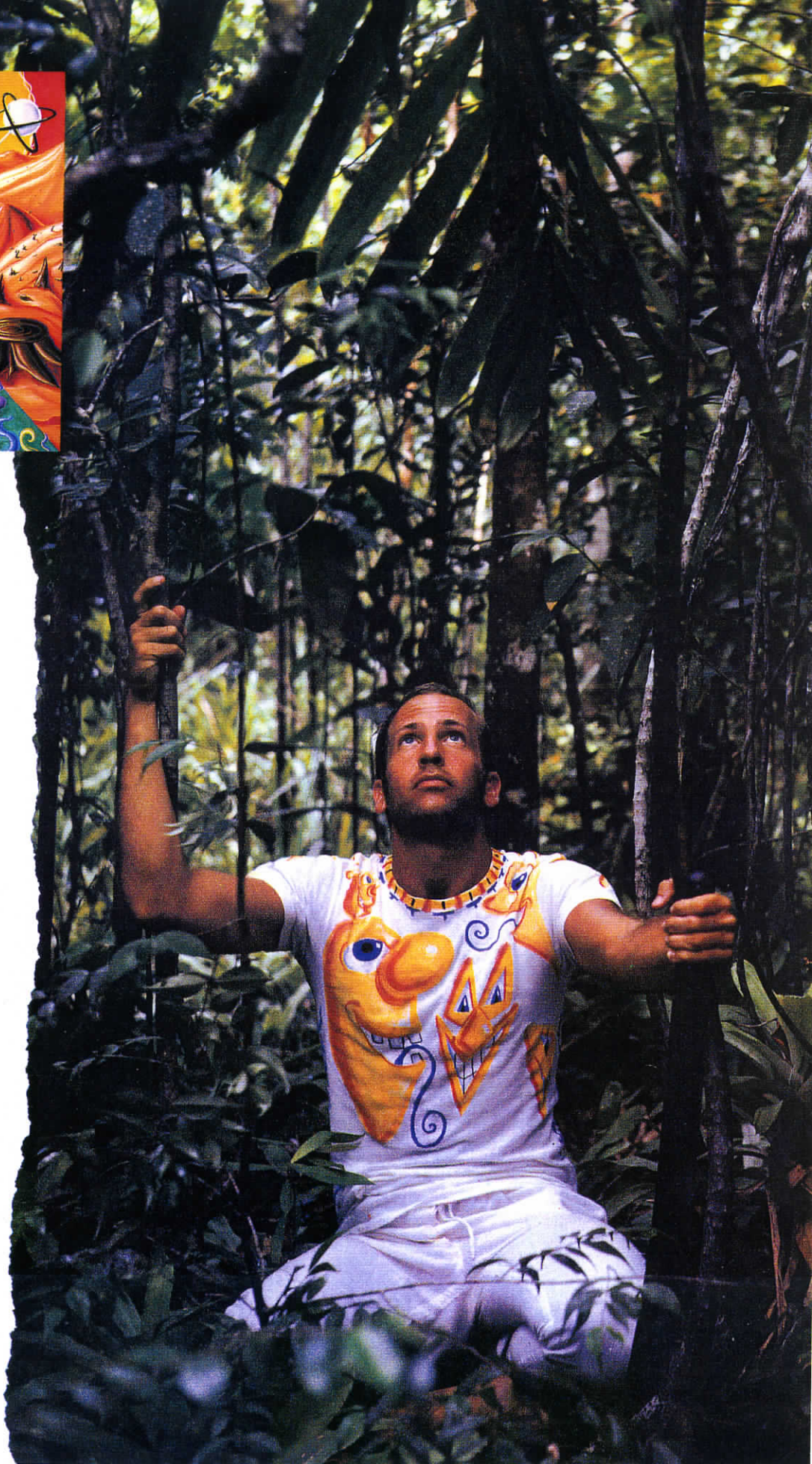




**Friend of the Forest** Kenny Scharf stalks across the cold, damp studio, his hands shoved deep into the pockets of a paint-splattered motorcycle jacket. There's no heat, and it's too cold to work. His two-day stubble and brooding good looks, set off by a slate-blue sweater the same shade as his eyes, make him seem more like an actor than one of the hot young painters in New York's downtown art scene. He sullenly surveys the six or seven ceiling-high canvases that line the walls of his cavernous West Village loft, and says, flatly, "I don't think you can see that horrible vision, all that destruction, without its having an effect. It emotionally charges me." He swings around. "It makes me want to make *everyone* mad!"

What Scharf (right) is charged up about is the Amazon rain forest, one of the world's great natural wonders. Brazilian ranchers are torching it, converting the land into short-lived grazing ground for cattle. Scharf has been traveling to Brazil for years to paint (above, Save the Jungle of 1987); in 1983, after he met his Brazilian wife Tereza, he purchased a home on the coast of Bahia. It was a breathtaking area, with the front of the house facing the sea and the back windows looking out on emerald rain forest. "It used to bother me to think that I was looking at the last one percent of what was once 1,000 miles of forest

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 140)



**Nature's Business** Though it keeps a relatively low profile, The Nature Conservancy, headquartered in Arlington, VA, has been quietly acquiring land sanctuaries for over 25 years and is now the largest independent owner of preserved property in the world. From its first investment in a small plot in New York's Westchester County in 1953 to the more recent acquisition of 55,000 acres on California's Santa Cruz Island, this nonprofit organization has accumulated four million U.S. acres.

