

BENJAMIN
SPARK

the possibility
of an island

KAPOPOULOS
FINEarts

MYKONOS ATHENS THESSALONIKI PATMOS SPETSES ELOUDA NICOSIA



Do you know what « Spark » means in Icelandic? A kick, as well as strength. It suits him well. I like his energy, the vitality that emerges from his works and artistry. Looking back at where he comes from, his early paintings, and seeing what he does now, one can only be delighted. It's magnificent. Benjamin Spark is someone, who really knows how to draw and has evolved a lot.

Although I have only known him for 3 years, he is the only artist in my entire career – and I am 83 years old! –, who has ever come to my studio to explain to me how he works. Usually painters keep their little secrets to themselves. But he, he explained everything to me, everything from how he realises enlargements to the way he projects them like slides onto a screen, without keeping anything from me. Thus, this is the first time in my life that I get inside the mind of an (other) artist, so to speak. He came with his computer and I had a feeling that he was showing me somewhat the next day! We, artists, are always concerned with the future, what comes next, but also with the idea that everything has been done already, that nothing is left to do, hence the future is uncertain, dotted. Benjamin Spark embodies one of the possibilities of this future that is being drawn. He works incredibly fast, but also very skilfully since his compositions are exceptionally polished. This is by the way one of our similarities. Benjamin Spark thinks about the way he is going to compose his canvas before thinking about the subject of his painting.

Composition is the most important part. I learned it in Florence, during my formative years as an artist, where I studied at the Uffizi all the masters of Renaissance. This is necessary to evolve towards more modern compositions and eventually consider realising them with the help of a computer. This is the way modernity goes, fast, very fast, like Facebook, like the Web. With Benjamin Spark, we move forward at least. It is dynamic and he demonstrates that one can still introduce something breaking with everything that has ever been made up to this point, until oneself. There were Pop art, Figuration Libre, Figuration Narrative, and plenty other movements, but Benjamin Spark draws from them to actually invent a new form of narration. His subjects come from all over the world; they are very diverse, very open. He can't be reduced to a position.

So when I discover such talents, I try my best to help them exhibit, with or without me. Also what I like with him is that he doesn't take himself seriously. It is refreshing. He loves his work and this is essential. There are so many guys, who only did one or two things in their lives and foolishly believe themselves to be indispensable. At least Benjamin Spark isn't like Nicolas Sarkozy!

