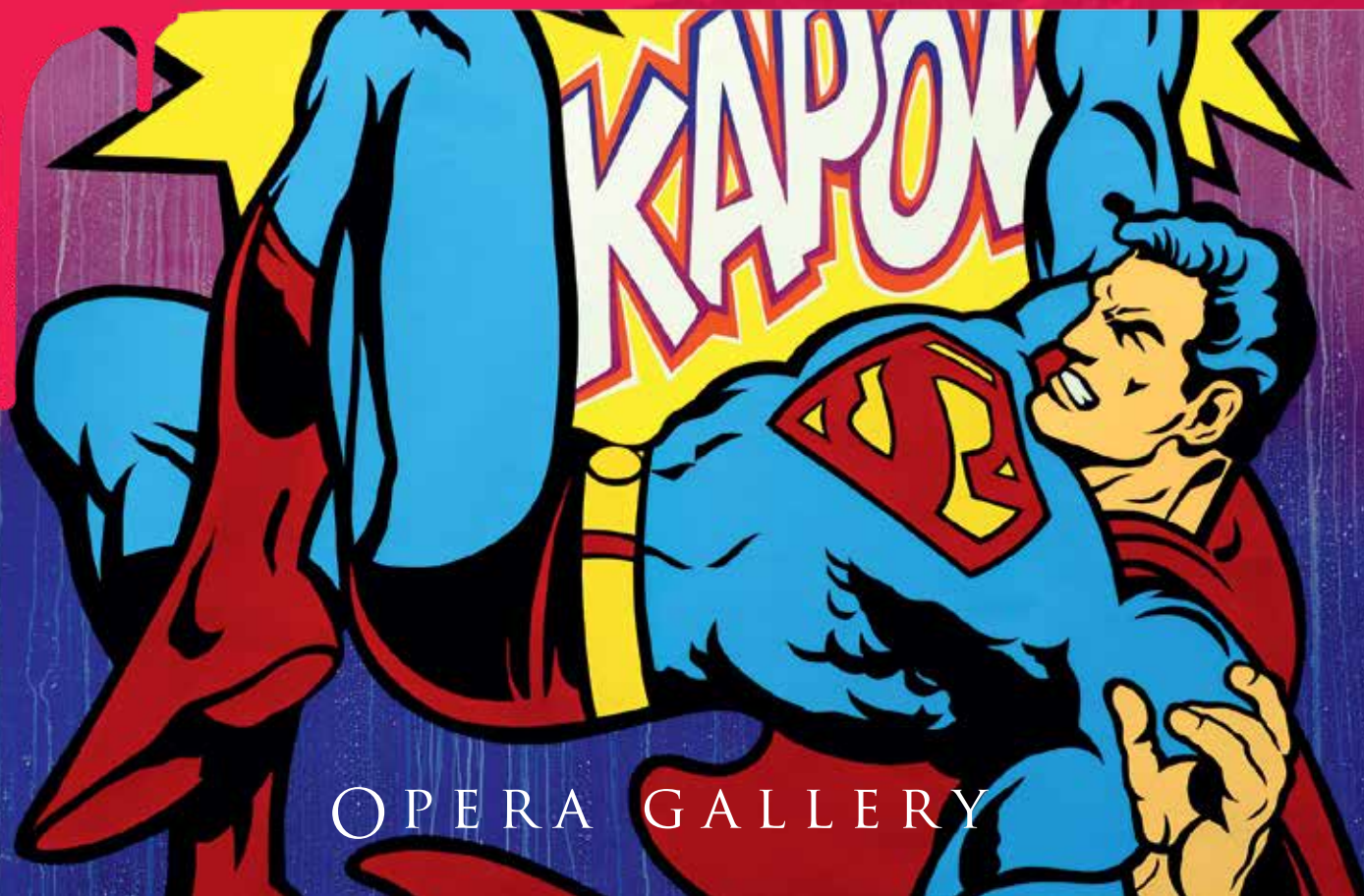




STREETEASE



OPERA GALLERY

PREFACE

MR. BRAINWASH & SEEN

From subway taggers in the 1940s to the Banksy phenomenon of recent times, Street Art has experienced a rapid and unexpected proliferation in the contemporary artistic canon. Born in side-streets and alleyways, the rise of urban art from anonymous subversion to a bona fide cultural movement has surprised and redefined the global art market. In the nearly fifty years since a teenage SEEN tagged his first underground subway, art experts, auction houses and theoretical dissertations have come to analyse the social, economic and political infrastructures that nurtured the uprising of his risky creative journey.

Street Art, like any art, demonstrates a very human need to make sense of and manipulate our surroundings. Loaded with social commentary, street artists took to public spaces as a way to communicate independently from the established art world. Using basic iconography to attract the attention of the general public, Street Art originated from the heterogeneity of commercial and underground cultures. Liberated from the heavy-handed rhetoric of art history, it emphasizes the raw creativity of the layman, shifting focus from minimalism and abstraction to subcultures of punk, pop, fashion, comic, and hip-hop. Its ubiquity on everything from street signs in Brooklyn to trash cans in Tokyo have turned it into a symbol of global visual culture, expressing, perhaps for the first time in art history, an indication of a worldwide cultural and artistic language.

The rise of Street Art in the global art market is in large part due to the era in which it was conceived. The Internet Age, which came into focus in the 1990s alongside urban art's meteoric resurgence, was crucial in the circulation of this global artistic mentality. Websites, blogs and eventually social media platforms became digital counterparts to the artists' public gallery spaces, meaning site-specific artworks were available to a growing community of netizens. Renowned Street Art exhibitions such as Mr. Brainwash's *Life is Beautiful*, which opened in 2008, attracted 50,000 visitors in Los Angeles as well as countless other online explorers, whose activity of digital sharing helped the exhibition title transform into a mantra, brand and icon of the Street Art generation.

