



BLEECKER STREET ARTS CLUB
IS PLEASED TO PRESENT

THE 80s: PAST + PRESENT
AN EXHIBITION OF WORKS CURATED BY KEITH MILLER

OPENING APRIL 24TH AND ON VIEW THROUGH MAY
OPENING RECEPTION APRIL 24th FROM 6PM-8PM

Bleeker Street Arts Club is pleased to celebrate a group of artists brought together by the enthusiastic passion of one collector, Keith Miller. The link between CRASH, Tom Slaughter, Ronnie Cutrone, Scott Kilgour, and Michael De Feo lies beneath the surface of their art. Each artist is linked to the zeitgeist of the events that were transpiring in the 1980s New York art scene: the years when creativity and flash ruled the streets. It was a time when Graffiti was making its way onto the gallery walls, and Andy Warhol was the six degrees of separation of the art world. Art was changing and it was selling, and young collectors like Keith Miller were among the first to see the potential and importance of the new art coming from the streets influenced by the idea of Neo-Pop.

CRASH was a well-respected father of the Graffiti movement having created murals on the subways and walls at a time when New York was a lot more dangerous. As Andy Warhol's assistant at the factory from 1972 to 1980, Ronnie Cutrone remained a main fixture in the Warhol cast of characters even after he went out on his own and developed his "Post-pop" aesthetic replete with animated character references. Even though Cutrone was not working in the street, his use of cartoon characters and common brands were his way of accessing the broader public in the decidedly Warholian pop way. Michael DeFeo was painting his iconic flower all over New York at the same time Tom Slaughter began making conspicuous images of New York City water towers, a theme which he still uses in the studio today. After emigrating from Glasgow in 1983, Scott Kilgour was using trash and found objects as his subject matter and showing at 56 Bleeker Gallery. From Scott Kilgour's turn to formalism and Michael De Feo's flowers, each of the five artists has been influenced in some way by the 1980s art scene. For CRASH and Ronnie Cutrone, it was being part of the nucleus of the scene. For Kilgour and Slaughter and De Feo, it was being influenced and surrounded by the scene. For their show at Bleeker Street Arts Club, each artist has a unique take on art that, at its core, is about passion and exploration of what art is and what it can be.

"The 80s: Past + Present" is really Keith Miller's story about an exciting time when young artists with a street sensibility and accessibility were discovered by a group of young collectors. These young collectors were so vivaciously passionate about their explorations into contemporary art and this street scene that they would boldly call up artists such as Keith Haring to visit his studio: a move that took audacity, but also the knowledge that they as collectors were in a position to help build the scene through their patronage. Tom Slaughter describes a show he had in Southampton where Miller and his friends all arrived on brand new Harley Davidsons wearing T-shirts designed by Slaughter and manufactured by someone in their entourage who owned a factory; it was a collaborative effort. These collectors were fast and fun and making moves in the business world; collectively, they shared ideas and an aesthetic and felt a kindred spirit in the group of artists they chose to collect and hang out with.

Their choices elucidate a moment in New York's art history when accessibility was of supreme importance and artists' subject matters and modes of production and distribution were "democratic" in a way that opened up art-collecting to whole new group of people never before targeted and previously never as capable of, or as

interested in, collecting as much as they now were. Even though their art was championed by the influential Henry Geldzahler, contemporary curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and exhibited at legendary galleries such as 56 Bleecker and Fun Gallery, Pop Art questioned traditional highbrow modes of authenticity and distribution of imagery. Via the street, art could be a freer and more openhanded system than within the gallery system. Street art is also inherently fragile, as works get absorbed into their environments, tagged over, decompose, or removed. So the openness and ironically, the delicate nature, of some of the street art united these artists into a movement that was consistently trying to memorialize itself, and thus brought its members together ideologically.

For more information please contact Jessica Hodin at Hodin@BSACNY.com.

305 BLEECKER STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10014 | WWW.BSACNY.COM