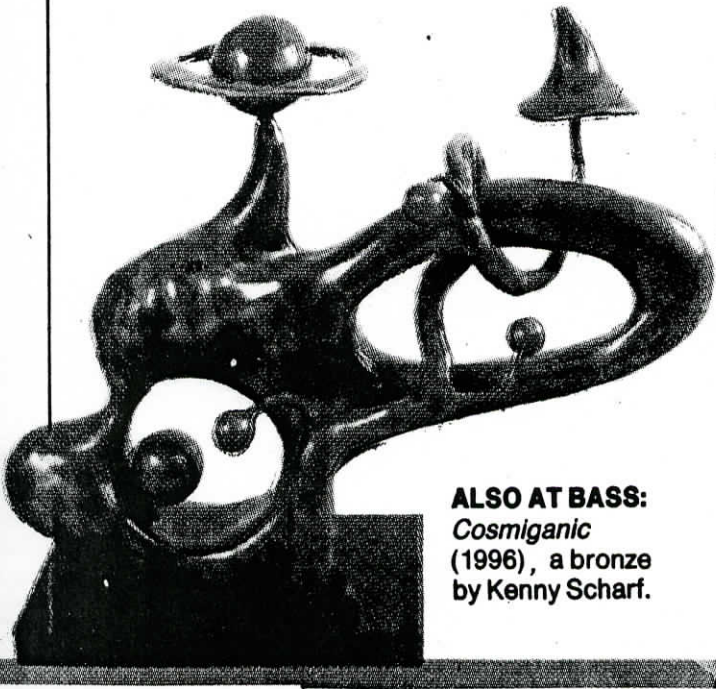


Bass exhibit a fashionable look at the past

By Helen L. Kohen
Special to The Herald



ALSO AT BASS:
Cosmiganic
(1996), a bronze
by Kenny Scharf.

Art Notes

■ With former exhibition spaces being closed as the bulldozers approach, the little show of Kenny Scharf bronzes at the Bass Museum has migrated to the southern-most gallery. It's small - only six table-top-size works of sculpture - but it's an unexpected addition to the usually madcap oeuvre of the Miami artist. When you think about it, the designation "Scharf bronze" is almost an oxymoron. The artist made his zany bubble-gum reputation with plastic reruns, the assemblage of disposable junk into more complicated disposable junk. How does

bronze fit in?

Once the shock passes — we got past it with Duane Hanson, who exchanged wrapped rags for store-bought clothing, and we weathered George Segal's tony rise, from white plaster to patinated bronze — those goofy Scharf shapes capture your heart.

They come directly from his paintings — the grinning mouth, the large dollop of matter that dwindles down to a mere splash of stuff, the cosmic system that, barring the gorgeous '90s finish, might be mistaken for the less technically perfect abstract metal works of America's first generation of modernist sculptors.

In fact, there is a primitive, 1950s look to all the works in this group, only belied by those glossy

surfaces, and by the distinctive nature of Scharf's signature forms. Scharf's work proves that you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear — at least as long as the taste for silk holds firm.

■ As long as you're in the Bass neighborhood, take a stroll to the corner of 20th Street and Collins Avenue to survey the most recent work from Miami's most famous urban cartographer, Purvis Young. His latest mural covers a fence hiding the construction site of yet another dingy Deco wreck about to be transformed into something upscale and re-Decoed. The Bass has been promised the fence when it's no longer needed, but now is the time to examine the artwork in its original context, while the house-paint colors are

still bright and fresh. The whole Young cityscape is there, buildings and trucks and dancers and heads and horses, evoking both the actual activity of a busy, growing city and the artist's personal symbolism for life on the street. Don't miss the figures Young added to the printed signs direct-

ing potential customers to a sales office. Erected over parts of the fence Young had already painted, the signs provided him with added opportunities for his favorite motifs. And Young proved much more sensitive than the sign czars. He painted around their lettering, which remains clear and legible.