

PRESS RELEASE**KENNY SCHARF**
Superdeluxa**2–25 October 2008****Monday – Friday 10am-6pm**
Saturday 10am- 1.30pm

Handy Andy, 2008, 152.4 x 182.9 cm, oil and glitter on linen

*“The first images you absorb are the ones that stick”**

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce an exhibition of 13 new paintings by the Los Angeles based, American artist Kenny Scharf. This is his first solo exhibition in the UK since 1992.

The paintings, completed in 2008, demonstrate the continuing way in which Scharf utilizes imagery from our everyday experience. Unlike the earlier generation of artists inspired by popular culture, Scharf grew up with television and in 1965, aged seven, his family bought their first colour set. He would sit inches away from the screen becoming completely absorbed for hours in its vibrant coloured dots. The bright cartoons of *Hanna-Barbera*, whose characters such as *Fred Flintstone* Scharf has sometimes included in his work, were to have a lasting impression on his subsequent sensibilities as can be seen in the painting *The All New International Hot Dog* - a seemingly smiling hot dog hovering in front of cartoon shafts of explosive white light on a “Techicolor” background.

An art history class with Eileen Guggenheim at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the legacy of Andy Warhol’s *Factory*, prompted a move to New York in 1978. He enrolled at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan and became close friends with Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, with whom he later shared a loft room from 1981 to 1982. Originally studying illustration, Scharf switched to fine art where he learned the photo realist process of blending paint by brushes. Uninterested in making photographic renditions with paint, he was excited by transferring the technique into a visual realism of fantasy. He was simultaneously involved in the dynamic graffiti art of the streets. It was around this time that Scharf started to customize household appliances with found objects under the alias “Van Chrome”, and became a major participant in the East Village art scene based around *Club 57* on St Mark’s Place. A venue for performance artists, painters and musicians, such as John Sex and Wendy Wild, *Club 57* became a hub of energy and vitality for a burgeoning, disparate group of artists.

In 1991, Scharf’s paintings began to feature silk-screened backgrounds of newspaper texts applied in ways which suggest the anti-gravitational atmosphere of the solar system; planets were often used as locations in his earlier work. Three works in the exhibition: *Ahhhh...*, *Wonderful* and *Hotcakes*, show this “galaxy” of typography, drawn from a mixture of languages. In *Wonderful*, isolated objects rotate and float; bread, the most ancient of food staples offers “12 ways to build strong bodies”; the car has become an aeronautical rocket of personal freedom; spiritual longing has been superseded by the allure of glamour and the promises of industrial products. The paintings *Fresh N’ Pretty* and *Handy Andy* have a calmer, more ethereal quality. A cocktail dress is draped over a chair beside wistful, biomorphic spirals of baby blue and candy pink, whilst in *Handy Andy* a lady captures mid-century memories with an early cine camera, against a celestial purple sky. Scharf conveys an excitement of progress, the anticipation of sensory gratification with the knowledge of hindsight.

Born in Hollywood in 1958, Scharf currently lives and works in New York and has a studio in Los Angeles. He has a second home in Bahia, Brazil and it was after witnessing the total destruction of the surrounding rainforest that he organised the Brooklyn benefit concert *Don’t Bungle the Jungle* in 1989 with Madonna. In 2002, his dream of a cartoon based on his own work was realized in an animated special called “The Groovenians”, made in collaboration with the Cartoon Network. Scharf’s work is featured in many public collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Sogetsu Museum, Tokyo and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

* Hopper, Dennis, "Dennis Hopper Interviews Kenny Scharf", *Kenny Scharf*, New York, New York, 1996–1998

For further information or images, please contact Leonie Holzwarth