



Collection G. Vazquez

Glacialo Warmino Electricidade, acrylic and oil on canvas, 38½-by-72½ inches.

Surreal puzzle: What to make of it?

■ A Pop-Surrealist show at the Dali hints at a superficiality that in itself is revealing.

ART REVIEW

Kenny Scharf: Pop Surrealist

- **Where:** Salvador Dali Museum, West Galleries, 1000 Third St. S, St. Petersburg.
- **When:** 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 5:30 p.m. Sunday through Sept. 1.
- **Cost:** Adults, \$8; students, \$4; adults 65 and over, \$7; children under 10 accompanied by adult or students of Florida State University system, free.
- **Catalog:** \$17.95 in gift shop.
- **Organized by:** Dali Museum with the Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York; curated by William Jeffett.
- **Sponsored by:** Raymond James Financial Inc.
- **More Information:** 823-3767 (St. Petersburg).
- **Also on display:**

"Prints and Processes," Raymond James Room, through August 24.

"Selections from the Permanent Collection," East Galleries.

By MARY ANN MARGER
Times Art Critic

ST. PETERSBURG

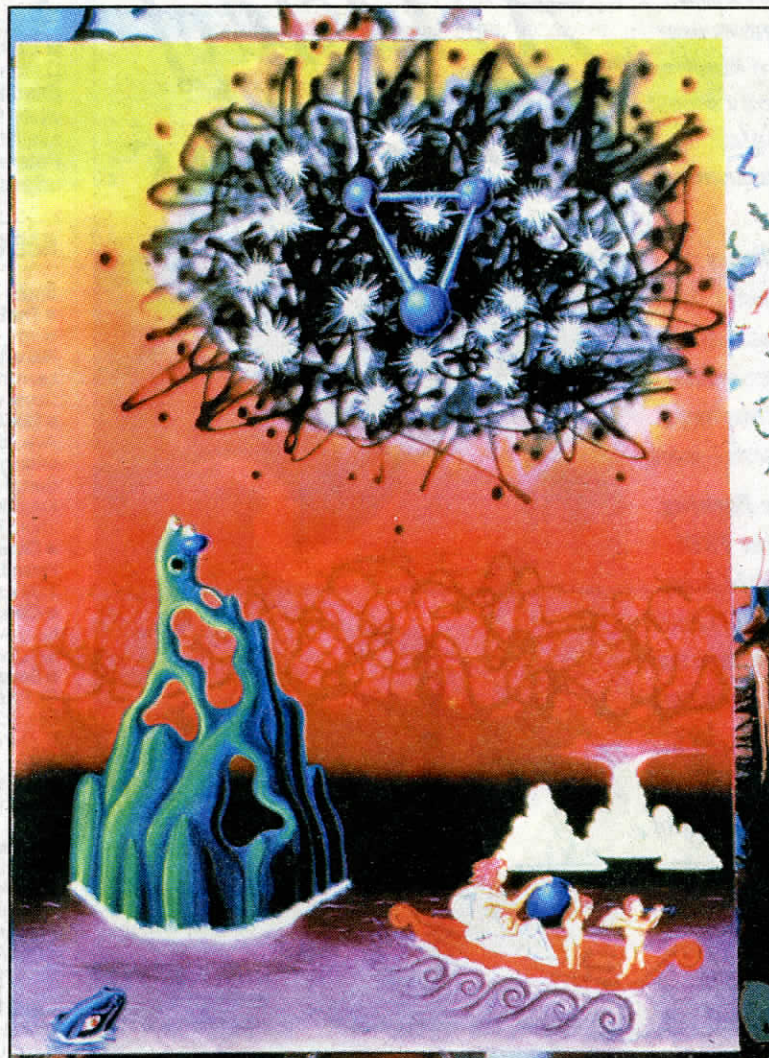
Try this when you see the Kenny Scharf show at the Salvador Dali Museum:

Walk swiftly through the West Galleries to the rear, where Dali's masterworks are displayed in the recessed lower gallery. Check out the contrast of the Day-Glo colors of Scharf's squiggly shapes against the huge, carefully executed works of Dali's classical period.

Suddenly Dali's works, his most dramatic in the museum, seem tired and gray.

What's happening? Scharf has taken Surrealism, images of the unconscious mind, and morphed it via commercially attractive, bubble-gum-bright cartoons. He aptly calls it "Pop Surrealism."

The results range from *Globulecular*, a doodle, to *Glacialo Warmino*



Collection of Phoebe and Herbert Chason

Message from Molecular Messiah, oil and spray paint on canvas, 5 by 7 feet.

that produced his friends Keith Haring (who died of AIDS at age 31 in 1990) and Jean-Michel Basquiat (who died of drug overdose at age 27 in 1988). Both were known for raising graffiti to high art.

Scharf is alive, well and living in Miami with his Brazilian-born wife and family.

His work is described by the introductory panel as "a Pandora's box of unconscious imagery." There are the Flintstones and the Jetsons. There's Jackie Kennedy in

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Swoosh, bronze, 16-by-4-by 6¾ inches.

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The results range from *Globulecular*, a doodle, to *Glacialo Warmino Electricidage*, a hot-cold mix of icebergs, glowing sky and a sea traversed by a smiling dragon. A black orb could be a sun, a pill or a bowling ball.

The Kenny Scharf show marks the first time that the Dali Museum has presented a one-person exhibit by an artist other than Dali. Since branching out from showing Dali exclusively, the museum has confined its offerings to artists that have some connection: other surrealists or compatriots.

Scharf, 38, grew up in a different time and place from those artists, though. Born in Hollywood, Calif., in 1958, he idled away many hours staring at color television. "Those images go inside your brain and become part of your unconscious," he says.

He claims major inspiration from Dali. But Dali's brand of Surrealism grew out of Freudian psychology. Scharf points to Jung, who put less emphasis on sexuality and more on collective identity.

The Pop component of Scharf's work comes from Andy Warhol, master of soup-can Pop.

Scharf joined the same East Village New York scene



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His work is described by the introductory panel as "a Pandora's box of unconscious imagery." There are the Flintstones and the Jetsons. There's Jackie Kennedy in *The Three Faces of Jackie — The American*, all one face, awkwardly played against a map of the U.S. with some decorative blue tendrils, seeking to unite the composition.

Message from Molecular Messiah combines classical figures on a barge, a green cartoon figure and, this just in from the sky, a blob of sparkly stuff, a blue triangle (the molecular messiah, no doubt) and — doodles.

Is the green figure a mutation or just a funny observer? Are we, media-dazed as we are, expected to know the difference? Does it matter if we don't?

No wonder the figures on the barge are leaving.

Other works make reference to the ozone layer, pollution and nuclear devastation, potentially scary events toned down to the point of being ludicrous.

Should we take him seriously?

How can we react to his references to the hard issues of our time when he gives them only surface treatment?

Does his real depth lie in the concept of portraying the shallow veneer of today's media-influenced society?

Answers? Scharf once said, "That's your part; I only do the drawings."