



Tom Hinde Portfolio

The Artist Speaks

by Tom Hinde with Jack Fritscher

Written and produced in March-April 1977, at the request of Tom Hinde as a press release to accompany his drawings and quotations for *Drummer 16* (June 1977), Second Anniversary Issue.

This same text was also published at Hinde's show at the Eons Gallery, 708 Heliotrope Drive, Los Angeles, August 2-31, 1977.

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I. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written December 22, 2001

Gay art spontaneously combusted into the first designated "gay galleries." Lowell and Herb's Eons Gallery in Los Angeles, like Robert Opel's Fey-Way Gallery in San Francisco and Lou Weingarden's Stompers Gallery in New York, was one of the pioneer galleries for queer art in the 1970s. Eons opened in March 1976 showing the photographs of *Drummer* contributor, Robert Opel; the 1977 Eons show featured Tom Hinde, Tom of Finland, Go Mishima, and Zach of Los Angeles. Tom Hinde's first solo show at Fey-Way was January 20 to February 18, 1978. (See the telegram from Eons' "Lowell and Herb" congratulating Etienne and A. Jay on their dual opening at Fey-Way, May 1978, in the "Star Trick" entry in this book.)

Tom Hinde sold his S&M lithographs as 8x10 prints in limited editions of 125 signed-and-serially-numbered "suites" through his own mail-order company, Denim Publications, San Francisco. Through Denim, Tom Hinde published the 120-page paperback novel titled *Leather Boy, Leather Man*. Billed as "At last, a sensitive S&M Sex/Love Story," the novel was particularly well written by Robert Stewart (whom I always believed to be Tom Hinde toying with the heritage names of Jim Stewart

and Sam Steward). The cover and the 10 interior illustrations—one for each chapter—were drawn by Tom Clave (aka Tom Hinde). Hinde's drawings in that book are original and distinctive, yet seem to share the nervous, speedy South-of-Market look similar to drawings by legendary drug-addict artist, Chuck Arnett. Tom gave me a copy of this limited edition novel in 1977, and I treasure it to this day.

Tom Hinde's personal story in a sense is the story of *Drummer*—out of many stories of *Drummer*. The 1970s were a Golden Age before HIV sucked out the gold and turned the light as fluorescent as an ICU.

Tom Hinde, born in San Francisco, was the kind of artist *Drummer* needed to invent itself. His story is typical of how personal sex encounters led into the pages of *Drummer* at a time when everybody was fucking everybody else. Tom Hinde, a brilliant erotic artist of submission, was both my friend and playmate. He starred as “the martyr” in my two-reel Super-8 color film, *The Imitation of Art* (1973), two years before *Drummer* was invented. The film trans-substantiated Tom's autobiographical S&M drawings onto his own flesh, which, of course, made him so much the more interesting as an artist whose lust included the performance art of his own erotic suffering. I filmed the movie at Allan Lowery's playroom on Castro near 15th Street. David Sparrow did the lighting. My films and videos usually focus on one man on screen from the photographer's point of view. If I walk into the frame, my camera is on my tripod.

Over time, Tom Hinde introduced me to several other artists and bodybuilders who also wished to appear as martyrs on screen as if, I think, to be able to see themselves lit and angled and shot in ways even more intimate than in a mirror. This “suffering artist” phenomenon in the 1970s in San Francisco was not new to me, even when “original-recipe martyr,” Michel Foucault, showed up to play among the *Drummer* salon on Folsom Street, because in the 1960s in New York I had shot a number of rather severe films of several artists and critics and writers (the names of the dead, the famous, and the still living are deleted). In San Francisco, one in my series of S&M films, *Muscle Agonistes* (1972), was shot in the same location as was Tom Hinde. The little epic starred Tom Hinde's friend, the very handsome blond bodybuilder Robert Walker who was a painter famous as a muralist in Los Angeles interior design. He was also the personal chef for the very famous “name deleted,” the doyenne of the San Francisco social scene whom Armistead Maupin fictionalized in *Tales of the City*.

(Many of my Super-8 films and 35mm transparencies—some shot with Tony Tavarossi at the Slot Hotel in the Stocks Room #226—premiered during a number of performance-art “happenings” staged with the poet Ron Johnson at the No Name bar on Folsom Street during

1972-1973. The No Name became the Bolt which became the Brig which became the Powerhouse.)

In 1972, the ever gracious Robert Walker asked my lover David Sparrow and me as a favor to him to pose for one of his very large paintings which was not meant to be a portrait of us. Because Robert Walker had appeared in my Super-8 film, turn-about seemed fair play. That experience of being made into the object of a painter's eye is recounted as an episode in my 1975 short story, "Rainbow County," in the female character named "Cleo Walker." Robert Walker after several sessions said, "I can't capture the two of you in one frame. There is too much tension." Neither David Sparrow nor I needed to ask exactly what that meant. The painting which was mythic in theme lies unfinished in some San Francisco attic. The short story that remains appears as the title story in *Rainbow County and Other Stories*, as well as in *Sweet Embraceable You: Coffee-House Stories* featuring my spin on Virginia Woolf, "Mrs. Dalloway Went That-A-Way."

