



MONOGRAPH

MOODZ

by Kenny Scharf

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Psychedelic Conceptualism

This new book by cult artist Kenny Scharf reveals his latest body of works entitled “MOODZ.” Comprising 350+ circular paintings of faces—each one different—this comprehensive ensemble gives form to a population of moods, feelings, expressions, and colors. Who are the characters depicted on these multiple canvases? Scharf explains they all reflect aspects of his own personality. Some days he needs to release his aggressive energy and they may reflect his anger. Other faces reflect his exuberance and love of painting.

The serial imagery and the iconic quality of Scharf’s faces evoke the work of Andy Warhol. The conceptual structure also reflects the heritage of minimal art. Scharf likens the “MOODZ” series to an early memory of seeing the pixels of color on his parents’ first color television. His work fuses the vocabulary of Pop and Minimalism with 1960s California TV culture that he experienced as a boy in the San Fernando Valley, and as a high school student in Beverly Hills.

Kenny Scharf has been spray-painting faces since 1981. First furtively painting on the street, he learned to develop images spontaneously and quickly. For “MOODZ” he has created an expansive body of work within a rigorous set of constraints—but with infinite possibilities. Scharf embraces the immediacy of spray paint. His gestures use his entire body. The process is totally physical, like a dance. He paints while listening to music on his headphones, entering into a zone where his mind and body merge. His strokes follow the beat. Spray painting is probably the most direct way to make an image. There is no possibility for correction or erasure. As Scharf says, “there is no lying with spray paint.” The accidents that happen lead to new ideas. His faces are continually morphing and evolving.

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