

HEADS UP! FOOTBALL AND THE WAGES OF
CONCUSSIVE HEAD TRAUMA

THE FOOD ISSUE

pasadena

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THEO ROSSI,
PASADENA RESIDENT,
TALKS HEALTH,
HIS UPCOMING
FILM AND
SEASON 7

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INTO SAN GABRIEL'S
STEAMIEST
DINING ROOMS**

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products they've fallen in love with. The events are also an opportunity for customers to get to know one another and for Fierro and her staff to get to know them too.

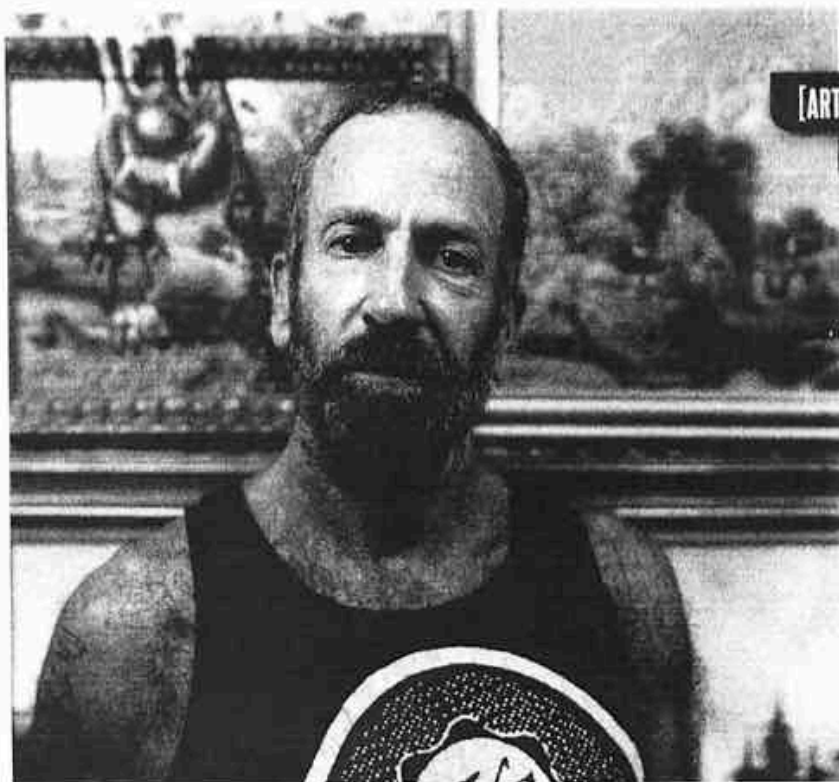
"The reason why this table was built was because I knew that this area was community driven. I wanted people to sit together and not in a corner by themselves with a computer. That's why I also have the four-seat counter. It's really for the regulars. I want them to come in, sit there, have a good chat and eat good cheese together," said Fierro. "I think the seating also has to do with my travels. Nearly everywhere you go in Europe you sit side-by-side and look out onto the street. I loved that."

Equally important, Fierro wants to impart knowledge and "show them what exciting gems we have that are local," she added. "Everything here is touched by hand; nothing is manufactured."

By having makers explain how their products are made and the process by which they make them, the customers have a greater appreciation and are more willing to spend money on high-end cheeses that average \$10 a pound, or on small pieces of nougat that are nearly \$3 a portion.

For 26-year-old maker Michael Bernstein, who owns Savour This Sauce with his sister Marlene, the partnership with Milkfarm has been outstanding. "Meet the Maker presentations are immensely beneficial to our brand. [They] really do put a personal touch that is otherwise missed in conventional grocery shopping," he said. "I thrive off of meeting the consumer and engaging in sales. This product has become to me, something much greater than I had ever intended it to become. I want to share it with the world. And the best way to go about that is by getting out there and communicating the benefits of the product to the public, and establishing a tangible connection between the product and maker—that is key."

Milkfarm recently acquired its liquor license so now customers don't have to take their cheese plate down the street for a glass of wine, greatly enhancing the community appeal. Regulars and new customers alike can gather at the massive, seamless table in the back or at the four counter stools to converse and sample the delicious diversity on display. Fierro has worked hard to create a homey atmosphere her customers are reluctant to leave, and eager to return to. Visit Milkfarm and you'll undoubtedly find yourself lingering longer than planned to try another bite of delicious chesse, or maybe just to sample a little friendly conversation. ☺



The Kosmic Krylon Turns 10

In 2004 artist Kenny Scharf painted murals throughout the PMCA garage. 10 years later the artist's trademark futuristic pop imagery continues to amuse and provoke.