David Sparrow and I were gorgeously tempestuous lovers, truly in love and loving each other, officially from July 4, 1969, through March 17, 1979. After that we became even more tempestuous friends who continued to fuck together, as well as tempestuously create together (mostly billed together, explicitly or covertly), shooting many photographs for *Drummer* under the names "Spitting Image" and "David Sparrow." Actually, from 1977-1979, the salon of friends and talent and fighting at *Drummer* drove David and me closer together in creative work, and drove us apart as a domestic couple. *Drummer* at that period of High Sex was the only game in town, and the very handsome David Sparrow—depressed by his genetically addictive and suicidal personality, confirmed by his sister—never felt he could compete with other players such as Robert Mapplethorpe, who, as I recall, bought several drawings by Tom Hinde, because, Robert said, he admired Tom Hinde's work at Tom's second Fey-Way Gallery show, January 21 to February 18, 1979. (David Sparrow, my first true love, is loosely fictionalized as the character Teddy in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1979-1982*.)

Everything about our lives in the Titanic 70s was in the fast lane, but at least we were celebrity passengers in a decade when everyone was a star. On March 3, 1979, Fey-Way, the first art gallery South of Market, celebrated its first anniversary hosted by founder Robert Opel and his muse, the poet and singer Camille O'Grady. On April 20, 1979, I recorded live my interview with Camille O'Grady and Robert Opel which was published in *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera* (1994). On May 21, San Francisco gays, angered by the light sentence given to assassin Dan White, set police cars on fire outside City Hall during the

White Night Riot. A week later, Robert Opel appeared as Gay Justice in the Civic Center plaza and with a gun acted out “executing Dan White.” Six weeks later, on July 8, 1979, a real gunman entered Fey-Way Gallery, cornered Robert Opel and Camille O’Grady and Anthony Rogers, and in an exchange of words shot Robert Opel to death. To handle the horror the leather-and-art salon immediately spun a joke about how cruel a critic could be.

Critics can be merciless. Rewind tape! Five months before the murder, on January 30, 1979, Camille O’Grady, distressed at a review of Tom Hinde’s work in *The San Francisco Sentinel* newspaper, wrote me a letter introducing herself. She was that month literally “new in town” and she trusted that as *Drummer* editor I could help rebut the review. Her approach to me was typical of the power of not me but of the editorship of *Drummer*. Mapplethorpe approached me in the same way. (Camille and I discussed that her letter was both personal to me and an “open letter” meant for publication, and that her letter to the *Sentinel* was also an “open letter” which she gave me to publish at my discretion.)

Camille O’Grady
c/o Fey-Way Studios
1287 Howard Street
San Francisco Calif 94103
January 30, 1979

Dear Jack:

I have been in San Francisco for about a month—I read *Drummer*, & we have many friends in common both here and in N.Y.C.

I thought that this article & my reply to it might be of interest to you & others at *Drummer*. Since I don’t know whether my letter will be published in the *Sentinel*, I am sending you this copy of it. [Camille included a clipping from page 9 of the *Sentinel*, January 26, 1979]

I am reachable through the gallery—626-1000. If you haven’t seen Tom Hinde’s show, come by and see it.

—Camille O’Grady ©1979 Camille O’Grady

This letter opened a friendship. Camille and I bonded (over Tom Hinde) within our mutual circle of New York and San Francisco artists and writers who traveled back and forth between *Drummer* and Fey-Way. (We also bonded as quivering Catholics, and she gave me copies of dozens of her song lyrics and mystic poems. I gave her journal pages from *Some*

Dance to Remember.) Camille was to Robert Opel what Patti Smith was to Robert Mapplethorpe, except that Camille was hot. Forget comparisons to the intellectually engaging Patti Smith who is cool in her own right. Camille O'Grady seemed to me to be channeling Jim Morrison. In the early 70s, she was an artist who was a singer and a poet. She came up in the underground sex-art-punk milieu of Manhattan. At the Mineshaft, where no women were allowed, the crotchety Wally Wallace who founded and managed the Mineshaft (opening night, October 8, 1976, to the closing in 1985), told me in my videotaped interview with him (March 28, 1990) that he actually welcomed the full-leather Camille into his infamous sex club. (Wally Wallace died September 7, 1999.)

