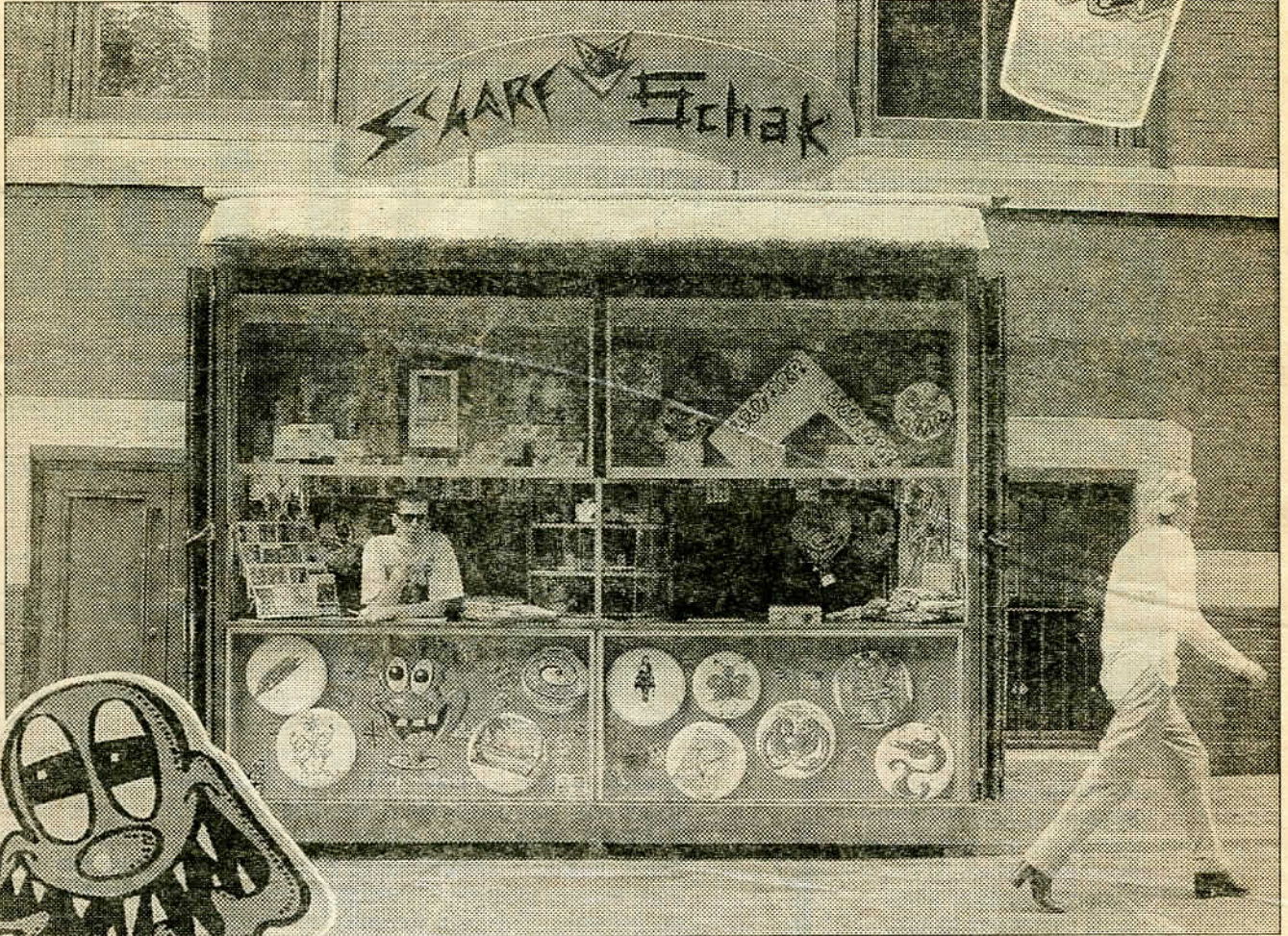
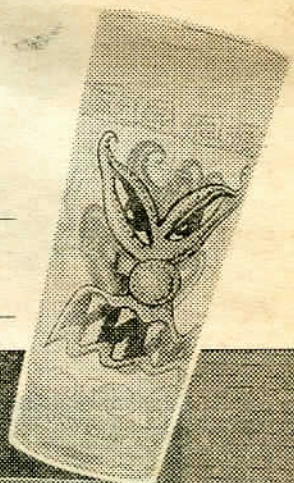


STYLE WATCH

Kiosk of Kool

Fun & functional finery — from the gallery to the street



HELAYNE SEIDMAN

SCHARF ATTACK: Inside the Scharf Schak on Prince St., manager Cameron Clark sells creations like drinking glasses (above), 2 for \$35, refrigerator magnets (left), \$2.50 each, and filled cookie tins (below), \$45, all decorated with Kenny Scharf's colorful images.



By LAURICE A. PARKIN

A NEW ART SPACE OPENING IN SoHo isn't usually the type of news to start a stampede to Prince St. Then again, few of downtown's terminally cool spots can boast a thatched roof, Crayola-colored walls and a past as a newspaper kiosk.

From the moment artist Kenny Scharf opened the "Scharf Schak" two months ago, this tiny store — which looks a bit like a displaced Tahitian beach hut — has been causing big noise.

What differentiates the art sold here from most else available is that this merchandise, while original, also is functional — even wearable.

Scharf's painted images, which appear on everything from address books (\$4.95) to cookie tins (\$45), are typical of his sharp signature style: an amalgamation of pop art, surreal and outer-space motifs peppered with cartoons like "The Flintstones" and "The Jetsons."

For Scharf, 36, whose work has been compared to that of Andy

Warhol, the opening of the Schak was a logical step. "For at least 10 years, I've been applying art to usable objects, customizing appliances and painting T-shirts and I always wanted to further that idea and really design usable, accessible art," he says.

Even for those who aren't art connoisseurs, the Schak is a haven of funky collectibles. For instance, there are limited-edition signed and numbered classic Zippo lighters (\$80), refrigerator magnets (\$2.50 each, \$12 for a set of six) and drinking glasses (\$35 for a set of two), all decorated with Scharf's wacky cartoonish characters in a bright color mix. The ubiquitous backpack (\$45) also can be found with a new twist — heart-shaped tie-dyed canvas sporting a smiling face. Then there are basics, like planetary T-shirts (\$20) and baseball caps (\$15) featuring outer-space images.

An ardent supporter of environmental causes, Scharf incorporated recycling into his store's operation. Bring in any piece of clothing and Scharf will give it a customized makeover. Prices for this service range between

\$30, for a short-sleeve shirt, and \$100 for a pair of jeans or a long dress.

So, has Scharf the serious painter sold out for a wave of commercial success? Hardly. "Selling out means that you compromise yourself, but the concept of the Schak is perfectly in sync with my art — art for people. It's my way to reach into a different audience.

How many kids can afford an oil painting? Making things which are used in the real world goes right along with my philosophy of art and life merging together. It is art enhancing life."

The Scharf Schak is located on Prince St. between Mercer and Houston Sts. Open Mon.-Sat., noon-7 p.m.; (212) 925-4569.

