



THE 80s REVISITED

FROM THE
BISCHOFBERGER
COLLECTION

DUMONT

KENNY SCHARF

Kenny Scharf was born in 1958 in Hollywood, California. He attended the School of Visual Arts in New York between 1978 and 1980, where he met Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring; he lived with Haring until 1982. His first works were soon baptized *Pop Surrealism*, since they took Pop Art—such as American road cruisers from the 1960s—and mounted it in surrealistic-looking landscapes. Like many young artists, Scharf was enthusiastic about the new, up-and-coming graffiti art, and this became evident in his painting around 1980, too. He finally became known in New York for spraying numerous walls with a modified, graffiti-style version of the cartoon character, Fred Flintstone. During that period, his tag was *Van Chrome*. Children's television programming left obvious marks on Scharf's visual world. To this day, the artist declares that his goal is "to break through the elite boundaries of art and connect to popular culture."

"These early works were all made free hand without any drawings. I was relying on automatic improvisation and 'magic' to bring the images to me and the canvas." Kenny Scharf, 2010

In 1981 Scharf had a show at Patty Astor's Fun Gallery, the artistic home of many graffiti artists. In 1982 Scharf and several other artists helped to prepare the gallery for shooting *Wild Style*, the first successful film about hip-hop culture. Despite its bright colors and apparent cheerfulness, Scharf's work is characterized by a profound seriousness—some of his themes are the nuclear arms race and global environmental pollution. Gradually, however, motifs from art history, such as the Renaissance period, have found their way into his work. In 2001 a cartoon by Scharf was broadcast on television, and throughout his career, he has painted rooms and objects in museums and offices in Europe and the United States. Scharf currently lives in New York.

Exhibitions: Fiorucci, New York, 1979; Fun Gallery, New York; P.S.1, New York, 1981; Whitney Museum, New York; Kunstmuseum Lucerne; Palacio de Cristal, Madrid, 1983; Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York; Venice Biennial, 1984; Whitney Biennial, New York, 1985; Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, 1986; Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1987; The Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1991; Halle de l'Union des arts décoratives, Palais du Louvre, Paris, 1992; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Mexico, 1996; Miami Art Museum, 1999; Pasadena Museum of Contemporary Art, Pasadena, 2004; Kunstverein Mannheim, 2006

Kenny Scharf: Butterstripe Sixeye Infitum 1984, Oil on canvas, 77 1/4" x 65 1/4"



Kenny Scharf: Abelia Come 1983-1984, Oil on canvas, 84 1/4" x 108"





Kenny Scharf: Ob - Glob No. 2 1989, Oil on canvas, 60 1/4" x 72"



"'Abelia come' (1984) was made in Brazil in the jungle and is named after these bees that kept eating the paint as I was painting. My art was morphing into a combination of representation using recognizable cartoon figures and psychedelic abstraction. I named it pop surrealism back in 1981 which was basically surrealism in format and philosophy combined with a subconscious mind steeped in mass media that was overloaded in my brain from childhood. 'Butterstripe Sixeye Infinitum' (1984) is a good example of that too." Kenny Scharf, 2010



Kenny Scharf: *Darkness Bleeds*. 1990. Oil and acrylic on canvas with upholstered vinyl frame, 91 3/4" x 115 3/4"

