

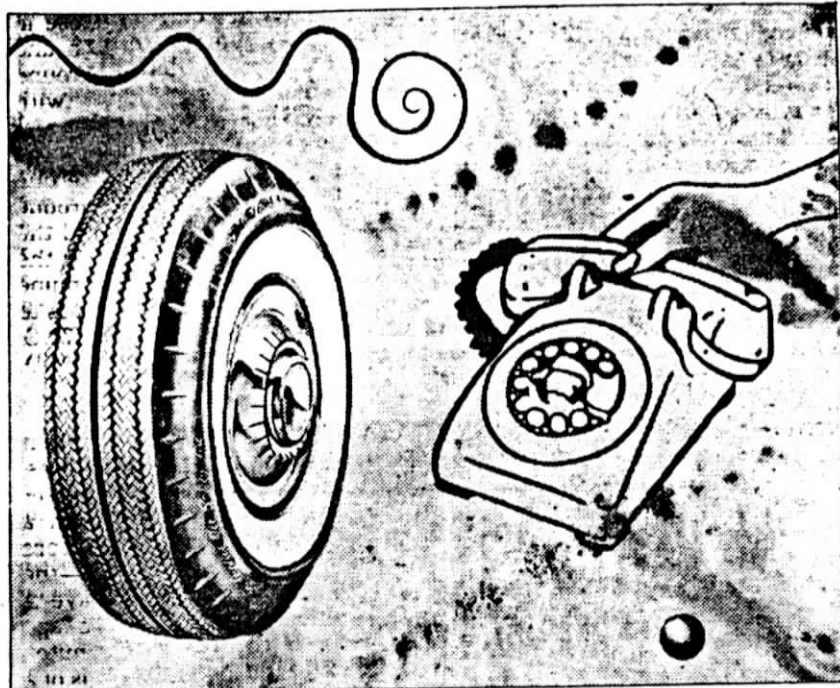
Los Angeles Times  
**The Galleries**

La Cienega Area

It's obvious Kenny Scharf spent most of his youth in front of the TV set watching cartoons and their rapid-fire commercial messages. His paintings have always had the same kind of absurd innocence that tries to turn real-life scary stuff into harmless, garish amusement. This time out Scharf steps into the wheeling-dealing realm of consumerism. It's an area of hard sell idiocy that seems well matched by the artist's surreal sense of fun and games.

These paintings are their own kind of hard-sell. They couple simplified drawings of comic book characters and consumer objects with English-Spanish translations of key phrases such as "What is the price range?" and "I would like to buy!" There is something so blatantly obvious about a painting emblazoned with comments about its own marketability that the work gets giddy about being self-referential. Somehow this whimsy in primary colors, airbrush and finger paints doesn't feel funny, however. Scharf's cosmic comics don't defuse the malaise this time around. (Michael Kohn Gallery, 313 N. Robertson Blvd., to June 17.)

—SUVANGEER



Kenny Scharf's "20th Century Pl." at Michael Kohn Gallery.