Camille O'Grady lived the liberated pop-and-art life Camille Paglia wrote about ten years later. To me, Camille O'Grady was the "Queen of the *Drummer* Women." She was second only to Jeanne Barney, the founding Los Angeles editor in chief of *Drummer*.

As an exorcist ordained by the Catholic Church, I know about witches: Camille was born a changeling. In the 1977 text-and-photo book *Hard Corps: Studies in Leather and Sodomasochism* by Michael Grumley and Ed Gallucci, she appears in two photographs: as a striking woman, and as a genderfuck leatherboy. (I wrote in 1979, "Camille O'Grady is a lady. And the lady is a tramp. That's hot.") In fact, Wally Wallace not only let Camille in to play, he invited her to sing at the Mineshaft's 1978 anniversary party where she belted out her piss song, "Toilet Kiss." She wrote all of her songs from a gay man's point of view. Camille had assembled her own band dubbed "Leather Secrets" who were a prototype of punk and new wave. Camille told me on audiotape that she played at Hilly Kristal's CBGB "before Patti." Her flyer announcing her appearance at Max's Kansas City, October 9, 1977, sported a drawing of her with a bullet-snifter of poppers (or coke?) up one nostril. Her temporary tattoos read "Wounded Not Broken" and "Stigmata Hari Bleeds for You."

She had messed around singing with Lou Reed who called her "Patti Smith without a social conscience." That whole Warhol Factory superstar scene, and *Interview* magazine crowd, welcomed Camille's creation of her own wild twin, "Stigmata Hari." Camille met Robert Opel about the time he streaked the whole wide world on live television at the 1974 Academy Awards. My former house mate Jim Stewart whose work I introduced to *Drummer* photographed Camille for his show at the Ambush bar. The show opened on March 3, 1979, with Camille appearing in a "Special Guest Performance." Jim Stewart had moved from Kalamazoo, Michigan, with David Sparrow and me when we all heard the call to head to San Francisco where Jim Stewart lived with us on 25th Street. Camille was,

before the trauma of the murder of Robert Opel, a kind of earth mother, a leather lioness of the arts.

And Tom Hinde was one of her cubs.

Her significance emphasizes his.

Excuse me for thinking about these times, and these people, and that art the way some think about the lives and art of all charmed circles of their young adulthood.

At the time, I thought they were all of interest.

That's why I saved everything: letters, invitations, the last Quaalude....

And took notes.

And shot photos.

And made audiotapes and films, and then videos.

Camille's letter to the *Sentinel* is interesting and maybe important because she voices her own view of art and morality, which, while very liberated, reveals the reactionary Catholic underneath.

Her art-for-art's-sake letter is dated "January 27, 1979," and says:

Dear *Sentinel*,

In his review in the Jan. 26 *Sentinel*, Beau Riley has compared the art of Thomas Hinde as representing "evil," and the art of William McNeill as representing "good." This approach is unfair to both artists, and is irrelevant to the criticism of art itself.

If Riley is to criticize art, he can not approach his subject as a moralist; he must leave his and others' lives and lifestyles behind, particularly regarding art of a sexual/sensual nature.

Riley's major criticism of Hinde's work is a reaction to the subject matter, and his (Riley's) projections about it. He was obviously quite disturbed by the work. He was, on the other hand, quite delighted with McNeill's work.

Riley then proceeds (very ambitiously) to declare that one man's work is "art" and that the other's is not—on a "good-evil" basis. What each artist is appealing to is an experience in a specifically sexual area—where one man's pain is another man's pleasure, where one man's "heaven" is another man's "hell."

One of the main properties of successful "art" is its ability to place the viewer in the artist's spirit; in the case of these two artists, in his sexual persona and flesh. If one is to truly experience sexual art, he must approach it with an acceptance and willingness to have congress with the artist's own vision. If one is to criticize it and negate it as "art" outside of technique, the only

dismissal of sexual art is that the critic was totally *unmoved* [word is underscored by Camille’s hand in ink] in any sensual way.

Art is the forum where men can transcend many limitations, one of them being the area of “good” and “evil”: many physically uncommitted crimes have been transfigured by artists into great moments to be recognized and experienced by others. The critic’s function is to determine whether that moment occurs — not whether he is physically repelled by it or not.

Sincerely,

Camille O’Grady [signed in black ink from a fountain pen]

©1979 Camille O’Grady

Tom Hinde’s drawings were so controversial in the Titanic 70s that they made critic Beau Riley foam at the mouth like a right-wing Republican — in fact, like a 1979 prototype of the new wave of the politically correct. Riley reviewed two shows: William McNeill’s “Seven Deadly Virtues,” seven large mixed-media drawings at the Ambush bar, and Tom Hinde’s “Thomas G. Hinde,” forty-one small drawings at Fey-Way Gallery. The two South of Market venues were about two blocks apart.