As commercial enterprises began to take notice of the growing popularity of the icons and messages of the urban art scene, artists began incorporating their work into gallery and institutional settings. After decades benefitting from the free promotion of the streets, artists such as SEEN became highly sought-after forerunners of a globally resonating movement: urban art began carving out a place within the institutionalised art world. Combining visible social and political commentary with mainstream media coverage, the inherently transient nature of the craft has turned urban art into a desirable investment. The visual world of urban art delivers artistic freedom without being confined to a common aesthetic. Its common attitude, of irreverence and democracy has become an ephemeral piece of contemporary cultural history.

Street artists are increasingly dominating the contemporary Art market. The personification of freedom and spontaneity has thrust the movement into centre stage, while art historians are increasingly making connections between art world giants Warhol and Basquiat to artists such as SEEN and Space Invader. A commentary on popular culture, Street Art has also proven to be a lasting conceptual form that relies on a consistent cycle of impermanence and replacement. The world's largest museums and auction houses have, in the past couple years, dedicating commercial and academic efforts to the continued acceptance of Street Art as a major cultural manifesto. Its argumentative nature has, perhaps ironically, only elevated it commercially, as we the people continue to seek ownership over freedom of thought.

Gili Karev - Art critic



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MR. BRAINWASH

is a French-born, Los Angeles-based artist, filmmaker and cultural impresario. Previously an amateur videographer and vintage clothing store proprietor, Thierry Guetta, aka Mr. Brainwash, made a name for himself in the early 2000s as a controversial compatriot of prominent street artists such as Banksy and Space Invader. In 2008, Mr. Brainwash staged his debut solo exhibition, *Life is Beautiful*, in a dilapidated television studio in Hollywood. Featuring his now signature savour of large-scale installations, historical pop imagery and contemporary iconography, the exhibition was met with enormous critical and commercial acclaim. The success of *Life is Beautiful* was sustained through subsequent exhibitions of similar scope in New York, London, Toronto and Basel over the next few years. A hybrid public incarnation and artist in his own right, Guetta's Mr. Brainwash alter ego remains a fascinating commentary on the relationship between artist and public in the contemporary street art movement.



