

# LIFESTYLE

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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### Scharf opens window on quirky pop art

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PI REPORTER

You really can find everything you need at department stores these days.

Girdles, lip gloss, surrealist pop art.

Looking to mix it up a bit in its downtown locations, Nordstrom commissioned pop artist Kenny Scharf to design unique, quirky installations for windows at its Seattle and Portland stores.

#### COMING UP

■ **Kenny Scharf's "Multimundo 2000: Fusion of Art and Fashion"** will be unveiled today in the windows of the downtown Nordstrom and remain through Aug. 23. He'll appear tomorrow, noon-2 p.m., on the store's main floor; information: 206-628-2111.

Scharf's installations are titled "Multimundo 2000: Fusion of Art and Fashion."

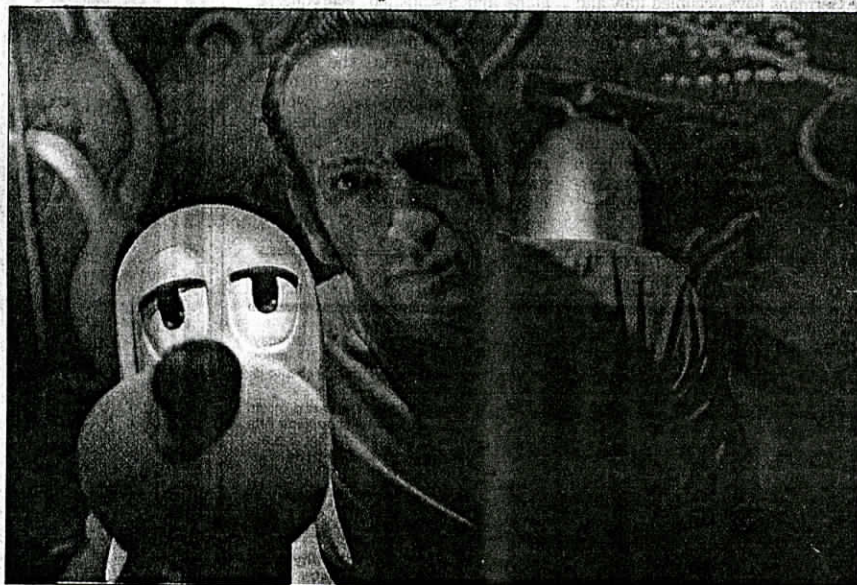
The 14 windows in the Seattle store depict Day-Glo mannequins with names like Suavo, Swirly, Ivis, Jet and Glindy in commonplace poses before netherworld scenes. The backdrops are blown-up versions of Scharf's otherworldly paintings. Lots of alien landscapes, one-eyed creatures and space ships.

"It's almost like a Benetton from outer space. Instead of all the countries of the world, it's all the planets of the universe," says Scharf, explaining both the theme and the title of the installation.

Among the windows are "Avabaloozam," a cocktail party scene with a "Star Trek"/cha-cha-cha vibe to it, and the goofy "Beyond B.C." (before cell phones), where hipsters are reduced to lining up to use a (gasp!) pay phone.

This isn't Scharf's first showing in a department store. In fact, his first show was at the Fiorucci department store in New York back in '79.

"There is a good artists-doing-windows history. (Andy) Warhol, (Robert) Rauschenberg and (Jasper) Johns. So there's a tradition. And I also think



Pop artist Kenny Scharf, with dog Howy in his installation called "Junglism" at the downtown Nordstrom, will fill 14 windows with his "Multimundo 2000" display. MERYL SCHENKER

that galleries and museums, those are great places to show art, but windows, I think are another way of getting out there, more to the public," says Scharf.

"But I'm always looking for ways of getting my art out there in ways that are not the norm. ... I think art should be everywhere."

With his designs for everything from Swatch watches to Absolut vodka ads, Scharf has had to deal with his art being viewed as commercial, which is something purists frown upon.

"A lot of my art comes from a pop mentality. I call myself a pop-surrealist because pop imagery is

embedded in my subconscious. The images are very pop," he says, adding that Warhol, who he refers to as his mentor, crossed that boundary more than 30 years ago.

Scharf's world is one of swirling colors, one-eyed Biffs and flip-haired Betyts in retro space-age settings.

The futuristic flavor of his works speaks of a childlike optimism — this is a man who grew up in an era where school textbooks were filled with promises of lunar space travel by the year 1984.

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### Scharf: Capitalism and art are a playful, edgy pair

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And boy does he feel lied to.

"These messages were constantly being pushed, that this was the future, so when the future arrived, it was definitely a letdown. I wasn't ready to accept that. So I continued that dream in my art."

The windows are a quirky commentary on the uneasy partnership between commercialism and art. The conflict is something Scharf is keenly aware of and tries to resolve.

"I have a love/hate thing with consumerism and capitalism. Sure, I love the images and the sparkle, but at the same time, I know it's destroying the world and our way of life as we know it, is wrecking the planet," says Scharf, who calls himself a "Huppie" — a cross between a hippie and a yuppie.

There's also a cheekiness in his jabs at commercialism. A not-so-subtle example is the "History of the World" window/installation.

Two mannequins stand in a class-

room with a third, a headless teacher, in front of them, arms crossed, wielding a ruler. Behind them is a spiraled time line.

Call it The World According to Scharf.

The spiral starts with forms and molecules, continues on with vegetation, insects, humans, aliens (don't ask) and ends with a cityscape with signs.

"You. Gas. Go. Buy. Money. Now," says Scharf, reading the signs.

"That sure says it all, doesn't it?"