

Benjamin SPARK

Benjamin Spark's visual language freely samples from art history and popular culture, redeploying canonized styles and genres alongside graphics borrowed from youth subcultures and the commercial mainstream.

Spark's complex pictorial worlds include quotations from artists like Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Basquiat, as well as song lyrics, brand logos, video games, cartoons, and magazine covers. He subverts the locked-in comic book universe, juxtaposing Disney stars, superheroes or the denizens of Franco-Belgian comic strips, then leaves them dirtied and defaced with a spray-paint graffiti attack. "I take these icons and ridicule them, to illustrate a sort of disorder in their world," he says,

"I'm exploding the frame that holds them in, soiling them a bit. The characters become the background and the tag comes to the fore." Spark admits being a frustrated comic strip author/artist. "I dreamed of it as a boy, but could never come up with a good story," he says. Instead he went into the web design business. Mid-life crisis came early and by 30 he dropped everything to start painting. After flirting with tribal-influenced art brut, known as 'outsider art' in English, Spark developed his own style, amalgamating pop and graffiti art. He cites Icelandic post-modernist Erro and New York street artist Jean-Michel Basquiat among his influences, and changed his name in tribute to the designer Philippe Starck. Having abandoned Paris, Spark now works out of a studio in a converted brewery on the mean streets of Brussels. "I fell in love with Brussels... it's the place be."

More than any artist of his time, Spark exemplifies what art historian Daniel Birnbaum calls "painting in the expanded field," his prolific oeuvre reflecting the prepackaged newness and hybrid spaces of the Information Age.

Born in Boulogne-Billancourt, FR
Lives and works in Brussels

EXHIBITIONS

2018
Art Up Lille
2017
MAISON TRIOLET-ARAGON, Moulin de Villeneuve
2016
Envie d'Art gallery, Paris VIII
KAPOPOULOS GALLERY, Athens

2015
All the word's a stage, MARIE DEMANGE GALLERY, Brussels
Fragmentations, BERTHEAS GALLERY, Paris

2014
It takes alifetime to unlearn everything, MAZEL GALERIE, Brussels
Looking for Spark, BCK GALLERY, Marrakech

2013
L'affaire Spark aux Tournesols, BERTHEAS GALLERY, Saint-Etienne
Do not open project, Brussels

2012
Group show, POP GALLERY, New-York
Group show, KELLERMAN GALLERY, Dusseldorf

2010
Bad Joke, L'ENTREPOT, Monaco

2009
Bartheas gallery, Vichy
Zberro gallery, Paris