

TOTAH

KENNY SCHARF

WOODZ 'N THINGZ

April 21st, 2022 - June 25th, 2022

TOTAH presents *WOODZ 'N THINGZ*, an exhibition of new paintings by Kenny Scharf. *WOODZ 'N THINGZ* opens on the eve of Earth Day, April 21st, 2022. This is Scharf's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

WOODZ 'N THINGZ continues legendary downtown painter Kenny Scharf's intuitive derangements of the regime of senses. Depicting a continual tension between ecosystems—the consciousness of the viewer and the fragility of nature—Scharf creates dazzling paintings that exist in a perpetual state of in-betweenness. Change and influx remain central components to his practice, while latter day ecological threats and the looming certainty of global crises have come to seep into his canvases like liquid metal. Utilizing a familiar vocabulary of imagery, Scharf has created a new painterly substrate for his motifs; an architecture that becomes a visual analogy for the presence of sentience in all things.

While art cannot change the course of reality, or alter how people behave within it, Scharf's paintings exuberantly argue with the ordinary, objective course of affairs. The key lies in learning new ways of refashioning the old, and combining it with the new. *FUZZOODZ* is almost collage-like. The human plane of being is brought into relation with nature through a kind of animistic worship, conflating anthropomorphic creatures with the risible awareness of the trees surrounding them.

STARGET, could, as its title suggests, be a kind of target. The painting could equally refer to a tree-trunk or a mandala. The color palette of greens, purples, and blues, takes on heightened significance here in that an economy of means is utilized to create a cosmic welter of effects. While being a motif repeated throughout Scharf's work, the faces encircling the center of the canvas each have their own individuality. Similarly, the almost vortex-like patterns at the painting's center seem endless, despite the minimalist color scheme.

All of this suggests a richer, more cosmically-oriented consciousness can be achieved if we pare down the means by which we live. The utopian promise embodied in Scharf's paintings intimate that humans can still live in harmony with nature, if only we learn to make new forms of architecture that mimic jungles, which extend from wilderness.

Kenny Scharf (born in Los Angeles, 1958) attended Manhattan's School of Visual Arts and came of age in the 1980s New York downtown art scene alongside his contemporaries Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. A painter and performer inhabiting the visual worlds of both street art and popular culture, Scharf's graffiti paintings gained him notoriety and established a vernacular language all his own. Often working with improvisation, he creates playful, gestural pieces that blend stylized motifs with references to the surreal, science fiction, and icons of popular culture. Many of his larger works still adorn New York streets to this day. Scharf was included in the 1985 Whitney Biennial and again in their show "Fast Forward: Painting from the 1980s" in 2017. His work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Miami Center for the Fine Arts, Florida, and the Queens Museum of Art, New York, among others. Work by Scharf is held in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Broad Foundation, Los Angeles, and The Jewish Museum, New York, in addition to others worldwide. He currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

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