

Kenny Scharf / Edward Totah Gallery

Kenny Scharf's work is alive with a furious electricity. His images, culled from the excesses of pop art and 50's Americana, are combined with more contemporary spaced out oil slick blobs which nearly cover everything.

It is as if Scharf wants to disfigure the bland and predictable leitmotifs with a splash of fun, of irreverence and naive, childlike wonder, in the form of a bulbous, creeping microbe symbol, arching deltas and candy discs.

Scharf calls into question the American dream and creates a glorious nightmare out of it. His obsessions with power, fast cars, sex and hum drum domesticity, combine and collide on these canvas slices with an energy and purpose rarely understood by even the most heavily seasoned gallery goer.

Scharf shocks. He puns and plays like a mischievous imp. Colours are magic spells to him. Images are his trump cards. What we duly realise after taking in the world according to Scharf, is that his obsessions are ours too. We also submit to the lure of sleek automobiles and tuxedo sex. Scharf juxtaposes images. At one time we see the happy all-American clean living family from Squeakville out for a drive. In another

image, a potential ma and pa get down to it on the bed, their privates flashing wildly and alluringly. Underneath, Scharf stamps 'Enjoy' in 50's type-script.

Dinosaurs feature from time to time in this body of work, ironically placed, floating on tyres like the hilariously named Cheek-A-Saur and juxtaposed with an alluring female made up, and Maybelline (?) lashed eye. The eye it turns out refers to the pointless glamour, the third eye, the intrusive viewer, the spy eye. The eye has it. Scharf seems as intoxicated with this single image as say, Fornasetti was with his face of an unknown girl, which he proceeded to turn into all kinds of objets d'art.

In the final analysis, Scharf – one of the last of the New York graffiti bunch which included Keith Haring and Jean Michel Basquiat, is a vital link between the carefree discovery of unbridled fun of early 80's American art and 90's sterility.

Possibly the most significant show in London at the moment.

Kenny Scharf's work is on show at the Edward Totah Gallery until May 23.

ROBIN DUTT

