bizarre." Strong among the store-house of memories collected during these years are recollections of the lumberjacks he worked with in a logging camp near Mount Rainier in Washington. "They gave us great little two-man bunkhouses to sleep in, and we only got into town one weekend a month. Those loggers got pretty horny in the meantime, and some wild scenes went on in the bunkhouses before the 5 o'clock morning whistle sent us out into the woods.

Working as a highway-construction surveyor in Minnesota added more material, as did driving a cab in Chicago ("lots of weirdos when you work the graveyard shift, boy!"), surveying, again, for the Forestry Department in New Mexico ("no bosses to watch over you when you're high up in the Jimenez Mountains alone with a work-buddy whose cock never goes down"), and doing a stint in the Navy on the eastern seaboard ("how about hour after idle hour in drydock with nothing else to do but hide out in one of the many unused heads with a huge, humpy Dago bunk-mate...") Some formal training, and a growing career as an artist, eventually brought Domino to New York City where he now lives and continues his "research."

"Currently," says the artist, "I'm trying to instill in my memory the face and greasy work clothes the manager of a certain New Jersey Amoco station. I'm determined to get him alone one of these days, so that I can memorize the rest of him."

©1978 Domino, ©2003 Estate of Don Merrick

Domino Video Gallery **Review by Victor Terry** **from *Checkmate* magazine**

Domino Video Gallery: Tough Tops Who Will Fuck You Up! Directed and photographed by Jack Fritscher: produced and edited by Mark Henry. 60 minutes. 1999. Review by Victor Terry.

Domino is a well-known GM DS raunch artist, and this video shows fifty of his 70s to 90s drawings in great close-up detail. The camera roves up, down, and across the drawings, usually pulling back to give a complete shot of an individual drawing. The dirty daddies are bikers, construction men, cops, farmers, firemen, soldiers, truckers, and the like. They are usually 40's, hirsute, mustached, often bearded or unshaven, often beer-bellied, often uncut, always big dicked and sometimes dripping, often erect. The men are sometimes

alone enjoying a solitary masturbation, are sometime engaged in duets or trios involving pissing on bodies and in mouths, fucking on top of a telephone pole or in a forest or in a prison cell. Dominance and submission (rape) are present as is some bondage; the bondage drawings are toward the tape's end. Occasionally, a photo of a man, apparently a man who inspired Domino, will be shown with the companion drawing. Richard Locke is one such man. Domino's admirers should snap up this tape which is, says Palm Drive Video, all new for the millennium.

Excerpts from "Memorandum of Understanding between the Estate of Don Merrick and Jack Fritscher/Mark Hemry/www.PalmDriveVideo.com"

1. The Estate of Don Merrick, which owns the rights to the Don Merrick *aka* Domino drawings, owns forever the copyrights to the Domino drawings sent...to Jack Fritscher and Mark Hemry/Palm Drive Video Arts, and grant permission for their use in the video documentary.
2. Fritscher-Hemry as Palm Drive Video Arts will create a documentary video, the *Domino Video Gallery*, to interpret these particular Domino drawings and will own the copyright to the video.
3. During this three-year agreement, these particular Domino drawings may not be used in any other video...but they may be published by their copyright owners, in magazines and books and advertising and galleries, and by the filmmakers, in magazines and books and advertising, continuing after three years, for the dual purpose of promoting the *Domino Video Gallery* and memorializing the artist Domino himself....

Signed by the Estate of Don Merrick, November 16, 1996

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