Everyday Life, 2016
Stencil and mixed media on wood panels
157,5 x 205,7 cm - 62 x 81 in.



Bucket Heart, 2016
Acrylic and steel buckets on canvas
122 x 122 cm - 48 x 48 in.



Charlie Chaplin, 2011
Stencil and mixed media on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Life is Beautiful Drips #2, 2016
Acrylic on enameled steel sculpture
68,5 x 106,5 x 25,5 cm - 27 x 42 x 10 in.



Not Guilty, 2011
 Stencil and mixed media on canvas
 162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Charlie Chaplin, 2011
 Stencil and mixed media on canvas
 162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Max Spray, 2010
Stencil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas
234 x 102 cm - 92.1 x 40.2 in.



Smile, 2011
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Dog, 2010
Recycled tires
130 x 85 x 130 cm - 51.2 x 33.5 x 51.2 in.



Picou, 2010
Mixed media on canvas
91,5 x 91,5 cm - 36 x 36 in.



Shazam, 2011
Mixed media on canvas
91,5 x 61 cm - 36 x 24 in.



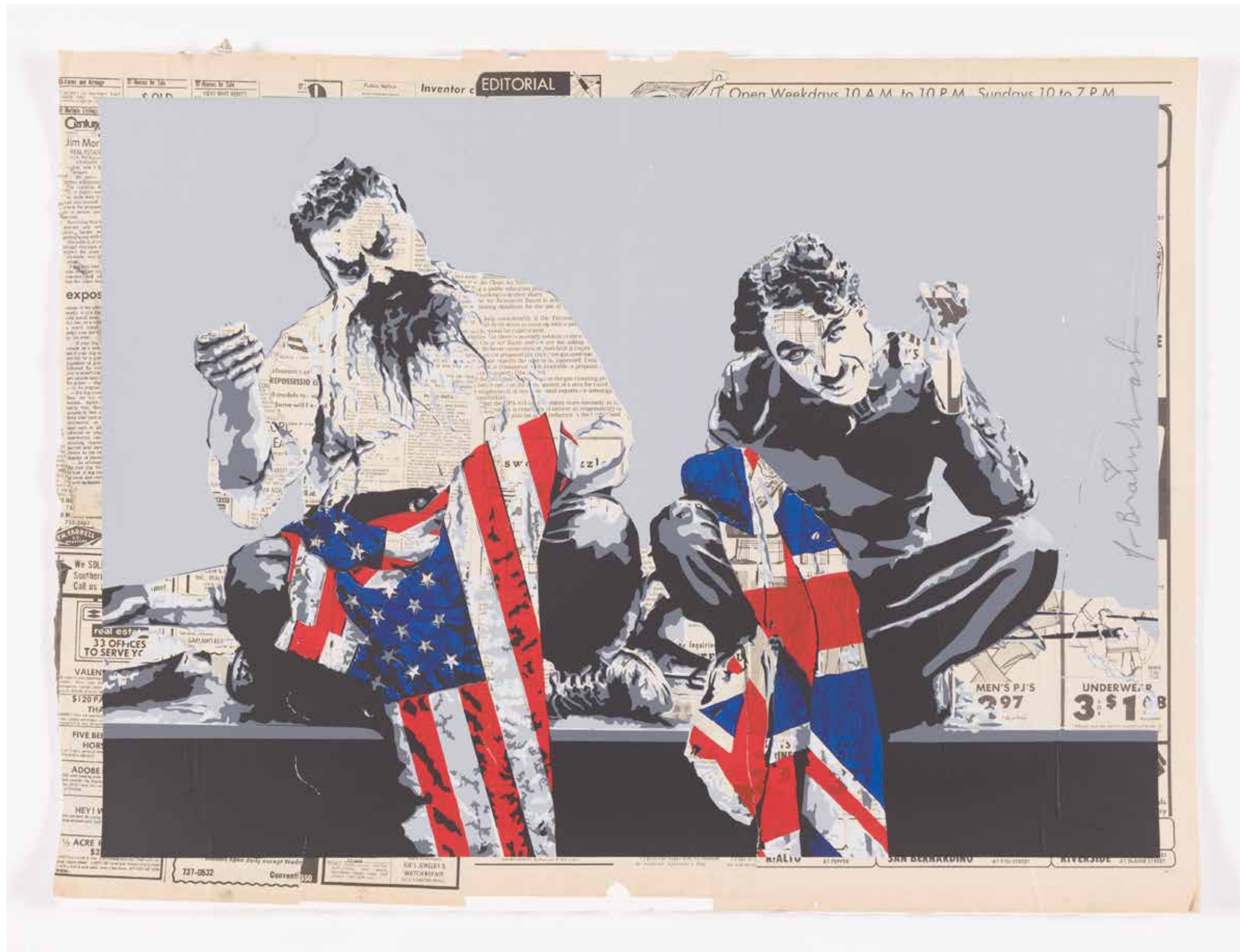
Multi Jackson, 2009
Silkscreen and acrylic paint on canvas
122 x 91,5 cm - 48 x 36 in.



