

By Deidre S. Greben March 13, 2019

## **“That 80’s Show” Relives Decade’s Color, Culture**



Kenny Scharf, left, Andy Warhol and Keith Haring at Elizabeth Saltzman's birthday party at Il Cantinori in Manhattan in 1986. Credit: Patrick McMullan

“The gang’s all here,” museum director Charles Riley says of the megastar cast powering “That 80s Show,” opening at the Nassau County Museum of Art in Roslyn Harbor March 16. Keith Haring’s bold cartoon-graffiti figures, Eric Fischl’s emotionally urgent Neo-Expressionist narratives and Cindy Sherman’s pre-selfie “Untitled Film Stills” are all propelled into the spotlight in this sweeping, hundred-work survey of a decade of brash and bracing American art. In what is fast becoming the museum’s signature cross-disciplinary approach to the art-historical timeline, “That 80s Show” juxtaposes select works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, April Gornik, David Salle, Ross Bleckner, Robert Mapplethorpe and other big-name artists with photos, posters and a host of celebrity memorabilia documenting the heady period’s explosive art, sports, entertainment and social scenes.

What distinguishes the exhibition is the personal involvement of many of its key players. “Fischl weighed in very strongly with the selection and installment of the works,” Riley says. The artist, who grew up in Port Washington and now resides in Sag Harbor, has likened his perspective to that of a surfer catching a wave off Montauk’s shore. “That feeling of being swept up and carried by something so much bigger and more powerful than yourself, something you’d worked so hard to catch, and now you’ve caught it and you’re in it.”

Riley says he has also benefited from the keen eye and iconic contributions of sculptor Bryan Hunt and neo-conceptualist Jenny Holzer in mounting the show. Holzer’s textual series “Inflammatory Essays” covers a variety of the decade’s hot topics — and an entire gallery wall.

Direct connections also emerge in a mixed-media work by David Wojnarowicz incorporating a map of the museum’s surrounding location and in vintage photos featuring ’80s hit performers, including punk rockers The Ramones, at nearby trending music venue My Father’s Place. Mementos documenting Islanders and Mets championships are showcased with other souvenirs from the era, such as handwritten lyrics by Madonna and a shirt worn by Prince, assembled by “Antiques Road Show” and “History Detectives” star Elyse Luray, a resident of Port Washington.

“Collectors were mixing in and among the artists and celebrities,” Riley says of the period, and not in downtown watering holes where the avant-garde have historically hung out, but in dance clubs like Area and the Palladium. Viewers can feel like part of the party spotting A-list personalities of the era in a broad selection of Patrick McMullan’s ’80s nightlife photographs.

The chronicler’s images, like the NCMA show, don’t capture the whole picture but provide juicy glimpses of a compelling and creatively ambitious moment in time.

**WHAT** “That 80s Show”

**WHEN | WHERE** March 16 through July 7, 11 a.m.-4:45 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, March 16-July 7, Nassau County Museum of Art, 1 Museum Dr., Roslyn Harbor

**INFO** \$4-\$12; 516-484-9338, [nassaumuseum.org](http://nassaumuseum.org)

<https://www.newsday.com/entertainment/long-island/museums/that-80s-show-1.28386205>