

HAMPTONS

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PTONS

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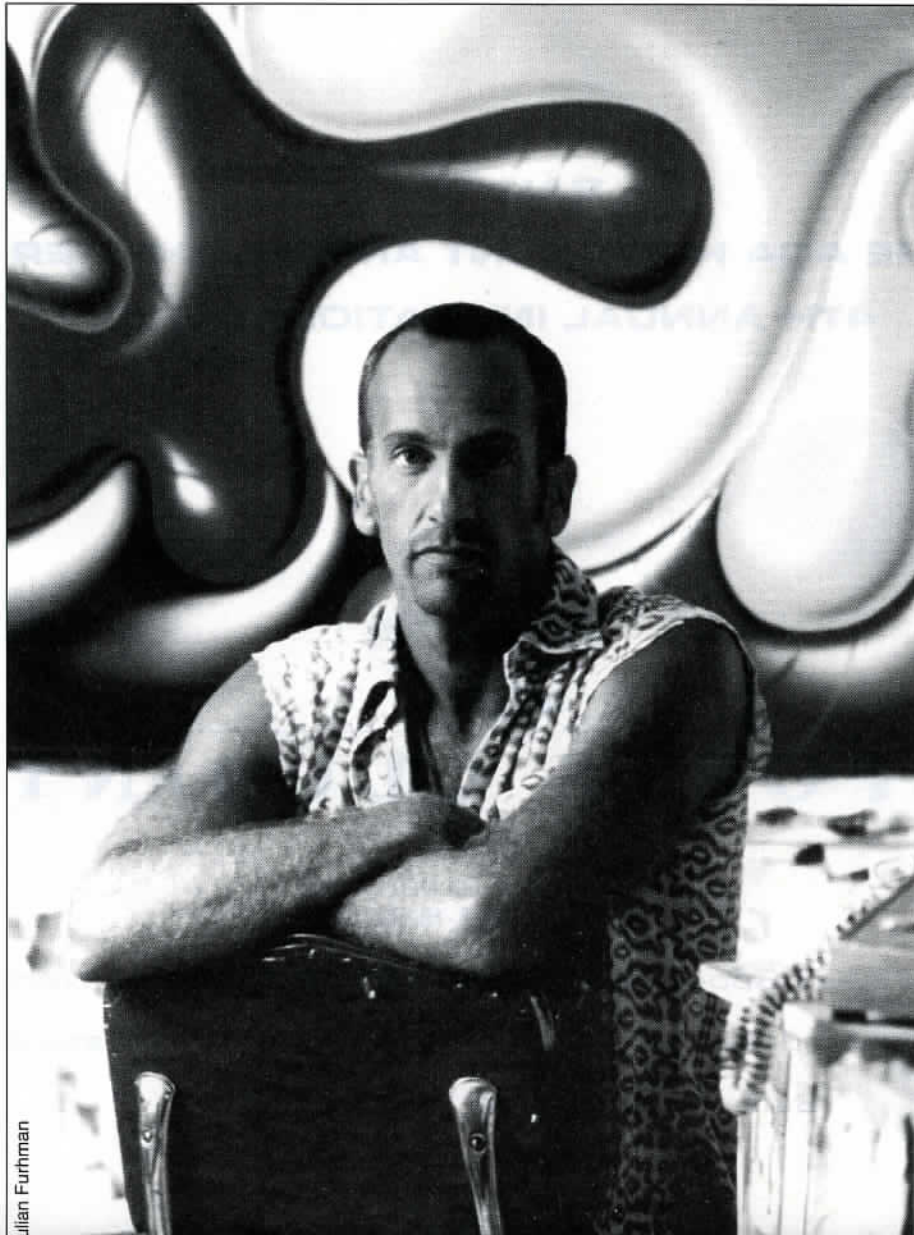
Kenny's Scharf Schack

By Kathleen Beckett

"Hey, it's Kenny Turlington!" "Yo! Kenny Campbell!" Kenny Scharf's assistants are giving the boss a hard time as a photographer shoots him in front of his just-opened *Scharf Schack*. The tiny shop occupies what used to be a newspaper kiosk outside the Guggenheim Museum in Soho. It's stocked with all the odds-and-ends that the 80s art phenomenon has designed over the years: T-shirts, Swatches, belt buckles, drinking glasses, address books. You name it. If you can slap an image on it, Scharf has done just that, drawing from his library of cartoonish icons: Fred Flintstone, the Jetsons, the Don't Bungle the Jungle logo.

"I've been customizing objects since 1980, playing with the idea of art as functional, usable objects," he explained. He started with appliances he found discarded in the trash. "One day I decided 'why not do ones that are working?'" The shelves of the future Scharf Schack started being stocked.

Kids, tourists, and other passersby, attracted by the Schack's playful, colorfully painted, raffia-topped exterior, stop by to browse, to the consternation of



Julian Furthman

himself who appeared to be partying their way through the '80s. "From the very beginning, since I started, I've always had to fight the attitude that art should not be fun. A lot of people believe art is something you have to suffer for. I always believed that, yes, you can suffer for your art and I surely have. But there's also a place for joy in the creation of the art and having fun." What else would anyone expect from the man responsible for dubbing the East Village gallery that launched so many artists *The Fun Gallery*?

One reason Scharf is focusing on fun these days is that he feels he's gotten over the deaths of friends Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol. "It was very difficult losing so many close people, but it's been about five, six years now. I recently heard that the mourning period takes five years and I feel now like I'm beginning to come out of the pain, the shock, of losing my friends. I still think about them and miss them, but I feel I have recaptured my original spirit which was definitely dampened for some time by all this death."

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Sporting a goatee and sun-bleached hair, Scharf left his home and studio in Miami for Manhattan last week to preside over what he called a "fund-raiser—for me" that his "landlord" Peter Brant had organized. The purpose: to insure the future of the Schack.

Artists have to eat, but Scharf's foray into retailing—he opened a Scharf Shop in Miami 6 months go—seems a bit, how you say, *commercial* for a serious painter. "I've always made functional, commercial things," he protests, "but I've never gotten it together to actually create my own store as an outlet that would push me to make more." At the same time, Scharf points out, he is preparing for upcoming shows—a gallery opening in Belgium this week, a museum show at the Center of Fine Arts in Miami later this year, and another museum show in Monterey, Mexico next summer. Scharf's painting, it appears, doesn't stop at boxer shorts and tank tops.

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Kenny Scharf

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Scharf can be seen in Julian Schnabel's upcoming film about Basquiat. "I don't say anything, I'm an extra. I just stand at a gallery scene, his opening at Anina Nosal. I was most thrilled to see David

Bowie as Andy Warhol because I love them both. It's a great mix."

Scharf used to visit Schnabel at his home in Bridgehampton, before the latter left wife Jacqueline and decamped for Montauk with Ann Duong and, now, wife #2 Olatz. "How can you be a New York artist and not have spent time in the Hamptons?" he wonders. Three years ago he traded in brisk Long Island waters for balmy Florida beaches. "I love the ocean and the outdoors of the Hamptons, but now I've got the tropical thing going."

He lives in Miami Beach "not South Beach, so there's not a lot of trendy people walking around the outside." He let the manicured lawn and clipped hedges surrounding his house grow wild and planted vines and fruits. "I've made it my jungle. It's paradise on a little 1/2 acre of land." His two girls, ages 11 and 7, can bike, swim in the pool, and otherwise enjoy "a fantastic childhood." And his wife, Tereza? "I've got her working at the Scharf Shop." ♦