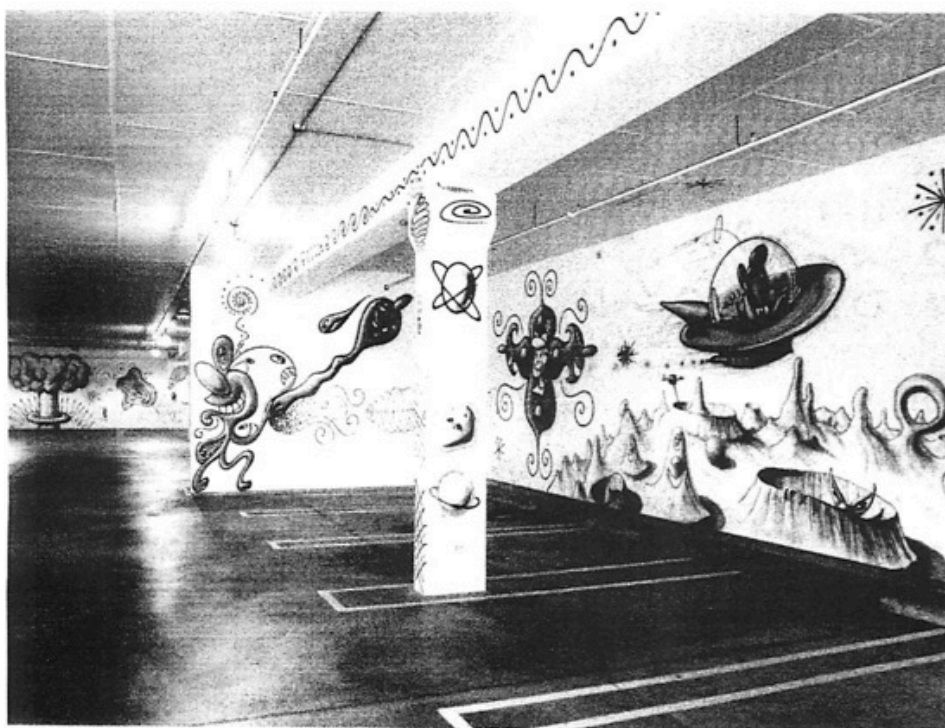
STORY BY // CUYLER GIBBONS PHOTOS BY // MEENO

GRAVEL CRUNCHES UNDER THE TIRES AS WE PULL IN ALONG SIDE AN INDUSTRIAL SIZE DUMPSTER INCONGRUOUSLY ADORNED WITH WHIMSICAL, AMORPHOUS FIGURES OF INDETERMINATE SPECIES. BEYOND THE DUMPSTER IS A GARAGE, DECORATED IN SIMILAR FASHION, WITH A FLAT ROOF SPORTING A LINE-UP OF LARGE CHILDREN'S TOYS INCLUDING A YELLOW PEDAL CAR, A FOUR FOOT SMURF,

and a Barbie kitchen. Behind the garage lies a courtyard below a canopy festooned with dangling found objects and reconstituted detritus in all manner of shapes and sizes. Across the courtyard, acknowledging the heat in tank top and shorts, stands Kenny Scharf and his assistant Dave at the open door to Scharf's

Weird West Adams studio. He welcomes us as we approach.

Middle-aged, with a graying beard, and sporting tattoos of Fred Flintstone and Eloy Jenson, pop figures of deeply personal talismanic significance, Scharf would look at home strolling barefoot on any Southland beach. But



THE KOSMIC KRYLON. (Left) The Kosmic Krylon garage at PMCA. (Right) Scharf's new take on an old thrift shop landscape painting.

clearly he's most at home in the studio we are now standing in.

By now the sometimes whimsical, sometimes cartoonishly threatening pictorial language of Scharf's art is internationally recognized. With his trademark whorls, spirals and starbursts, use of iconographic pop figures like the Jetson and Flintstone characters, and typical pallet of bold primary and day-glow colors Scharf's visual vocabulary is at once both surreal and accessible.

And that is as Scharf intends it. His work, a direct product of his subconscious, is largely unplanned. As he says, "...everything I do in this room I make up on the spot...80 percent of what I do is just spontaneous...I look for a while and think what should I do, then I just start." The attic of Scharf's mind is stuffed to overflowing with the pop imagery of his childhood. When it comes to sifting this imagery for inspiration, Scharf trusts his subconscious implicitly, which allows him to be sanguine about where it takes him. "The truth is, if I chose to do one thing or another thing would it really make much of a difference? It would be something different but it doesn't really mean it's better...I just sort of let it begin, and once it begins it sort of reveals itself to me...I don't know what the outcome is going to be so it's more exciting to be surprised myself."

