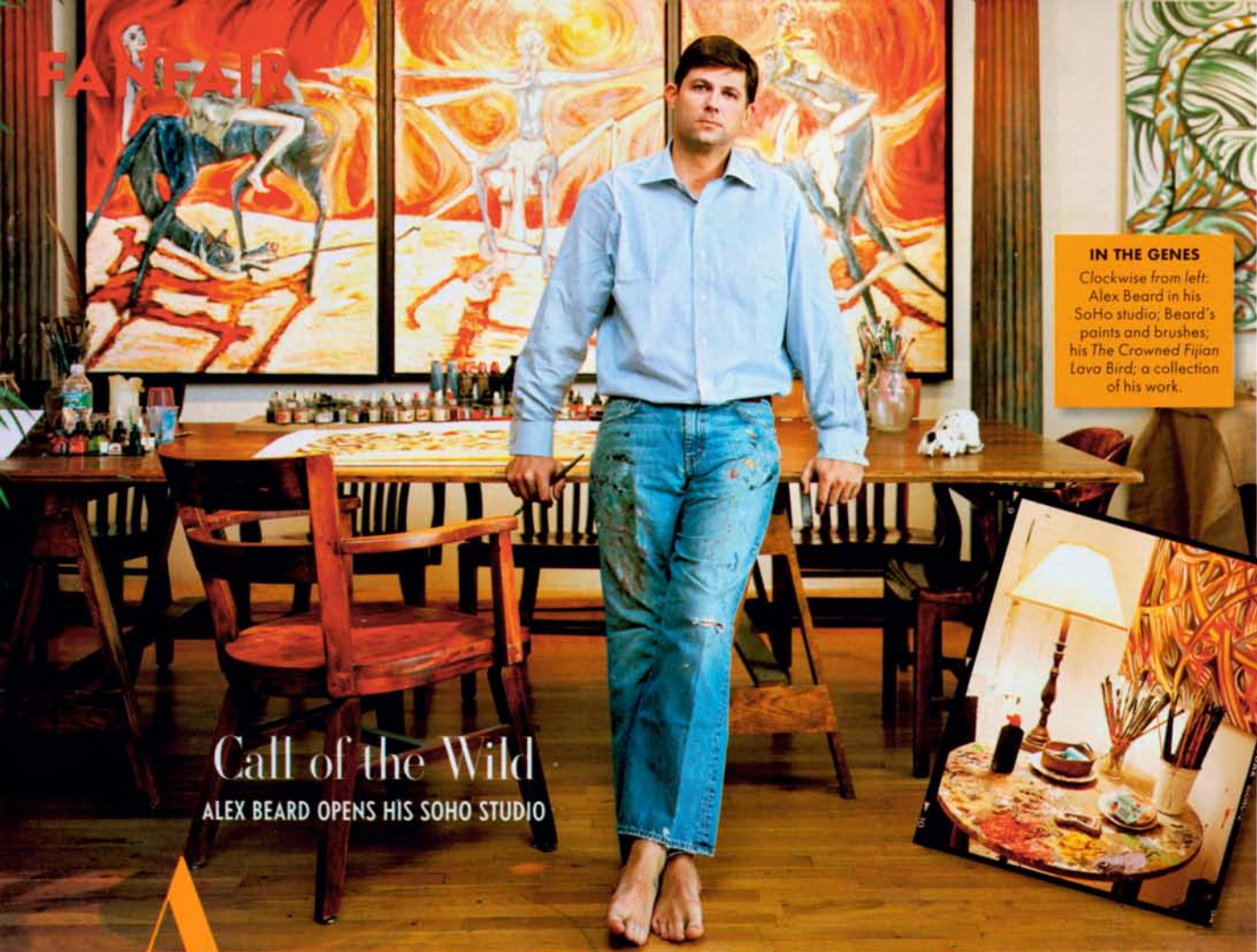


FANFAIR



#### IN THE GENES

Clockwise from left: Alex Beard in his SoHo studio; Beard's paints and brushes; his *The Crowned Fijian Lava Bird*; a collection of his work.

## Call of the Wild

ALEX BEARD OPENS HIS SOHO STUDIO

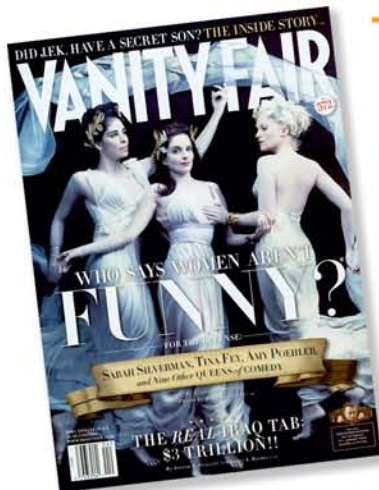
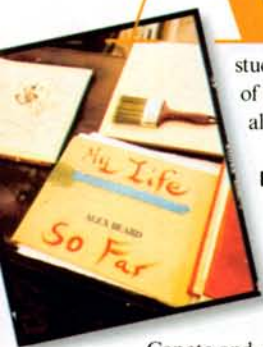
At 37, **Alex Beard** is an accomplished artist, an adventurer, and an accidental entrepreneur redefining the New York gallery scene with his SoHo studio, which doubles as an exhibition space. Here the flow of ideas, audience participation, and children is always welcome. His motto: "Be curious."

Son of noted author and editor **Patricia Beard**, Alex grew up in New York, with his celebrated uncle, photographer **Peter Beard**, often camped out on the couch. A self-described fly on the wall during many of Peter's escapades, Alex grew up doing projects with his uncle and his merry band of luminaries—such as Truman

Capote and Andy Warhol—and emulating his idea of what Uncle Peter was, which included learning the fine art of pen-and-quill drawing from him. "I knew I wanted to be a doodler from the time I was six," says Alex, adding that it took until his early 20s to realize that he didn't really

want to be Peter. At that time, Alex took off on an extended search for self that began in India, where he looked for a tiger in the wild—he found one after trying for six months. He wound up in Calcutta, where he "stumbled into an ancient art-supply store, completely out of time, filled with oil paints, linseed, pigments," and knew immediately, "I am going to be a painter." After India, he holed up on the island of Mustique as "artist-in-residence" at Basil's Bar. There he met a couple from New Orleans, who lured him to what became for a time his adopted city to study at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts.

Beard's paintings and ink drawings are filled with an intricate, almost mathematical dance of whimsical animals, feathers, and figures, all in constant motion. He constructs drawings much like riddles or puzzles, and in fact has just completed a line of puzzles for Sababa Toys. He's also working on a story for children called *The Jungle Grapevine*, which has animals playing a version of the game of telephone—"the watering-hole chaos theory," he calls it. Exuberant, with a familiar twinkle in his eye, Beard "thrives on this idea of communal spirit."—A. M. HOMES



As seen in the April issue of *Vanity Fair*

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PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP, ALL BY BEN HOFFMANN; BOTTOM LEFT, BY JACQUES DEL CONTE. SEE CREDITS PAGE.