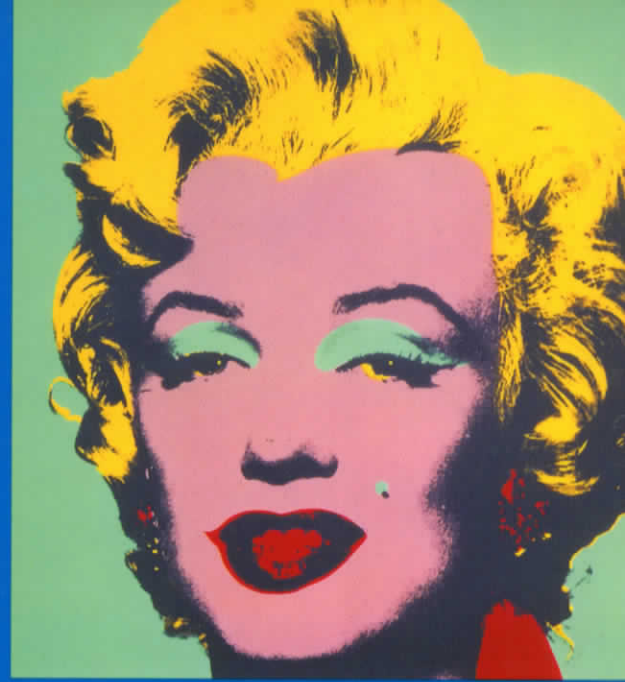


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# POP ART

Jamie James

## KENNY SCHARF (1958– )

### Felix on a Pedestal

1982. Acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 243.8 x 264 cm. Private collection

Kenny Scharf met Keith Haring in 1978 at the School of Visual Arts in New York, where they were both students. The two became close friends and worked together often. They frequented a nightclub in the East Village called Club 57, an informal (and illegal) bar housed in the basement of a Polish church and run by a performance artist named Ann Magnuson. The room had a small stage, where Haring, Scharf and other art students and demimonde hangers-on staged raucous poetry readings and spontaneous evenings of cabaret. The Club 57 scene was bright, colourful, silly and anarchic in a style that was perhaps closer to the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire than to the Happenings of Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine. Influenced by Haring, Scharf began to create art using spray paint, in the style of the graffiti artists who were painting the subway trains in New York at that time. In addition to drawings and paintings, Scharf also made a large number of what he called 'customized appliances', ordinary household appliances such as telephones, blenders and television sets, which were covered with images in the graffiti style. Whereas Haring's style was reduced to bare, bold outlines, Scharf favoured highly finished paintings of what he described as 'super-realistic images of things you couldn't photograph, like objects from outer space. It was all imaginary subject matter which I'd paint in a photo-realistic way.' *Felix on a Pedestal* makes a pointed reference to the Pop Art of the early 1960s by including the figure of Felix the Cat, a popular American comic-strip character.

