# Celebrating Tom of Finland at Palm Springs Leather Pride



Palm Springs, the desert city popular with older gay men, is set to host an array of activities during the annual Leather Pride event, spotlighting the influential works of Finnish artist Touko Laaksonen, famously known as Tom of Finland. As Leather Pride is an established gathering that celebrates leather subculture, this year's event aims to embrace broader inclusivity, shifting from traditional terms like “erotic” to a more encompassing terminology such as “queer”.

Incorporating a miniature exhibition of Tom of Finland's original artworks, the event will be held at prominent local venues, including the Mizell Center and the Palm Springs Cultural Center. The celebrations promise an intriguing blend of art displays, social gatherings, and discussions catered to engage a diverse audience.

Among the highlights is an engaging talk session featuring Tom Bianchi, a noted photographer known for his nude portraits, alongside Richard Villani, the Tom of Finland Foundation's creative director. Together, they will further explore the themes and communal aspects of the event. A vendor booth at the Dark Alley Marketplace will also offer unique artefacts for sale, alongside a social gathering with a cigar theme, enhancing the community spirit inherent to the event.

Tom of Finland’s work, known for its bold exploration of sexual freedom and expression through art, has been a source of inspiration beyond the gay male community. His artworks resonate widely, including among lesbian audiences. Describing a whimsical encounter in Riga, Latvia, it becomes evident how Tom's art continually evokes joy and freedom among women viewers. A touching moment was noted when a group of women expressed how the artwork made them feel delighted and liberated, illustrating the universal appeal of Tom of Finland’s creations.

Further testimony to the wide-reaching impact of Laaksonen's work came from a female Parisian photographer who admired the uninhibited expression portrayed in his art. To her, it symbolised a universal freedom, transcending traditional bounds and resonating with a vast array of individuals irrespective of gender or sexuality.

The Tom of Finland Foundation, keen on preserving and promoting this ethos, strives for inclusivity, welcoming visitors from across the globe, regardless of ethnicity or sexual orientation. It challenges the often presupposed notion that such art represents only a narrow demographic, instead celebrating a wider, more diverse community.

Within its archives, the foundation houses both historical and contemporary pieces. This includes early 20th-century Japanese pillow paintings crafted on silk, traditionally intended as intimate guidance for brides. Adding to this rich collection are innovative works by artists-in-residence, such as Polaroids enhanced with cross-stitching, showcasing a blend of photography and textile art.

Among the cherished works in the foundation is a piece titled “Ecstasy”, a vivid coloured pencil drawing depicting a man in a state of bliss holding a pair of boots, demonstrating the playful yet profound expression characteristic of Tom of Finland’s artistry.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://thepalmspringspost.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Corroborates the celebration of Tom of Finland Foundation's 40th anniversary in Palm Springs, including events at the Mizell Center and the Palm Springs Cultural Center.
* <https://thepalmspringspost.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Supports the inclusion of a talk by Durk Dehner and a panel discussion featuring Tom Bianchi, aligning with the event's focus on art and discussions.
* <https://www.pspride.org/event-details-registration/film-night-tom-of-finland-selected-shorts> - Confirms the event's inclusion of film nights and social gatherings, such as the Film Night: Tom of Finland & Selected Shorts.
* <https://gaydesertguide.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Verifies the participation of the Tom of Finland Foundation in Palm Springs Leather Pride and the broader inclusivity of the event.
* <https://gaydesertguide.com/how-artist-tom-of-finland-shaped-lgbtq-culture/> - Explains how Tom of Finland's work has shaped LGBTQ+ culture, resonating beyond the gay male community, including among lesbian audiences.
* <https://www.palmspringslife.com/how-artist-tom-of-finland-shaped-lgbtq-culture/> - Provides insight into Tom of Finland's impact on LGBTQ+ culture and his universal appeal, as noted by Durk Dehner.
* <https://thepalmspringspost.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Details the Tom of Finland Foundation's mission to preserve and promote erotic arts and LGBTQ artists, aligning with the event's inclusivity goals.
* <https://thepalmspringspost.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Mentions the exhibition of Tom of Finland's original drawings and the artist residency program, which aligns with the diverse art displays mentioned.
* <https://thepalmspringspost.com/tom-of-finland-foundation-celebrating-40th-anniversary-with-multiple-palm-springs-events/> - Describes the historical and contemporary pieces housed by the Tom of Finland Foundation, including works by artists-in-residence.