ALMINE RECH

Kenny Scharf
Tout Suite

Oct 14 — Nov 10, 2023 | Paris

Almine Rech Paris is pleased to present Kenny Scharf's second solo exhibition in Paris and fourth with the gallery, on view from October 14 to November 10, 2023.

Kenny Scharf is enjoying life as best he can. He's keenly aware of the charmed perch on which he is situated—professionally, as a pioneering artist that's been celebrated for four decades, and personally, as a family-oriented patriarch, an off-kilter personality, and one of the few still standing from his moment of comeuppance in 1980s downtown New York. Concurrently, and unlike so many of us living today who as a means of survival block out our planet's abundance of ongoing macro-level destructions, Scharf ponders daily the unfortunate state of the world and its likelihood of getting much worse rather than better.

Though living within this duality is a shared human experience of present day, it's a topic that seems to get swept under the rug, as though ignoring it for long enough will make it all go away. Maybe we simply don't have the language to discuss such an unthinkable roadmap or perhaps knowing our less-than-ideal fate, we focus on the daily pleasures of our finite lives. Through his own language, Kenny Scharf speaks about the various states of life– the good, the bad, joyous, scary, and all its in-betweens. All the while, he urges us—both with content and form—not to take anything too seriously.

At 64 years old, Scharf has spent an artistic lifetime within this exploration; He's stayed true to his ethos since landing in New York in the late 1970s to pursue art and join the downtown cultural movement. Always doing things his way, Scharf wasted no time turning the classrooms at the School of Visual Arts upside down with his unorthodox approaches to making and going beyond the studio and into the city itself to find his ideal canvas. To this day, Scharf pushes the limits of what a recognized artistic language can do and say, thrilled by the premise that when he steps inside the studio, he is presented with infinite possibilities of what can be created.

This exhibition in Paris gives us Scharf in his most evolved state, synergizing all his artistic moves that preceded into a body of work harmoniously situated for the moment. He has arrived at a place where creating comes easy leaning into the intuitive knowledge that only comes through years of refinement.

What currently resides on the top of his mind is clear when you allow a slight reading between the lines: melting characters, politically charged colors, the dire headline 'emissions surge hastening perils across the globe'—Scharf, like all of us paying attention to the current state of affairs, has his concerns for the direction the world is heading. For an artist who has never shied away from spotlighting less then pleasant realities, the critical moment of now presents unprecedented urgency in Scharf's messaging. As with all the artist's work, the characters may remain the same, but their context is different. When you take time to examine these motifs, you'll see the significant meaning within Scharf's practice. In his studio and in life, Kenny Scharf follows the philosophy that nothing can truly be planned. His enduring artistry upholds this belief, forever acting as an ongoing response to what came before and what is possible for the future.

– Maria Vogel