Beau Riley was writing about not just Tom Hinde. He was also flaming on about sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll South of Market in the same fundamentalist way as had Richard Goldstein in his shock feature article “S&M: The Dark Side of Gay Liberation,” *Village Voice*, July 7, 1975 — two weeks after the first issue of *Drummer* was published, June 20, 1975.

In truth, in that time in that place in the politically correct *Sentinel*, Riley was really writing about *Drummer* and the culture of *Drummer*.

Odd, the way he perceived it, because at the same time he was writing his point of view for the *Sentinel*, I was writing my point of view about art, politics, gay leather culture, and the fashioning of homomale identity in *Drummer*.

I find it absolutely necessary to quote fundamentalist Beau Riley because he voices precisely the politically-correct bigotry that I was fighting against in the pages of *Drummer*. In the fair play of fair use, I quote the vanished Riley nearly in full because his militant article in smearing the leather culture South of Market as an “explicit hell” and “forum of depravity” is historical “Exhibit A” of swanning gay puritanism. He requires inserted line-item rebuttals and scholar-like comments. And, to be fair to him and readers who may want to judge if I have “bent the bent” of his primary text in then publisher Charles Morris’ *The Sentinel*, I quote him for textual examination because his article seems otherwise irretrievable.

Beau Riley wrote in part:

William McNeill's seven colossal-sized works are clearly idealizations. They all represent nude males, rendered in a mix of black, white and gray media, in a loose, quick, Zen-inspired style.... The group has been given a satiric name, deadly virtues [*sic*], a warning to the wary not to take the works at face value, not to see them as only seven naked men.

Thomas Hinde has been equally and oppositely direct. His forty-one small drawings are specimens of precise draftsmanship, mostly in pencil, a few with washes of ink or paint, one washed with the artist's own shit. The subjects are sado-masochistic sexual activity, including bondage, mutilation, and the (nowadays) inevitable fistfucking. No reference is made to abstractions, to ideals, or to anything which a camera might not have seen as well as Hinde. His men, trussed and slung for fisting, seem to insist that we not see a male nude, but merely the debased and dis-clothed [*sic*] human object.

Clearly Hinde is an eroticist and McNeill is not, but this is where the ambiguity begins. Hinde's cold, even clinical approach seems to prevent an erotic response....

Both artists are working from the milieu in which they are exhibited, the black-and-white, EXPLICIT HELL SOUTH OF MARKET, THAT FORUM OF DEPRAVITY [I added caps to emphasize Beau Riley's Jonathan Edwards-like preacher's approach to "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; or is he more a campy version of Harold Hill singing "We Got Trouble" in *The Music Man*.] which has arisen in our troubled day, in part as a response to our confusion. We seem to be looking for something basic, durable and present which can be used as a referent [*sic*], and we seem to find this in ultimate forms of sexuality.

But Hinde's appreciation of whatever is going on out there in the sex clubs and bars and deserted streets is typically American, short-sighted and misled by appearances. He is content to locate and show the events, the symptoms of this social exploration, in this case the extreme sex acts themselves, together with their miasmic atmosphere of decay, ruin, and disgust, all of it neatly, nicely, medically framed under glass on white walls, and for a clientele in their dress-leathers.

By contrast, McNeill's approach is typically Japanese, understated, lyric, ironic....

Two scenes: Hinde in a gallery, free wine, everybody seeing and being seen. McNeill in a scruffy [*sic*] bar, supply your own drugs and look out for reality....Hinde's work is a spectre, McNeill's a prospect....Hinde's work is ILLUSTRATIVE, his technique MAGAZINE-LIKE [I added caps to emphasize the prejudice that the "proper gay establishment" has always had against gay magazines as a genre], his ideas are those which are comfortable in their perverse way, and the works themselves [are] as easily dismissed or obsessively retained as any pornographic image....

Clearly McNeill has bested our fractious times...to assert himself and to plea for goodness. Clearly Hinde has been bested by it all, been objectified and victimized like his subjects, has surrendered his own feelings to the crowd notion of what is real. Hinde has been specific, naked if you will; but McNeill has made art.

—©Beau Riley, "The Naked and the Nude," *The San Francisco Sentinel*, January 26, 1979, page 9.

Beau Riley makes me think of the German saying from the 1890s, "Just because you take it up the ass doesn't mean you're a critic." Like so many under-educated and agenda-driven gay critics in *The Sentinel* and in the *Bay Area Reporter*, instead of reviewing the art, he uses the art as an opportunity to stand on his moralistic, fundamentalist, bi-polar soapbox.

Of course, Tom Hinde was absolutely "illustrative" and "magazine-like." That's why *Drummer* published him. Of course, he had "perverse" ideas and had been "objectified and victimized." That's why we all had sex with him. And made movies of him. He suffered beautifully. He was like Christ in Gethsemane. He was a great bottom.