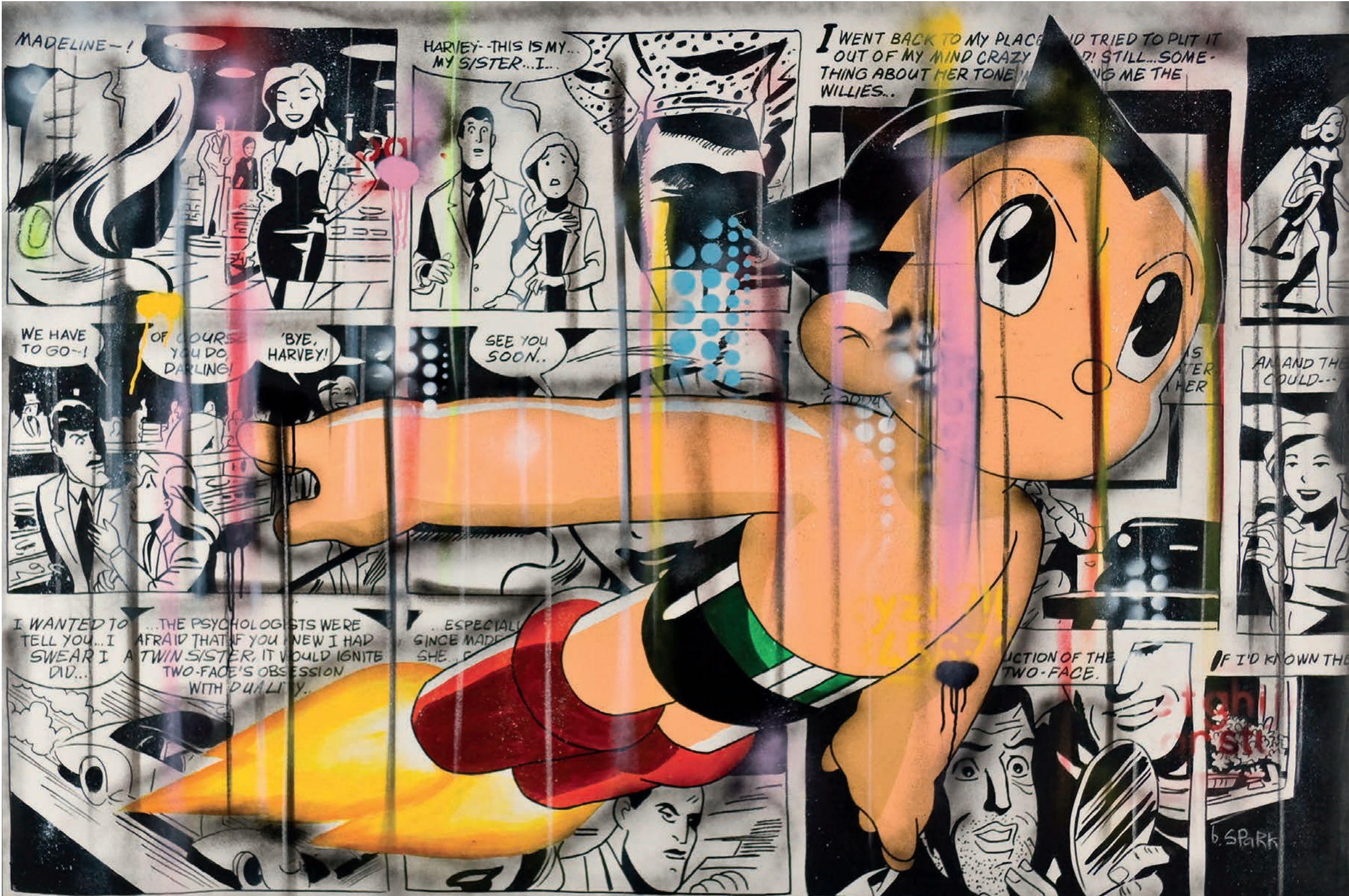
Erró

TRANSLATED BY Violaine Boutet de Monvel



THRILLS AMERICA | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 200 X 150





MADELINE--!

HARVEY- THIS IS MY...
MY SISTER...I...

I WENT BACK TO MY PLACE AND TRIED TO PLIT IT
OUT OF MY MIND CRAZY...? STILL...SOME-
THING ABOUT HER TONE... MAKING ME THE
WILLIES...

WE HAVE
TO GO--!

OF COURSE
YOU DO,
DARLING!

'BYE,
HARVEY!

SEE YOU
SOON..

S
ATER
HER

AN AND THE
COULD--

I WANTED TO
TELL YOU...I
SWEAR I
DID...

...THE PSYCHOLOGISTS WERE
AFRAID THAT IF YOU KNEW I HAD
A TWIN SISTER, IT WOULD IGNITE
TWO-FACE'S OBSESSION
WITH DUALITY.

...ESPECIAL
SINCE MADE
SHE...

...ACTION OF THE
TWO-FACE.

