

R. Crumb
Tales of Paranoia

October 10–December 20, 2025
616 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Panel from R. Crumb, *I'm Afraid*, 2025
© Robert Crumb, 2025. Courtesy the artist, Paul Morris, and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new drawings and prints by iconic illustrator and cartoonist R. Crumb (b. 1943), on view at the gallery's 616 N Western Avenue location in Los Angeles. In his works of the last several years Crumb reflects on life in his eighties and his sixty-year career as well as themes of personal and mass paranoia during these times of social and political unrest. Crumb's most mordant attacks are, as always, reserved for himself and show him contending with his own manic anxieties in a humorous and insightful manner.

The new works in this exhibition represent Crumb's first extensive solo comic work in over two decades, marking an impressive late-career resurgence. Many of these incisive, introspective, and formally

adventurous illustrations were made for the artist's forthcoming publication, *Tales of Paranoia*. This new comic book—Crumb's first in twenty-three years—will be published in November of 2025 by Fantagraphics. Created in the wake of the 2022 passing of Crumb's wife and longtime artistic partner, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, these works reveal a mind turning inward without its usual counterpoint—absent her grounding presence, the work veers further into obsessive, unfiltered reflection. As Crumb noted in 2019, "Success and the love of real women helped me a lot. Aline really saved my dismal ass."¹ Crumb and Kominsky-Crumb had frequently collaborated, particularly in the decade preceding her death, and her absence is felt directly in the content of these recent works.

While Crumb's early work skewered both mainstream and countercultural figures with a hyper-libidinal, satirical edge, his recent drawings meditate on paranoia, particularly around medicine and disease. These works convey a heightened self-awareness, oscillating between genuine suspicion and conspiracy; they incisively mirror a broader culture of mistrust of authority and the erosion of shared meaning and reliable information in the world today. In *A Difficult Conundrum* (2025), each panel depicts an increasingly agitated Crumb, his speech bubbles multiplying in a spiraling monologue directed against a pharmaceutical company. Through the familiar conventions of the comic form, Crumb constructs a self-portrait steeped in uncertainty and vulnerability. In other works he revisits his past, exploring difficult and disturbing moments that continue to affect him. As the title suggests, *The Very Worst LSD I Ever Had* (2025) documents a harrowing acid trip that Crumb experienced in 1966, which led him to seek several sessions of regressive hypnosis.

Also on view is a rare sketchbook from earlier in Crumb's career, which offers an intimate glimpse into Crumb's process and preoccupations. Placed in dialogue with the recent drawings, it highlights not only the evolution of the artist's style and tone but also the enduring idiosyncrasies—formal, psychological, and narrative—that continue to define his work. Numerous recent etchings Crumb produced in collaboration with the renowned print studio Two Palms, New York, are also featured.

This is Crumb's first exhibition in Los Angeles in over fifteen years, since *The Book of Genesis Illustrated*, which debuted at the Hammer Museum in 2009 and featured the original drawings for his acclaimed and best-selling graphic version of the first book of the Old Testament. The exhibition later traveled to David Zwirner New York in 2010, and in 2013, it was presented as part of the 55th Venice Biennale, curated by Massimiliano Gioni.

Born in Philadelphia, R. Crumb (b. 1943) moved to the dynamic Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco in 1967, and relocated in 1991 to the south of France, where he currently lives and works. Crumb joined David Zwirner in 2006. This will be Crumb's seventh solo exhibition with the gallery.

Solo exhibitions of Crumb's work were presented at the Contemporary Art Galleries, University of Connecticut, Mansfield (2020), and at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, California (2018). In 2016, the Cartoonmuseum Basel organized *Aline Kominsky-Crumb & Robert Crumb: Drawn Together*, the first comprehensive museum presentation of the artists' joint work. A retrospective of Crumb's work was held in 2012 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 2011, his work was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Museum of American Illustration at the Society of Illustrators, New York. A major solo show devoted to Crumb's work was organized by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, in 2007, and traveled from 2008 to 2009 to the Frye Art Museum, Seattle; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston; and the Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana, California. Other solo exhibitions of the artist's work have been organized by the Whitechapel Gallery, London, a show that traveled to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (both 2005); and Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2004). Terry Zwigoff's documentary

¹ Nadja Sayej, "Robert Crumb: 'I am no longer a slave to a raging libido'," *The Guardian*, March 7, 2019. Accessed online.

Crumb was named the best film of 1994 by the late critic Gene Siskel and won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 1995.

Work by the artist is represented in major museum collections worldwide, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles; Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie, Sérignan, France; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Notes

1. Nadjia Sayej, "Robert Crumb: 'I am no longer a slave to a raging libido'," *The Guardian*, March 7, 2019. Accessed online.

For all press inquiries, contact:

Elizabeth Gartner
egartner@davidzwirner.com

Julia Lukacher
jlukacher@davidzwirner.com