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Jimmy DeSana Gives Suburban Sprawl a Sexy New Meaning By Cait Munro



From Jimmy DeSana: *Suburban*.

Photo: Courtesy and copyright the Jimmy DeSana Estate/Salon 94.

When you think of the great American suburbs, "sexy" isn't the first word that comes to mind. But Jimmy DeSana's enthralling photographs of nude men and women cleverly positioned in otherwise quotidian surroundings might change your mind.

Sprawled on couches and carpets, slathered with dish soap, or balanced precariously on dressers and tables, DeSana's figures explore sexuality and desire. They also suggest physical comedy that often borders on sadomasochism.

DeSana's delightfully lurid images will soon be collected in print for the first time thanks to Aperture, which will release *Jimmy DeSana: Suburban* in the fall. The book includes a foreword by DeSana's friend and onetime roommate Laurie Simmons.

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"I don't really think of that work as erotic," DeSana, who died in 1990, once told Simmons. "I think of the body almost as an object. I attempted to use the body but without the eroticism that some photographers use frequently. I think I de-eroticized a lot of it. Particularly in that period, but that is the way the suburbs are in a sense."

The artist was a key presence in the downtown New York art and punk music scene, regularly appearing at CBGBs, Mudd Club, and Max's Kansas City to take photos of Blondie, the Talking Heads, and other performers. His candy-colored photograph of Debbie Harry of Blondie is currently on view at OHWOW Gallery in Los Angeles through August 15, in a group show titled, "Queer Fantasy."

DeSana passed away in 1990 at 41 of an AIDS-related illness.

The photos represent an early and rarely-seen body of DeSana's work, but still feel remarkably fresh and relevant today, as suburban sprawl and gentrification creep outward, sexual mores are challenged and re-evaluated, and the complexity of the human form continues to enthrall artists.



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