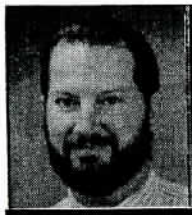


Arts

Kenny Scharf's metamorphosis on spectacular display



Art Beat
Arnold Simon

On view at the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale, *The Scharf-O-Rama Vision* presents works by Kenny Scharf from 1978 through 1995.

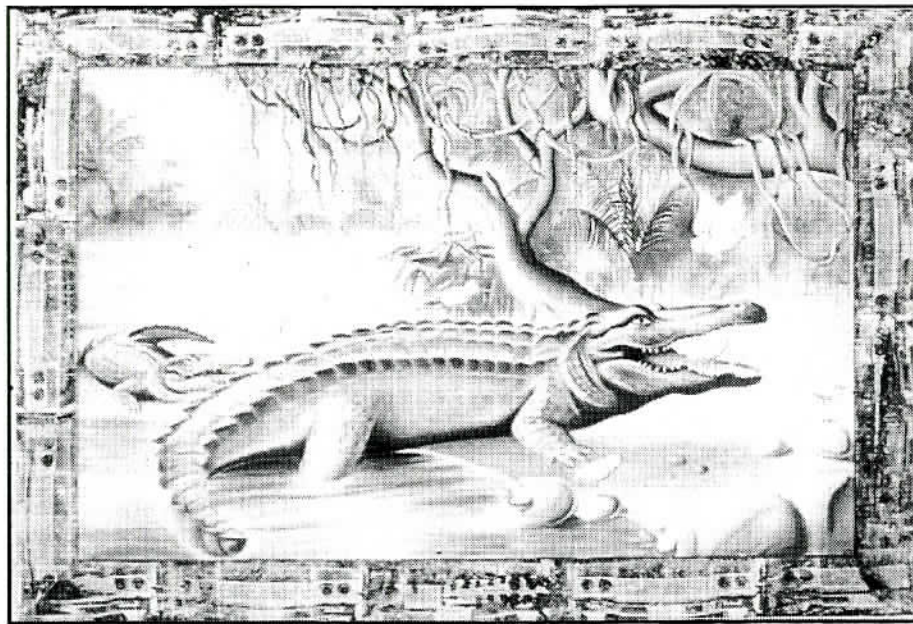
Many of the paintings come from Scharf's own collection, singled out as personal favorites, and seen together for the first time. The result is a pyrotechnic display covering each phase of the artist's development.

Starting off with paintings from his days as an art student at the University of California-Santa Barbara, we see his early assimilation of pop culture and cartoon characters. *Barbara Simpson's New Kitchen* and *George Simpson Barbecuing* (1978) contain all the elements and sensibilities of the later works before the technical skills were in place.

Both paintings combine Pop Art's reverence of the banal and satiric view of consumerism with Surrealism's odd juxtaposing of disparate elements. Hence, Scharf's term *Pop Surrealism*.

After his move to New York and from his time at The School of Visual Arts, we see some seminal space-age paintings. For a child growing up in the 1960s, futurism was best represented by none other than *The Jetsons*.

Quickly overtaking the Hanna-Barbera characters were Scharf's own cartoon-like creatures. These unclassified species often have heads growing out of heads, or other unusual traits. Their scale is larger too. By then, Scharf had begun his association with the Tony Shafrazi Gallery and his art was selling.



GATOR TIME...
'Evergladagator' by Kenny Scharf is just one of many works on display as part of 'The Scharf-O-Rama Vision: Paintings by Kenny Scharf, 1978-1995,' at the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale through June 18.

Big and bizarre as these cartoons became, they remained playful, not menacing. *Mean Scary Man* (1985-86) is anything but. The creatures inhabit landscapes from other planets and the colors glow like neon. The titles of the works became jumbled inventions like the images themselves.

Scharf started paying attention to the frames as well as the canvases, and moldings were either hand painted or made of things like patent leather and aluminum foil. They too became a statement on industrialism.

He experimented briefly with non-objective abstraction, and gave it his own unique spin. *Glob-up* (1989) looks something like a puffy jigsaw puzzle with overblown organic shapes in lollipop colors.

His travels took him to Brazil, where he met his

'The Scharf-O-Rama'

The Scharf-O-Rama Vision: Paintings by Kenny Scharf 1978-1995 will be at the Museum of Art, One E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale.

The exhibition will be on display through June 18.

Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesdays through Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays.

For more information call (305) 525-5500.

wife, Tereza, and where he witnessed the destruction of the rain forests. At first, the influence of

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Brazil appeared in his work as lush, jungle-like settings, replacing the barren moonscapes. Subsequently, nature gave way to industrial development in life and in art.

In a painting from 1982, *Junkle*, the plant life becomes sparse and a sickly purple. Products like appliances, tires and weed killers emerge from the background with alarming multiplicity. This interesting mix of media starts off with a broad color field of yellow, over which enlarged line art, right out of the newspaper, is silk-screened. On top of this the struggling natural forms are painted.

Since 1992, the artist has lived in South Florida, and we see him similarly appalled by what's happening to the Everglades. *Evergladagator* (1993) seems a natural next step to what has come before. Here the pristine environment is encroached upon by the frame, which is covered with repeating automobile grills.

Again, he shows us losing the battle against consumerism. And just so we don't mistake the alligator scene for anyone else's, Scharf has animated the rocks with his cartoon faces.

In addition to painting, there are a few 3-dimensional objects displayed as well. *Zena Scharf's Crib* (1983) is his child's crib painted with his own inimitable cartoon characters, which had been relegated to a closet when she outgrew it.

Created especially for this show is *Scharf Customized TV* (1995), a working television set covered with plastic toys and packaging from household products. It's a throwback to his early days in New York, when he would rescue discarded appliances from the sidewalks and use them as supports for his painting. The only difference now is that he buys them new.

Scharf has always contended that art should be fun, and viewers will find that immediately apparent. The exuberant images and colors wryly convey the mad scramble in which we currently live. And it's carried off with astonishing skill. Curator Laurence Pamer has arranged the works chronologically and the progression reveals an increasingly assured hand. The eye was always there.

Also note, the museum has unveiled for the first time two works by Scharf's friend and contemporary, Keith Haring. They hang in the lobby as a perfect welcome to this not-to-be-missed show.