Charlie Chaplin, 2010
Stencil, mixed media and spray paint on canvas
162,5 x 122 cm - 64 x 48 in.



Superman, Batman & Robin, 2011
Mixed media on canvas
91,5 x 61 cm - 36 x 24 in.



The Patriots, 2010
Silkscreen on paper
56 x 76 cm - 22 x 30 in.



SEEN

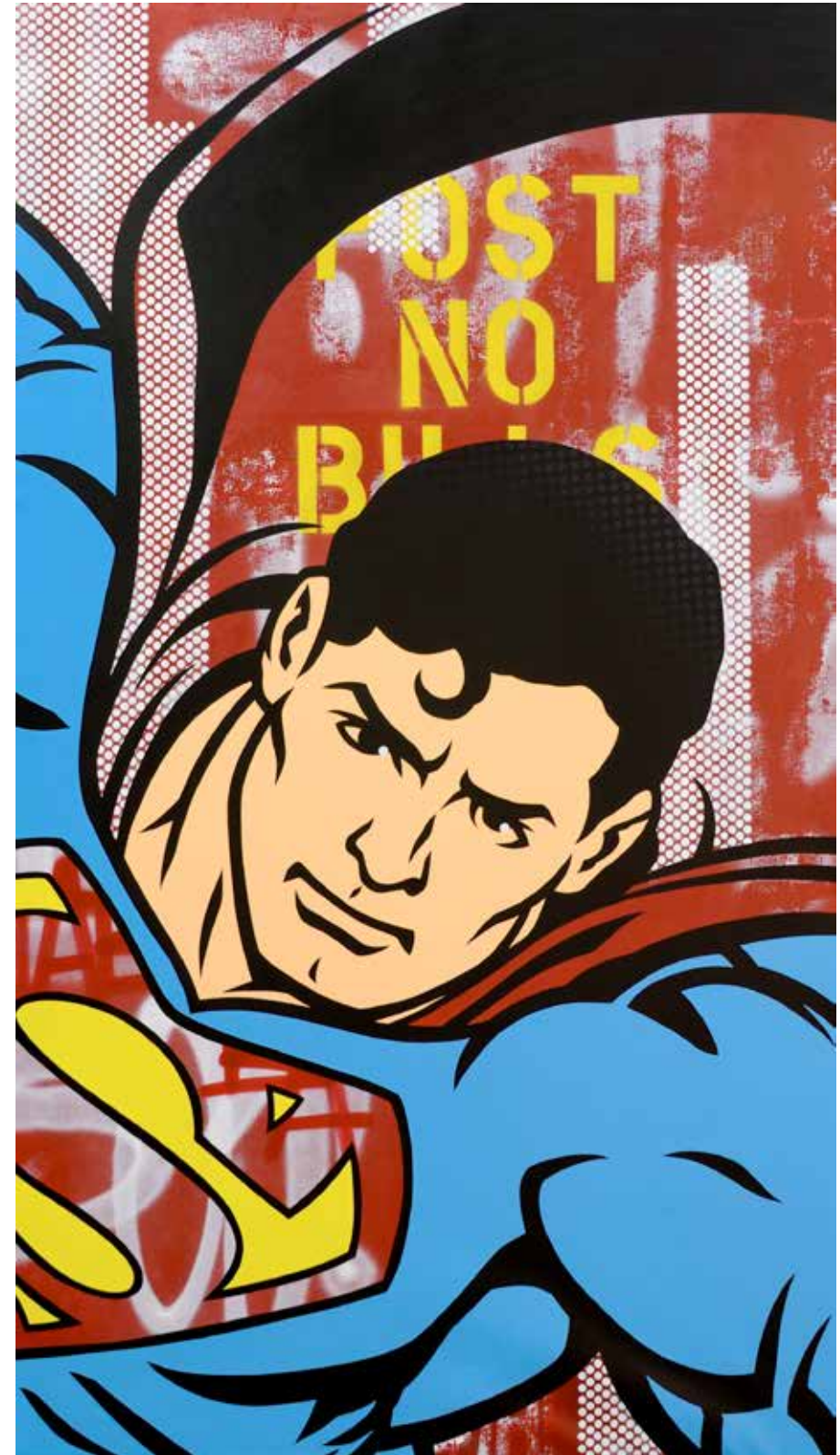
is known to be the Godfather of graffiti. Richard Mirando, aka SEEN, spent his teen years in the 70's spray painting New York subway trains, quickly gaining reputation as a prolific and highly stylised tagger. Recognised for his bright coloured lettering and cartoon characters, SEEN's top-to-bottom subway canvases have become iconic images of the time. In the 1980s, he became one of the first graffiti artists to produce works on canvas for gallery and museum exhibitions, exhibiting alongside artists such as Keith Haring, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. The shift pioneered the acceptance of graffiti and street art as venerable cultural symbols. Shifting away from the streets, SEEN ran one of the most successful tattoo studios in New York City throughout the 1980s and 90s. Returning recently to large-scale canvases, his new work incorporates a childhood fascination with comic book heroes with the immortalisation of imagery on a big screen.



Batgirl, Armed and Dangerous #1, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



The Wild Wonder Woman, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Superman Post No Bills, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 120 cm - 86.6 x 47.2 in.



Batgirl, Armed and Dangerous #2, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Catwoman (claws out!), 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Emma Frost #2, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Emma Frost #1, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Wonder Woman Bracelets #1, 2013
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Purple Batgirl, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Spiderman vs Catwoman, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 150 cm - 86.6 x 59.1 in.



Captain America, 2013
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
200 x 300 cm - 78.7 x 118.1 in.



Falling Superman, 2013
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



The Flash Can Fly, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Wonder Woman, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Dick Tracy is Back, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Sexy Blackcat #1, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Sexy Blackcat #2, 2016
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Kissing Pepe, 2013
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
105,5 x 95,5 cm - 41.5 x 37.6 in.



Betty Boop, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 150 cm - 86.6 x 59.1 in.



Popeye the Sailor, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Tweety is in Love, 2013
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 220 cm - 86.6 x 86.6 in.



Frenchy Bunny, 2014
Stencil and spray paint on canvas
220 x 170 cm - 86.6 x 66.9 in.

MR. BRAINWASH & SEEN

Exhibition 6 - 26 May 2016

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