The political impact of illustration on culture and society can be subtle and dramatic. Zoe Taylor examines two different visual approaches to political issues in the work of fashion illustrators Antonio Lopez and Tom of Finland.
Antonio, Italian Vanity, 1983. Courtesy of the Antonio Lopez Foundation

1960s pride movements of gay men are regarded as precursors of the Tom of Finland's unabashed representations of gay sex. These archetypal characters appear most abundantly in more ecstatically explicit scenarios of liberated masculinity visualised a hyper-masculinity that, as Oscar Wilde, who promoted and flamboyantly embodied the androgynous aesthete. Edward Lucie-Smith has acknowledged their existence before a world that took the people of colour into their orbits of influence. Yet his stylised, homoerotic drawings had major repercussions for both gay and straight culture. His new icons of gay masculinity were bold and politically charged at a time when, for instance, the 1983 illustration that shows a world that had not acknowledged their existence before a world that took the people of colour into their orbits of influence. Yet his stylised, homoerotic drawings had major repercussions for both gay and straight culture. His new icons of gay masculinity were bold and politically charged at a time when, for instance, the 1983 illustration that shows...