

## PRESS RELEASE

### TONY VIRAMONTES *bold, beautiful and damned*

Opening: September 7th, 2019

On view: September 8th – November 10th, 2019



10 Corso Como Gallery and Fondazione Sozzani present ***Tony Viramontes: bold, beautiful and damned***, an overview of Viramontes' iconic fashion illustrations, mixed media collages, and photographs from the 1980s curated by fashion journalist Dean Rhys Morgan. The exhibition is on view from September 8<sup>th</sup> through November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

When Tony Viramontes' work appeared in the late 1970s, it was very different from the work of his contemporaries. "Tony was the enfant terrible of fashion illustration. His strong and direct drawing style was a marked contrast to the whispered, pastelly, WASPy visuals of the time," Rhys Morgan says. "There was an insolence about his women. They were very hard and aggressive. Casting was very important to him. The last thing he wanted was a pretty face and a standard set of measurements."

Known for his bold, graphic lines and dramatic use of color, Viramontes made a name for himself with drawings of dominant women dressed in the theatrical haute couture of the day. In addition to putting pencil to paper, he was also a clothing stylist, makeup artist and hair stylist who collaborated with his subjects to create images with attitude.

Viramontes never worked from photographs. His models were hand-picked and would pose for hours engaged in his creative process. His style was fast and electric, and he would work through dozens of quickly drawn illustrations to capture the essence of a pose. The sensuous mouth, the hips and

shoulders thrust out, the sass, and the scowl—these became distinctive punctuations of Viramontes portraits. His depictions of men shared the same insolence and sensuousness he gave to his women. He boldly stretched the boundaries of masculine identity, and his models posed in make-up, jewelry, and exotic turbans.

Viramontes collaborated with some of the most celebrated names in fashion, sketching haute couture collections for Yves Saint Laurent, Valentino, Chanel, Claude Montana and Christian Dior, among others. Working in pencil, charcoal, collage and occasionally even lipstick or eyebrow pencil, Viramontes revived the tradition of selling fashion through drawing, which had largely been sidelined by photography.

“He responded to what was around him, to what he saw every day. He was fascinated by drag queens and counterculture, the more terrifying the better. And the heavier the makeup, the more ridiculous the hat, the more he loved it. He had a very street sensibility — there was nothing prim about it,” says Morgan.

His drawings, from the portraits of Paloma Picasso and Isabella Rossellini to the album he conceived for Arcadia, Donna Summer and Janet Jackson, perfectly capture the mood and the colors of the 1980s club and fashion scene. Jean Paul Gaultier wrote in the catalogue: “His images will remain symbolic of the 1980s but have also become classic examples of a timeless modernity”.

#### **ABOUT TONY VIRAMONTES**

Born 1956 in Santa Monica, California, American artist Tony Viramontes studied fine art and photography in New York at the Fashion Institute of Technology and Parsons School of Design, before switching to fashion and beauty illustration. From the late 1970s, his works appeared in numerous publications including *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Women's Wear Daily*, *L'Uomo Vogue*, *ID*, *Tatler*, *Per Lui*, *Lei*, and *Le Monde*, among others. He produced album and single covers for recording artists and bands, including *Control* for Janet Jackson, *All Systems Go* for Donna Summer, *So Red The Rose* for Arcadia, *Shock* for the Motels and the 1984 Olympic Games theme “Destiny” by Phil Pickett. Viramontes also worked with some of the most renowned names in fashion including Yves Saint Laurent, Valentino, Versace, Chanel, Perry Ellis, Claude Montana and Rochas cosmetics.

In 1983 he designed for the Genius Group including fashion brands Goldie, Bo-Bo Kaminsky, Diesel and Replay. In 1988 just before his death from AIDS at 31, Goldie and Hanae Mori asked Viramontes to lead the artistic direction of their companies, from the decoration of their boutiques to the design of their collections.

#### **ABOUT FONDAZIONE SOZZANI**

The Fondazione Sozzani was established in 2016 by Carla Sozzani and is dedicated to the promotion of culture through photography, fashion, the fine arts, and applied arts. The Foundation has assumed the patronage of Galleria Carla Sozzani, founded by Sozzani in Milan in 1990, and continues all relevant public functions that the Galleria has supported for the past 29 years.

For more information, visit [www.fondazione-sozzani.org](http://www.fondazione-sozzani.org).

#### **ABOUT 10 CORSO COMO**

Founded in Milan in 1991 by former fashion editor and publisher Carla Sozzani, 10 Corso Como is recognized as the world's first concept store, with a curated mix of fashion, design and art in a succession of spaces alongside a restaurant and café and an art and photography gallery. 10 Corso Como's visual identity, interior and iconic logos are designed by American artist Kris Ruhs, inspired by the idea of bringing art into the everyday environment. Over the past almost 30 years, 10 Corso Como has expanded internationally with venues in Milan, Seoul and New York. The Seaport District in New York is its first U.S. location. For more information, visit [www.10CorsoComo.nyc](http://www.10CorsoComo.nyc).