As of this date, Thomas G. Hinde, who gave me several of his drawings, is listed by his alma mater, St. Mary's College, San Francisco, among the "Lost Alumni" of 1964.

Camille O'Grady—God bless her—is rumored to be alive and well and living at an undisclosed location.

Tom Hinde was the kind of S&M player who, breathless over the poet, e e cummings, did not use upper-case capitalization he thought suitable only for masters and tops. He signed his drawings both as "T. Clave" and "Thomas G. Hinde" playing with S&M metaphor: that *clave* is a word for a hardwood stick used in a pair for percussion, and that *hind* can also mean *rear-end* and *deer*.

II. The feature essay as published in *Drummer* 16, June 1977,
Second Anniversary Issue

Body Worship, Submerged in Sex...

Tom Hinde Portfolio

The Artist Speaks

by Tom Hinde with Jack Fritscher

Mr. Hinde was born in San Francisco and was raised in Mill Valley, California, and in the Napa Valley, north of the San Francisco Bay Area. He has studied art at the San Francisco Art Institute, College of Marin, St. Mary's College, and the University of California Extension Center, San Francisco. His training includes lithography, etching, silk screen, painting (oil), landscape, and portraiture with major emphasis upon life drawing and the human form. His current medium is graphite and pencil, turpentine washes, and pastel. His subject matter of sex, language, and worship can best be summed up in his own words.

I once saw an alley cat in heat, spread eagle on a concrete walkway between my house and the place next door. looking over the fence I saw her lying flat on her belly with her rear sticking up in the air, her tail whipping from one side to the other. her front claws dug into the concrete path pulling at it. gathering in the alley were several toms [Tom's own multiple personas] fighting with each other over who would mount her first. four of them fucked her savagely and with each thrust she backed farther against that captor mating as violently as she could; she didn't care who screwed her or how many times each one did. she simply lay there howling for more and wanting no pause between shifts.

man as animal, like that alley cat or a bull wild in his mating; man mounting man, the spirit all carnal. man feeling his body, not thinking, enjoying his instincts as he submits to his body, freeing that animal to act: to taste ass, cock, sweat, to slap, kiss, grunt, to fart, to fuck, to eat cock, to rim, to howl, to cry. the power enjoyed while controlling another body—whether fucking it, beating it, tying it down, or stringing it up. the joy of surrender. the celebration of the animal in man.

I draw people who are human, people completely submerged in their sex with bodies which are real, faces filled with feeling, playing with other bodies, bare expressions which are quite direct. in the intensity of

this specific sexual language no thought is paid to any reality outside of the immediate. no value exists except the desirability of each body involved and the pride in which each person offers himself. "I am a man," his actions say, and as a man, he kneels or boastfully stands to take the pleasure he wants.

it is within this context, this personal climate that I draw my subject for it is here that a man lies exposed, his feelings expanded and open, his senses ignoring all caution or censure. the reverence demonstrated and acknowledged when one kneels before another "giving head or ass or body" is an act done in worship of the body. the cooperation between each person involved, seeking a common end produces that intensity experienced in their moments of climax; both work towards it, each one prodding the other on with a kiss or his hand. the reverence, the cooperation, the language, and each mood of this communication is what I acknowledge with my drawing. the dignity of those touches, and their intimacy, is worthy of respect.

—Thomas G. Hinde, May 24, 1977

III. Eyewitness Illustrations

Invitation, Tom Hinde Preview Party, Fey-Way Studios, 1978. Self-portrait by Tom Hinde.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Top: Tom Hinde self-portrait business card 1970s. Bottom: Cover of paperback novel illustrated *and* published by Tom Hinde who was most likely also the author under the pseudonym of “Robert Stewart.” In the 1970s, especially in gay publishing such as *Drummer*, authors and artists often had several alternative names. The desire was to make a few seem like many to gain business status for the publication by giving the impression that a large staff—and not just one or two dedicated people—had created the book or magazine. *Drummer* publisher John Embry frequently removed Jack Fritscher’s byline because, Embry said, “It looks like you’re writing the whole damn issue.” As a result, Fritscher often assigned the credit for his own writing and photography solely to his domestic lover of ten years, David Sparrow, and to his longtime friend, David Hurlles.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

© Jack Fritscher

Invitation, Fey-Way Studios, group show, First Anniversary, March 3, 1979, drawing by Camille O'Grady. During the inclusivity of the Titanic 1970s, before the iceberg of the gay gender wars, women and men mixed together in the art and life of SoMa. Robert Opel paired with Camille O'Grady. Steve McEachern of the Catacombs paired with Cynthia Slater of the Society of Janus. Robert Mapplethorpe paired with Patti Smith, but did not bring her to San Francisco where she would have been *prima inter pares*. The artists listed were: "Camille O'Grady, Gill Mann, Tom, Jim Stewart, Jonni Marchant, Lionel Biron, Rick Borg, Lou Rudolph, Gordon Pollock, Christina McCabe, Michael Drew, Kent, Stryder, The Hun, Larry Hunt, Tom Hinde, Mark Kadota, Robert Opel."

