

# MUSEUM OF ART PRESS RELEASE

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## THE SCHARF-O-RAMA VISION: PAINTINGS BY KENNY SCHARF, 1978 - 1995

April 13 - June 18, 1995

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Fort Lauderdale...The most extensive survey of works by Pop-surrealist artist Kenny Scharf opens at the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, on April 13, 1995, and will run through June 18. Entitled *The Scharf-O-Rama Vision: Paintings by Kenny Scharf, 1978 - 1995*, the exhibition features the gamut of Scharf's work, from his rarely exhibited early paintings created while he was studying art at the University of California-Santa Barbara (1976 - 1978), to recently completed works which will be displayed publicly for the first time. The exhibition is sponsored by Ruden, Barnett, McClosky, Smith, Schuster & Russell, P.A. and the Exhibition Fellows.

Scharf is best known for his zany, candy-colored, cartoon-inspired imagery. In an exhibition review, a writer for the *Philadelphia Enquirer* perhaps best described Scharf's paintings: "(They) look like Einstein's Theory of Relativity translated into Hanna-Barbera animations. They're full of laughing, goofy, disembodied faces and streaking blobs of painted cereal-box colors." Scharf often sets such images against vaguely defined backgrounds composed of silkscreened reproductions of commercial products, such as weed killer, hair spray, automobile tires, and other staples of popular culture. The effect is highly surreal or dreamlike.

In the early 1980's, Scharf rose to prominence in the New York art world with his paintings of the Jetsons and Fred and Wilma Flintstone. Soon he became friends with two other emerging artists, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose image-packed, graffiti-esque

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Scharf/ add one

canvases attracted the attention of major art dealers and museum curators. The highly visible trio was also befriended by veteran artist Andy Warhol, who influenced them with his talent for self-promotion and his fascination with popular culture. One of the highlights of Scharf's career in the '80s was his inclusion in the 1985 biennial exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art. The museum purchased Scharf's painting from the exhibition for its permanent collection.

In 1992, Scharf moved to Miami Beach, and he has lived and maintained a studio in Miami ever since. His work of the '90s still reflects his early influences--cartoon characters and commercial products--but it also includes references to contemporary issues such as AIDS and the world's fragile ecological condition.

"Kenny Scharf's paintings are visually dazzling, real attention-getters," says Museum of Art Curator Laurence Pamer, "and there's a bold, fun, innocent quality to his work that gives it a universal appeal. Children, in particular, I believe, will be fascinated with his crazy images of technicolor jungles and wacky, unidentifiable creatures that could only exist somewhere in outer space. Yet, at the same time, his paintings often comment on the contemporary human condition. Behind all the garishness, serious questions are being raised."

In addition to paintings, *The Scharf-O-Rama Vision* will include several sculptures and household appliances which the artist has customized. Scharf will also conduct a children's art workshop at the Museum, which is being organized by the Museum's Department of Education.

Scharf's work has been exhibited extensively throughout the world. Since 1983, he has

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Scharf/ add two

been represented by the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in New York, where his paintings have been given nine solo exhibitions, the most recent in 1994. In addition, his work has been featured in one-person exhibitions in museums and galleries in London, Milan, Tokyo, Paris, Los Angeles, Zurich, Dusseldorf, and Amsterdam.



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