IF I'D KNOWN THE

b.SPARK



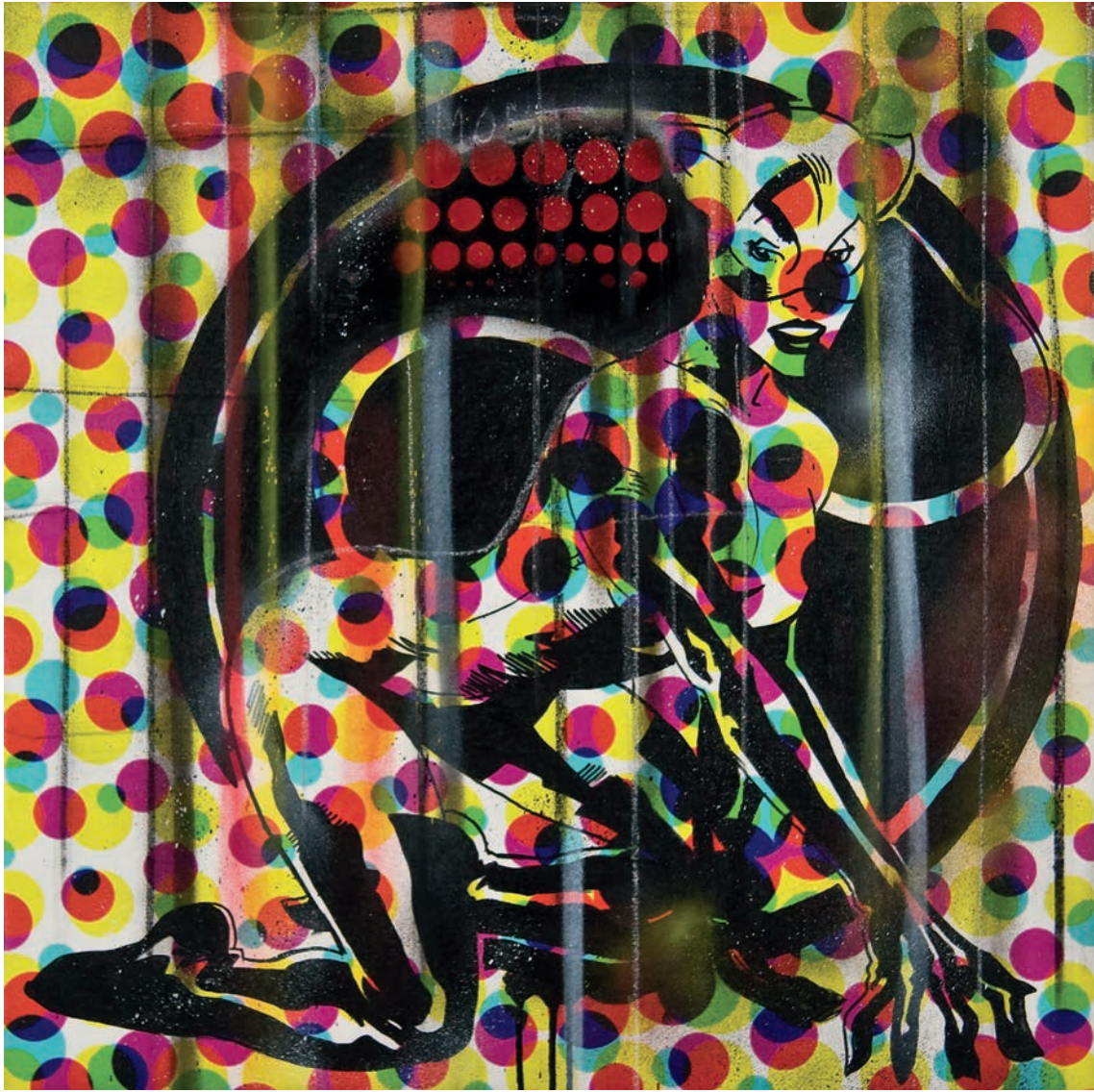
STRONG SILVER | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 100 X 100

INTO THE DARK | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 100 X 80



ANOTHER GREAT DAY | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 155 X 76





DOT LADY | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 80 X 80



BLUE MANGA | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 80 X 80





CINEMA PULP | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 100 X 100



CATALIST POST | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 100 X 100

CHASING PARENTS | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 80 X 40



CARING PARENTS | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 80 X 40





COST PEOPLE | ACRYLIC AND SPRAY ON CANVAS | 100 X 100





MARVEL TRIBUTE 280316 | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 100 X 100



BEAUTY FACE | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 80 X 75



CAPTAIN PINK | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS | 100 X 80



LOOK AT ME NOW | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS | 80 X 80



BLUE LADY CHANG | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS AND PLEXIGLAS | 80 X 80



BIG STUFF FACE | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS | 80 X 80



DUCK IN MY HEAD | MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS | 80 X 80



BENJAMIN SPARK'S visual language freely samples from art history and popular culture, redeploing canonized styles and genres alongside graphics borrowed from youth subcultures and the commercial mainstream.