The work may be largely unplanned, but

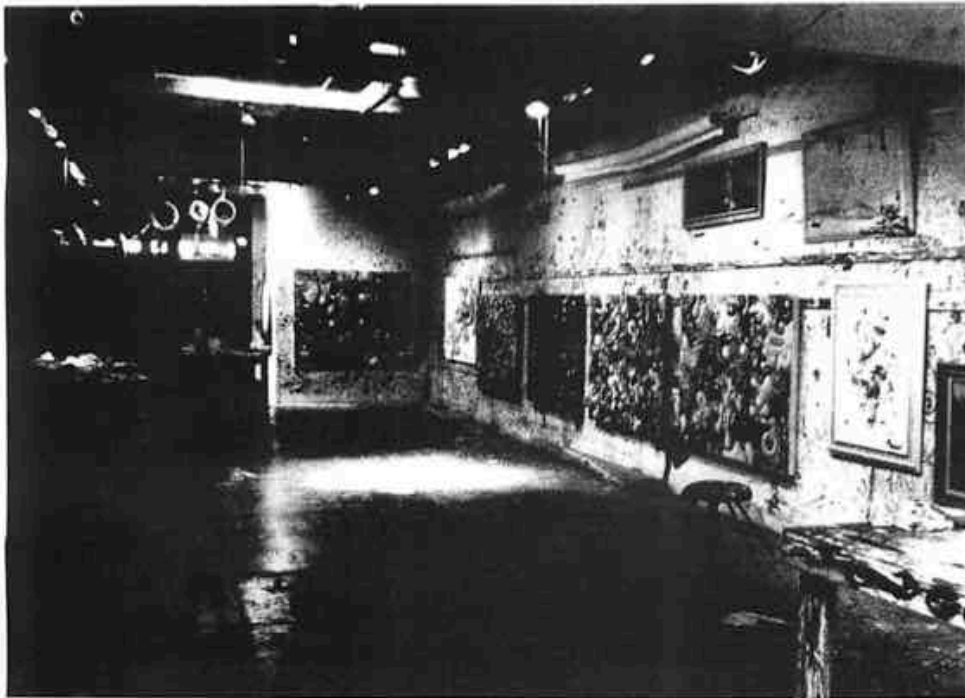
that doesn't mean it has no point or underlying philosophy. Scharf would like his art to be only as complicated as the viewer wishes it to be. He wants to make an immediate impact, to be accessible, but to also provide enough depth and context that an interested viewer can contemplate the deeper meaning beyond the surface representation. As Scharf explains: "I want (the viewer) to be able to look at something and get something right away. I also want him or her to look at something and get it right away, then if they choose to, to look deeper for what other meanings might be there. I try to put all of that in there. I try to make something visually exciting, and I want to appeal to anybody, but there are a lot of issues that deal with the world, politics, art...all these things...I put it all in there so it's up to the viewer what they want to take out of it."

To illustrate, Scharf points to his current project du jour where he's been painting his characters into old landscapes and portraits he's reclaimed from various thrift shops. In these paintings his figures subvert the original context and intention with their presence and their pose, and give new life and meaning to an otherwise discarded piece of canvas. As an example he shows me a typical ocean scene with waves washing up on a rocky, deserted beach. A scene at home on any Holiday Inn Express wall. Amongst the waves crawling up

onto the shore, Scharf has placed a number of his cartoonishly evil looking creatures. "This one deals with Fukushima," he says. "Here we are, we live on the Pacific coast, we love our beaches, yet I've been reading a lot and looking into Fukushima and it's still leaking. Nobody talks about it," he goes on with real outrage in his voice. "They never stopped the radiation leak. The leak is still going on. Where is that radiation going...it's coming here. So if someone wants to look at that (the picture), and think it's funny, well it is but it's also something else pretty creepy."

Scharf first became known for his work in the early 80's when he was a central part of a New York art scene that included Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Scharf's good friend and roommate, Keith Herring, whom Scharf met his first week in New York when he stumbled on Herring painting himself into the corner of an abandoned room to the beat of a blaring Devo song. Scharf was deeply affected by his association with both Herring and Basquiat, and by the early deaths of both artists. "It was terrible. I was very much feeling alone. I lost my balance a little bit," Scharf said. "I used to use those two guys as healthy competition. We had very different styles yet...we were in the same world and were speaking all the time. About the subject matter, how we made it, the spirit of everything we did, we'd share. They would do something really major and it would spur me on - a healthy competition. So when they were gone I felt like, what do I bounce off of?"

