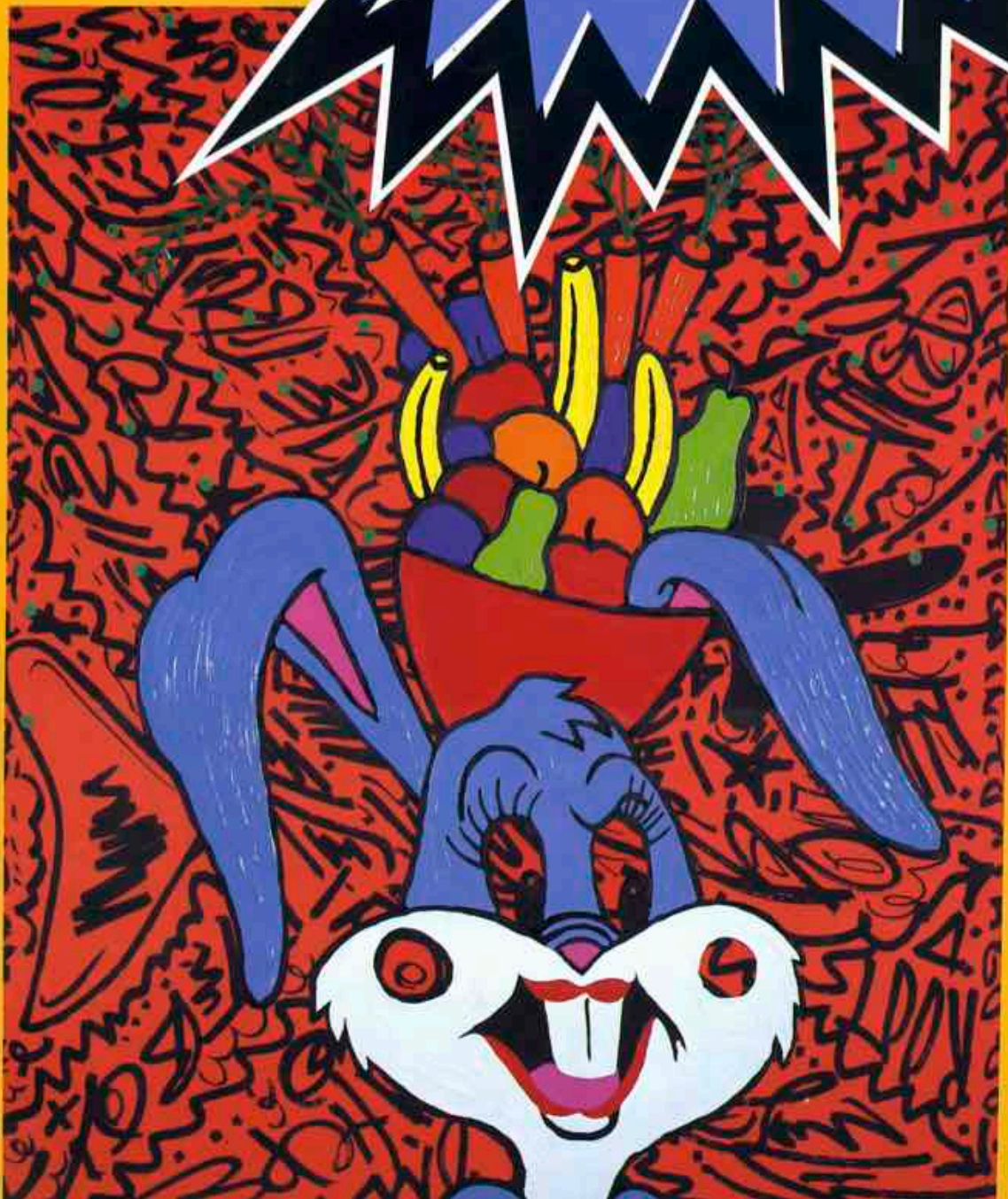


**NEW, USED
& IMPROVED**
ART FOR THE 80'S





KENNY SCHARF
 Untitled
 Mixed media on radio

traditionally used to distinguish fine art from graphic art, commercial art, or even advertising—values such as originality, scarcity, timelessness—can seem negligible, inappropriate, even obsolete when applied to the artwork now dominating the New York scene.