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

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Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *[Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#)*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

Opposite and this page. *Cinema Verite Meets Drummer Verite*. Four photographs of Tom Hinde and Jack Fritscher co-creating on the set of Jack Fritscher's *Imitation of Christ* film, *The Imitation of Art* (1973), on location at 15th and Castro Street. This documentary kind of reader-reflexive *verite* truth was what Fritscher's *Drummer* was all about. In this genre, *Drummer* picked as two of its video favorites Fritscher's *Buck's Bunkhouse Discipline* and *Hot Lunch*. Production photographs by Jack Fritscher assisted by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

Top: "Robert Opel and Singer-Poet Camille O'Grady with Interviewer Jack Fritscher of *Drummer*," Fey-Way Studios, April 17, 1979 (Tuesday, 7:30 P. M.). Fritscher's audiotape is Opel's last interview. These pictures are the last shots of Opel and O'Grady photographed together before Opel's murder, Sunday, July 8, 1979. Fritscher withheld his interview from *Drummer* and it was first published in the book *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera* (1994). Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. Middle: Camille O'Grady and Jack Fritscher, same evening. Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. Bottom: Robert Opel, same evening. Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

“San Francisco’s Muse Camille O’Grady,” *Drummer* salon portrait, Fey-Way Studios, April 17, 1979. Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

©Jack Fritscher

Robert Opel streaked the 1974 Academy Awards live telecast. Top: Opel streaking an LA courtroom protesting the closing of a nude beach; two-page photo spread from publisher Fred Halsted's magazine *Package 6* (January 1977). *Package* was a "Virtual *Drummer*" which tried to dig deeper than publisher John Embry allowed *Drummer* to go. Photograph by Opel's associate, B. Moritz. Bottom: Opel's obituary as reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 10, 1979. ©*San Francisco Chronicle*

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

Camille O'Grady photographed by serial-killer victim Larry Hunt, a member of the SoMa *Drummer* salon, who was himself a model (August 1978) for Jack Fritscher who introduced him to Robert Mapplethorpe who photographed Hunt in knee-high lace-up boots. Years after he went missing from a leather bar in Los Angeles, Hunt's jawbone was found in Griffith Park.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

The “Christmas Fix Invitation” illustrated with Chuck Arnett’s drug-drawing for the “Christmas Fix” salon party at “Fey-Way, Midnight, December 30, 1978,” featured Santa injecting his forearm with a hypodermic whose old tracks spell out *NOEL*. Fritscher has suggested that the sharing of needles during the Titanic 70s, more than unsafe sex, was what killed many speed-driven leather players in the first wave of HIV. Besides Robert Opel premiering his film *Fuck You, Santa Claus*, “club” artists featured were “Camille O’Grady direct from the Mineshaft in her first West Coast appearance,” Ruby Zebra’s queer rock poetry, Spikey Dummer’s live music, Tom of Finland, Rex, Chuck Arnett, Olaf, the Hun, A. Jay, and photographer Bill Moritz from the LA salon of Fred Halsted.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Invitation, Rex drawing—with actual condom attached by the artist's hand. On the condom the printing reads in tiny four-point black ink on yellow-white rubber: "Rex Originals, Fey-Way Studios, 1287 Howard St. San Francisco, April 8-19 [1978]. Reception for the Artist. April 7, 8-11 PM, Admits 2." Prime among the clever 1970s mixed-media pop-art objects, and second only to Aleister Crowley's ejaculation cover of *White Stains* (1898), this "Rex at Fey-Way" invitation is extremely fragile. Drawing ©Rex. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

© Jack Fritscher

“Pigs Out Of Castro” samizdat flyer distributed on May 22, 1979, the morning after the White Night Riot when crowds of gays angry over the light sentence given to Harvey Milk’s assassin attacked City Hall and set a dozen police cars ablaze. Immediately, the SFPD retaliated and stormed down Castro Street beating gays in their path. The Libertarian Party created this flyer protesting Mayor Dianne “Feinstein’s Gestapo.”

**Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *[Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness](#)*
*[Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008***

© Jack Fritscher

Poster. Robert Opel's samizdat advertising, *America Busted: A Satirical Revue*, was his response to the May 21, 1979, "Twinkie Defense" that let Dan White, the assassin of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, off with a slap on the wrist. "Robert Opel in association with Katos Rota, presents *American Busted: A Satirical Revue*" with "players Alexander Larsen and Howard Davis-McNeeley; Music by Sunshine; Masks by St. Bernard. \$2.00 at the door." In an earlier performance-art happening at San Francisco City Hall, Opel garbed himself as Gay Justice and with a prop gun "executed Dan White," the former fireman and cop; in his other satires, he had also appeared as "Uncle Sam" and as gay enemy Anita Bryant. *America Busted* played twice (8:30 and 10:30), one night only, July 4, 1979. Four nights later, on July 8, 1979, two men walked into Fey-Way Studios, forced Camille O'Grady to the floor, and shot Robert Opel to death. The turbulent week around July 4, 1979, and the murder of Opel at age 39, is dramatized in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 3, Sequence 9. Although someone was arrested and convicted, Fritscher's *Rashomon* inquiry poses: *Who Really Killed Robert Opel?*

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

In 1978, Robert Opel began promoting his own “Virtual *Drummer*” to be titled *National Pornographics*. A week after hiring Fritscher to write him a kickoff story, Opel arrived at Fritscher’s home and sat at the kitchen table with Robert Mapplethorpe who laughed when Opel asked Fritscher to read the story aloud. When finally Fritscher agreed, performance artist Opel astonished both Mapplethorpe and Fritscher when he unzipped and stroked to the rhythms of the story. When the story and Opel ended, Opel wrote Fritscher a check as Mapplethorpe muttered, “I thought I had to work hard for the money.” Opel retorted: “You should see my rejection slips.”

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

© Jack Fritscher

“Olaf and the Hun,” Invitation, 1979. Drawing by Olaf (1938-1997). Olaf and the Hun were two longtime contributors to *Drummer*. The two films, *The Hun Video Gallery: Rainy Night in Georgia*, and *The Hun Video Gallery: Chain Gang Gang Bang*, directed and photographed by Jack Fritscher and edited by Mark Henry, were both Palm Drive Video feature releases (1992).

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

“Robert Opel Presents Rex,” Invitation, 1979. Drawing by Rex. Drawing ©Rex. Used with permission. This announcement, the epitome of the zero degrees of separation in the *Drummer* salon, was also published as a quarter-page display ad in *Drummer* 30 (June 1979). Rex and his work were profiled in *Drummer* by Jack Fritscher in his special “New York Art” issue, *Son of Drummer* (September 1978). The bicoastal and reclusive Rex was the official artist of Wally Wallace’s Mineshaft in New York. When a SoMa arsonist torched the Barracks bath on Folsom Street during the night of July 10, 1981, the neighboring studios of Rex and photographer Mark I. Chester were destroyed. The burning of the Barracks and the flaming disintegration of Rex’s studio were fictionalized in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 4, Sequence 3. The film, *The Rex Video Gallery: Corrupt Beyond Innocence*, directed and photographed by Jack Fritscher and edited by Mark Henry, was a Palm Drive Video feature release (1993).

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

“Domino and Rick Borg,” Invitation, March 24, 1979. Drawing ©Estate of Don Merrick. Used with permission. Like Rex and the Hun, New York artist Domino (Don Merrick) functioned in the salon axis between Fey-Way Studios and *Drummer*. If Rex was a skid-row existentialist of “J. Alfred Prufrock” proportions, Domino was a romanticist of the same blue-collar sex in “one-night cheap hotels.” *Drummer* art director Al Shapiro and editor in chief Jack Fritscher produced their interview “Drawings by Domino” in *Drummer* 29 (May 1979). *The Domino Video Gallery: Men Who Will Fuck You Up*, directed and photographed by Jack Fritscher and edited by Mark Hemry, was a Palm Drive Video feature release (1994).

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

“Haiku Headlines.” As an eyewitness of San Francisco’s nervous breakdown, Fritscher montaged some of the *San Francisco Chronicle* headlines that began with the Jonestown Massacre, November 18, 1978, escalated with the assassination of Moscone and Milk, November 27, 1978, and continued through the White Night Riot, May 21, 1979. During this exact same high-anxiety period, Fritscher was sole editor in chief of *Drummer* which was having its own nervous breakdown because its publisher John Embry withdrew temporarily with the onset of cancer, treatment, and cure. *Drummer* emerged with a new identity.

The “Gay Plea for Calm,” May 22, 1979, was the fiery headline the romantic revolutionary evening that Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry cruised and met for the first time under the marquee of the Castro Theater during the Castro street party celebrating the first post-assassination birthday of Harvey Milk that had morphed into a Peace Rally in the riot-torn City. Material for collage ©*San Francisco Chronicle*

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Robert Opel's "Christmas Card, Fey-Way Studios, 1978." Sent to Jack Fritscher, this card, printed on one side only, was inscribed in Robert Opel's hand: "Love to you from Robert Opel."