Scharf left New York and returned to California in 1999 to work on an animated show he created for the Cartoon Network. It was not a positive experience, as Scharf describes. "It was



SEAT OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS. The interior of Kenny Scharf's West Adams studio.

a big fusco. A big Hollywood story. Big dreams and hopes, do the big project and they throw it away and nobody sees it. Your dream becomes a reality, then someone else owns it, and they just drop you." Despite this disappointment, however, Scharf continues to draw inspiration and solace from Southern California. "I love my studio, I love my house, I'm from here, I have friends here, my family is here, I grew up here," says the artist, continuing with passion. "A lot of what I do and what I am comes from where I grew up. I was really into 1970's airbrush van art, all that kind of psychedelic bubble letters. As soon as I got to New York, as a teenager in the late 70's, I was immediately confronted by all the graffiti on the trains and elsewhere and I immediately connected. My cartoon imagery and psychedelia really related. I already knew the language of it."

Despite Scharf's abiding love of Southern California, and the deep influence the area has had on his art, the fact that he went to school in New York, and his connection to Basquiat and Herring often result in him being labeled a "New York artist." A label the artist himself resists. He sees his work as very much a product of his Southern California upbringing, and himself as definitely a part of the California art scene, however one might define that.

Nevertheless, the art world can be notoriously provincial, and often seemingly obsessed with pigeonholing and categorizing that which is difficult to categorize. For Scharf, even

after 15 years back in the Southland, the artist still finds himself defending his Southern California bona fides. As he puts it, "New York is where I made my name and I will be forever punished by the L.A. Art scene for doing that. They don't like the fact that I made my name in New York, but not here. I try to explain, look, I've been back here since '99, we're talking about 15 years. AND I grew up here. How many artists in the L.A. art scene are actually from here? Not only am I from here, I live here, I work here. What else can I do to be more about here?" He goes on, his voice rising. This point clearly rankles Scharf as he leans in and continues with some vehemence, "Instead of looking at me like some New York interloper, think about that I took the language of L.A. to New York. I brought L.A. to New York, and if they'd realize that, they might look at me in a different way. Instead of like some New Yorker trying to get in on their territory."

For the last 10 years, residents of Pasadena have had the opportunity to closely judge Scharf's California connection for themselves right here in town. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Scharf's "Kosmic Krylon" installation at the Pasadena Museum of California Art garage. Using the museum's garage walls as a canvas, Scharf has transformed the space with murals bearing his trademark futuristic imagery including everything from planets, spaceships and Judy Jetson to a menacing

mushroom cloud. The work is important to Scharf as it kick-started his return to more large scale public projects. As he says, "A lot has happened since I did that project. A lot in the world. A lot in my world. That was picking up a can and doing something bigger than I'd ever done before. And since then I've done a lot of big murals." Public art is central to how Scharf views his artistic mission. He believes deeply in the power of this type of art to transform space in a positive way. "It's good to get artists into ugly areas, it makes the area a lot nicer really fast. Doing walls with spray paint is one of the fastest, and cheapest ways to make a huge impact. You can do public art and it can cost millions and millions of dollars, or you can get a lift for \$300 a day and a couple hundred dollars in spray paint and make a giant impact without a huge endeavor. It's a great way to make big changes fast." All he needs is a good wall. "Once you start doing murals you start getting an eye for great walls. I constantly see big buildings, no windows, just really big, boring, empty walls."

Fortunately for those of us who share Scharf's belief that important art can both amuse and edify, but that it can do neither if it's not accessible, the man gives every indication that he plans on continuing as he has been, tapping his subconscious for the pop imagery stored there, and reflecting it back to us in a new, often provocative, context. "I never get tired of what I'm doing. Sometimes I'll paint 12 hours a day. I'll never complain that I'm working so hard. I'm very grateful that I get to do what I do. I've never sat down to work on a painting and began by thinking, 'Oh God, am I doing this again?' I've just never had that feeling. If I ever did, I think I'd be finished." Kenny Scharf shows no signs of getting tired of what he does. The artist will continue to make us smile and make us think, as he generously puts his surrealist subconscious on display time and time again. ☺

To experience Kenny Scharf's art in person as well as enjoy cosmic cocktails, out of this world culinary creations, and some magic, be sure and attend the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Kosmic Krylon installation at PCMA. For one night only, the spectacular Kosmic Krylon Carnival honoring Kenny Scharf and Merry Norris on Saturday, Nov 8, 2014 7-10pm, 400 E. Union St., Pasadena CA, 91101, 626.768.5666. \$125 in advance, \$150 at the door