

Arts & Culture**Bob Rauschenberg Gallery spotlights artists who defined underground art in East Village in '70s-'80s****WGCUNews | By Tom Hall**

Published August 5, 2026 at 2:43 PM EDT

*Courtesy of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery / Bob Rauschenberg Gallery website*

'Time SPLAT!' exhibition will be on view Aug. 20 through Dec. 5.

Fifty years ago, Kenny Scharf helped shape pop surrealism in New York's East Village. Klaus Nomi burst upon the rock scene in 1979 when he backed David Bowie on "Saturday Night Live," four years before becoming one of the first prominent public figures to die of AIDS-related complications.

A new exhibition in the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Annex invites visitors to witness the enduring legacy of these visionaries who dared to imagine a more

colorful, queer and otherworldly reality. It's called "Time SPLAT!" and it will be on view Aug. 20 through Dec. 5.



Courtesy of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery / Bob Rauschenberg Gallery website

Kenny Scharf was prominently featured alongside Klaus Nomi in MoMA's 2017 exhibition, 'Club 57: Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978–1983.'

MORE INFORMATION:

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery's next exhibition is "Klaus Nomi & Kenny Scharf: Time SPLAT!" It is a landmark exhibition celebrating the synergistic creativity and era-defining work of two seminal artists who helped shape the underground art scene in New York City's East Village in the late 1970s and early '80s. "Time SPLAT!" bridges the gap between Kenny Scharf's signature, ethereal "pop surrealist" landscapes and characters and the highly theatrical, extraterrestrial persona of the now legendary performer Klaus Nomi.

"Time SPLAT!" is more than a retrospective. Visitors will experience a playful yet profound collision or "splat" of time - where Kenny Scharf's recurring motifs of cartoonish joy and nuclear-age anxiety meet Klaus Nomi's operatic, avant-garde futurism. A selection of Scharf's vibrant paintings, transformed found objects, uniquely customized clothing and cosmic printed editions are presented in direct dialogue with vintage artifacts, stage worn costumes,

props and rare performance documentation capturing Nomi's tragically brief yet spectacular career.

Together, these elements mark a pivotal moment in art history when new wave music, street art and high-concept performance met, merged and forever reshaped contemporary culture.



Courtesy of Bob Rauschenberg Gallery / Bob Rauschenberg Gallery website

Visitors will experience a playful yet profound collision of Kenny Scharf's recurring motifs of cartoonish joy and nuclear-age anxiety and Klaus Nomi's operatic, avant-garde futurism.

Exhibition details & visitor information

- Exhibition: "Klaus Nomi & Kenny Scharf: Time SPLAT!"
- Dates: Aug. 24 – Dec. 5
- Location: Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Annex (Building J-118), Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers, Florida 33919
- Admission: Free and open to the public
- Gallery Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed holidays).

- Special Events: Please note there will be no formal opening festivities. Details regarding a closing reception featuring artist Kenny Scharf and additional related programming will be announced as confirmed.



WGPU Arts Reporter Tom Hall / WGPU Arts Reporter Tom Hall

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Annex is located in the Rush Library, Building J-118, on the Fort Myers campus of Florida SouthWestern State College.

About Kenny Scharf

Kenny Scharf rose to prominence in the East Village during the late 1970s alongside close friends and collaborators Ann Magnuson, Joey Arias, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. He enjoyed a career that spans more than four decades. He is renowned for street-art-infused canvases, mind-altering installations and playful "pop surrealist" iconography.

He was included in the 1985 Whitney Biennial and early immersive environments such as his famous "Cosmic Caverns." Since then, he has enjoyed more than 100 solo exhibitions worldwide.

His notable museum retrospectives and major surveys include shows at the Pasadena Museum of California Art in 2004, the Hammer Museum in 2015,

the Nassau County Museum of Art, The Brant Foundation in 2024–2025 and MAM Shanghai in 2025.

Scharf was also prominently featured (alongside Klaus Nomi) in MoMA's landmark 2017 exhibition, "Club 57: Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978–1983."

His work is held in permanent collections across the globe, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Broad, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.



WGPU Arts Reporter Tom Hall / WGPU Arts Reporter Tom Hall

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Annex is located in the Rush Library, Building J-118, on the Fort Myers campus of Florida Southwestern State College.

About Klaus Nomi

Klaus Nomi (born Klaus Sperber in Immenstadt, Bavaria, in 1944) worked as an usher at the Deutsche Opera in West Berlin before moving to New York City in 1972. While working as a pastry chef and nightclub singer, he embedded himself in the downtown scene. Possessing an extraordinary countertenor vocal range, Nomi captivated audiences by blending rock, disco and cabaret with operatic arias—spanning compositions from Henry Purcell and Saint-Saëns to covers of Elvis Presley, Chubby Checker and Donna Summer.

Nomi's highly stylized aesthetic — including his iconic, geometric tuxedo inspired by dadaist Tristan Tzara and David Bowie — led to a career-defining

performance backing Bowie on "Saturday Night Live" in 1979, an RCA recording contract, and international tours.

Notwithstanding his tragic death at the age of 39 from AIDS-related complications on Aug. 6, 1983, Nomi left an indelible mark on music, fashion and visual art.

His papers and archive have been recently acquired by Harvard University's special collections.