Is this good news, or is it just so much disgraceful hype? On the one hand, media ballyhoo and subsequent commercial developments have allowed many young artists to

derive a substantial living from the sale of the work. If one believes that art is important, that good art contributes favorably to the human condition, then it would seem cruel to deprive a hard-working, gifted artist of the financial rewards enjoyed by successful doctors, lawyers, athletes, business executives, or any other talented professionals. On the other hand, is the art that responds to such reward good art? We play havoc with our basic cultural values and needs if we go too far in motivating artists with money—much too far if, indeed, we are churning out legions of artists who create their art not in answer to an inner drive but in response to an outer demand. The line between a market for art and art for a market blurs all too readily, making the questions of how artists deal with the media and the markets provided by the media that much more crucial.

Nowhere are these questions more pronounced than in New York. This is inevitable, as New York is America's media and advertising capital. And since the New York art scene—a scene comprised not just of New Yorkers but of artists from around the globe who have elected to make or at least to market their work from a New York base—is the primary focus

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RODNEY ALAN GREENBLAT
 Chair for the Puli, 1984
 Acrylic on wood, 94" high



"Carnival music and hawkers' chants lured the curious toward a ramshackle four-story structure on the corner of Seventh Avenue and 41st Street covered with midway signs, banners and subway-style graffiti. A motley collection of ragged-looking and aggressively fashionable characters leaned out of the open holes that had once been windows and stood talking on the sidewalk, mixing with the street people who wandered by." — Jeffrey Deitch, reviewing the Times Square Show for Art in America, September 1980.





Jimmy Carter and his CIA and FBI companions, leading to the questioning that ultimately closed the original Danceteria.

A host of other clubs opened in the early '80s. East Village outposts like the Pyramid Club and 8BC followed the Club 57 example, energizing decrepit spaces with a superimposed variety of media and programs of music, performance, film, and one-night art exhibitions. By contrast, a club called Area has taken the more curatorial approach of Danceteria several steps further. Opened in the fall of 1982 by four young pranksters with a penchant for party giving, Chris Goode, Eric Goode, Shawn Hausman, and Darius Azari, Area has expanded the concept of the theme party: the club is totally rebuilt every six weeks. Area pays artists for all materials and provides them with carpenters and other craftspeople to create installations and large-scale sculptures on a given theme. The result is a museum period room gone wild, a gallery where you can drink, dance, and let go.

"When I first moved to New York," Area's Eric Goode recalls, "I went out every night. I actually came here to study art, but I became obsessed with the nightlife—Studio 54, Club 57, and the Mudd Club especially. It all seemed so much more inventive, more daring, more interesting than the galleries at that time." Azari, Hausman, and Eric's brother Chris shared this view, and so, armed with hammers, saws, sanders, and screwguns, they built their idea of a twelve-thousand-square-foot art installation party palace.

At the time of its opening, Area seemed like a huge, slick, commercial palace, and it was an immediate financial success. Nonetheless, on a given night the informed Manhattan-dweller could be assured of a truly wild time courtesy of the wacko aesthetic of Area's brain trust. Events have included Free Sex Night, which assured live sexual contact; Religion Night, where no faith was spared crucifixion; and Experimental Studies, whose invitation—government issued, mind you—was a microdot of LSD.

The current "state of the art" club, Palladium, made quite a splash when it debuted with a voluptuous interior designed by vanguard Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, artsified with interior embellishments by Basquiat, Haring, and Scharf. The effect is rather like an art shopping mall, its tenants selling you at every turn. The Palladium, like the other megadisco clubs of the late '80s, was

The world's great faiths, and many not-so-great ones, were crucified during Area's Religion Night. For some, at least, it was BYO deity. Meanwhile, below, Kenny Scharf plays in his very own room at the Palladium.



conceived by nightclub pros whose aesthetic walks the line between the bar and the cash register. Therein lies the difference between the early art clubs from Mudd through Area and their commercial successors: conception for yucks versus building for bucks. "I used to wonder what it would be like to see art in clubs," muses Jim Fouratt. "Now I wonder what kind of art would be made by artists who didn't go to clubs."



"It's a really cool thing to drive," Kenny Scharf says of his customized Cadillac. "No matter where you go, everybody looks at you and waves." You bet they do—especially if you've got a customized character like Ann Magnuson in the front seat with you.

KENNY SCHARF
Ultima Suprema Deluxa, 1984
Acrylic, spray paint, found objects
on 1961 Cadillac



KENNY SCHARF
Major Blast, 1984
Oil and spray paint on canvas,
96 x 96"

Kenny Scharf has gotten a good deal of mileage out of operating on a high-energy version of the Pleasure Principle. For art-world sourpusses who cavil at the thought of Scharf giggling all the way to the bank, his extravagant painted installation at the 1983 Whitney Museum Biennial of American Art was a particular affront. Predictably, however, the installation was the popular hit of the show.

Controloguss, 1983-84
Oil and spray paint on canvas,
59 1/2 x 84"