"Our goal is to protect natural areas that contain threatened species," says Cliff Messenger, chairman of the board. "Biologists and zoologists scout out habitats where endangered animals or plants live, and we negotiate to buy the land that harbors them at market value. We then turn it over to corporations, colleges, park services or the government with the stipulation that the land will not be commercialized."

The Conservancy defends the earth with good business sense. For example, to protect a small nesting area for ospreys located within a hunting club on Shelter Island, they bought all the club's holdings, including several Manhattan brownstones and a warehouse, then resold everything but the birds' habitat.

They've also started a "debt-for-nature" program; if developing nations agree to pursue sound conservation policies, the Conservancy will buy some of their debt.

"The clock is running out and what we don't save will be gone forever," notes Messenger.

**It's Academic** The best way to create ecologically responsible adults is through education. Toward that goal, Brown University, in Providence, RI, offers environmental classes that are unique because they emphasize hands-on experience, including waste management, land development and energy efficiency. "Our program achieves the integration of knowledge by beginning with analysis, then reaching out to traditional subjects to take selectively what each has to offer toward a

solution," explains Dr. Vartan Gregorian (below), Brown president. "Our students learn that making connections across disciplines is necessary to their efforts."

Enrollment in the program has doubled in the last year, a sign that today's undergraduates do care about the world they'll inherit. Next month, the school will also hold a public affairs conference focusing on U.S. and foreign policy and waste water management in collaboration with the Providence Journal Bulletin.

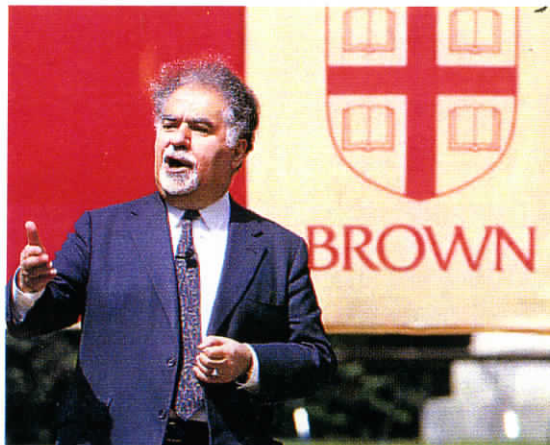


**Hollywood Wild** Picture Mimi Rogers, Tom Cruise (together above) and John Ritter sharing a small boat down the Amazon with 17 other American explorers. They pop malaria pills and scout the water for alligators. Soon after, they're bouncing wildly on a five-hour jeep ride into the Brazilian jungle. They set up camp at an obscure research station and sleep in hammocks covered by mosquito netting as the screeches of howler monkeys surround them like a firestorm. Next morning, they bathe in a pool that's been dammed off from the piranha, then put on knapsacks and trek off into the wilderness.

What brought them here to face such conditions—a big-budget remake of *The African Queen*?

No, Bonnie Reiss—and the earth itself—brought them. Ritter, Cruise, his wife Rogers, as well as most of the other crew, are on the board of directors of Reiss' dynamic

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PHOTOGRAPHS CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: TSENG KWONG CHI; STEPHEN VAUGHN; JOHN FORKASTE/BROWN UNIVERSITY.

## Friend Of The Forest

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stretching down the coastline," says Scharf, "but I had no idea then how fast it was going."

Last winter, the artist returned to Brazil to find total devastation. "All this lush jungle was just charred ruins," he recalls. "I had wanted to do something to protect it for some time, but now I realized it was a crisis."

The crisis, according to scientists, is that the rain forests serve as the lungs of the rest of the planet, and their destruction will have catastrophic consequences for future generations. Their trees turn carbon dioxide into pure oxygen, as well as cleanse the air and absorb much of the world's pollution. In addition, the forests are home to a fifth of the earth's plant and animal life, approximately 30 million different species. At present, this rich, densely wooded jungle is being slashed and burned at the chaotic pace of 54 acres every minute; as many as six animal species are dying every hour. Tragically, many of the wild plants—which supply ingredients to 45 percent of the world's medicines—are being wiped out before researchers have a chance to study them as potential treatments for still unconquered illnesses.

Determined to do something to stop the senseless destruction, Scharf started writing other artists and associates, asking them to participate in a benefit show that would raise money for Brazilian conservation groups. Scharf was already vice-president of "Companions of Arts and Nature," a tiny environmental organization started five years earlier by a colleague, Marie-Pierre Astier. With that as his base, he hired the consulting firm of Livet Reichard, which had organized the "Art Against AIDS" show, to help drum up support.

He also appealed to an influential friend, the rock star Madonna. Not only did she agree to perform at the show, she also offered to bring a few friends, including the comedienne Sandra Bernhard. With their names on the roster, many more musicians and entertainers signed up, as well as dozens of top talents in the art world. In the end, Scharf's "Don't Bungle the Jungle" benefit, held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music last May, raised \$500,000—and millions more in public awareness.

Scharf, who just turned 31, has two young children and a new puppy, and admits a little sheepishly, "I have to get back to work. I lost a year on all this, and I have a family to support and a career to think about." Every year, he does one "jungle" painting, as he calls them, inspired by the rain forest. He is about to begin a new one. "Just to be in the forest is the most inspirational thing I know," he says wistfully. But his conservation group is rolling now, and another art benefit is planned for later this year. "I'm hopeful things can get better; otherwise, I wouldn't have had kids," says Scharf, pushing a colorful tricycle out of the way as we leave the studio.

—Jennet Conant