As a post-mortem valedictory to the murdered Robert Opel in *Drummer* 32 (October 1979), Jack Fritscher published Opel's autobiographical religious poem, "The Men," written in praise of Sacred Eros in San Francisco. Opel concluded "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death" and ended with the promise of resurrection.

"Fey-Way Studios," storefront, 1287 Howard Street, the first gay gallery South of Market, founded by frequent *Drummer* writer and photographer, Robert Opel, who was murdered inside the premises on July 8, 1979. Photograph by Mark Henry (2005).

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008



Captions: Eyewitness documentation of the existence of graphics providing internal evidence supporting Jack Fritscher's text are located in the Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry GLBT History collection. Out of respect for issues of copyright, model releases, permissions, and privacy, some graphics are not available for publication at this time, but can be shown by appointment.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Two drawings by Tom Hinde, 1979. Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry collection.

Eyewitness
Illustration

"Camille O'Grady Proof Sheet," 1978. Photography by Fey-Way Productions (Robert Opel).

Eyewitness
Illustration

Poster. "Camille O'Grady," Fey-Way Productions, 1978.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Booklet cover. "Camille O'Grady, *Terminal Fascination: A Song Cycle*," cover for private printing of poetic O'Grady lyrics, 1978/1979. Photograph by Larry Hunt.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Booklet covers. "Camille O'Grady, *Stigmata Hari Stories: The Continuing Visions of a Progressed Saint*," sent with a letter to Jack Fritscher, 1979. O'Grady wrote all her songs from a gay man's point of view. Drawing by Camille O'Grady.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Invitation (featuring Mapplethorpe photograph of Cedric), reception for the artist, for the exhibition "Mapplethorpe Photographs," February 21, 1978, Simon Lowinsky Gallery, 228 Grant Avenue, San Francisco. Mapplethorpe, rising late, penned his handwritten note to Jack Fritscher after Fritscher had gone to work in the morning, and left it in the bed. "Jack—It was very hot—I hope to see you on Tuesday. Robert." The pair met during Halloween 1977 when a Mapplethorpe virtually unknown in the US flew from Manhattan to editor Fritscher's desk at *Drummer* to show his portfolio. They immediately clicked as bicoastal lovers. Fritscher assigned Mapplethorpe his first magazine cover: *Drummer* 24 (September 1978). The passion of the Mapplethorpe-Fritscher affair lasted from October 1977 to its amicable evaporation into friendship during spring 1980 after Fritscher had exited as editor of *Drummer*. It is chronicled in the erotic memoir *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera* (1994). Fritscher published "Cedric" as the opening photograph of his feature essay, "The Robert Mapplethorpe Gallery," *Son of Drummer* (September 1978), page 14.

Eyewitness
Illustration

Album cover. Mapplethorpe's muse Patti Smith on the cover of her album *Horses* (1975). Photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)



**Eyewitness
Illustration**

Poster, “The Slot Hotel,” Bill Tellman (1971). In the first-floor waiting room where no one ever waited because it was, after all, the Slot, there was a tiny table offering rolled-up Slot posters; over the years, thousands of men took this free advertising collectible home because it meant as much as a diploma.

Michelangelo hung out on Folsom Street.

SoMa artist Bill Tellman re-conceptualized the arms and one-legged posture of Michelangelo’s *David* to draw his louche reverse spin for Jack Haines’ Slot Hotel, displaying the new international signage of the signature “fisting tattoo.”

**Eyewitness
Illustration**

At the same time, artist Mike Caffee sculpted his slouching *Leather David* statue for Jack Haines’ Fe-Be’s bar, whose logo, designed by Caffee, was also spelled *Febes* and *Febe’s*.

Eyewitness Caffee told Fritscher at the “Arnett Lautrec” Opening at the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society in San Francisco, January 28, 2008: “Sam Steward brought me a tourist-shop

copy of Michelangelo’s *David* in April 1966 to sculpt into a motorcycle cop. Three months later on July 10, Jack Haines brought me another copy which I made into the Fe-Be’s statue. It took me two weeks to finish it in time for the bar’s opening on July 26, 1966. I finished Sam Steward’s statue early in 1967...I only recently discovered people were calling my statue *Leather David*. I have always called it the ‘Fe-Be’s statue.’ I like *Leather David* better because it’s a good description. Fe-Be’s is long gone and mostly forgotten — only the statue lives on.”

In 1972, Fritscher first wrote about Caffee’s iconic *Leather David* and about leather occult rituals in the “Sex and Witchcraft” chapter of his book *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch’s Mouth*; revised twenty-first-century edition, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, page 152 and following.

Copyright images of the Slot poster and Fe-be’s *Leather David* can be examined on the Internet.