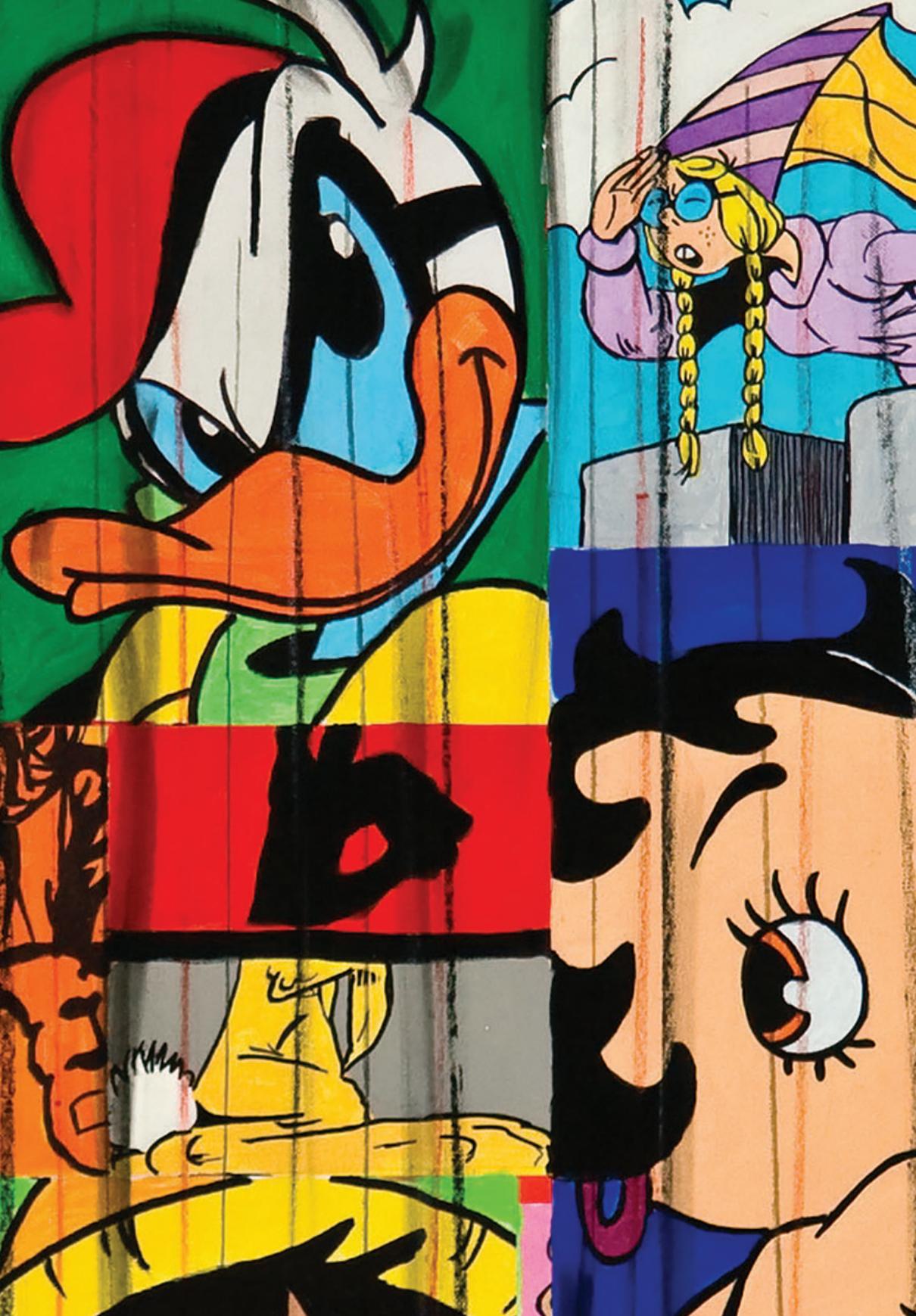
Spark's complex pictorial worlds include quotations from artists like Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Basquiat, as well as song lyrics, brand logos, video games, cartoons, and magazine covers. He subverts the locked-in comic book universe, juxtaposing Disney stars, superheroes or the denizens of Franco-Belgian 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, France.

Lives and works in Brussels.



RECENT SHOWS

07/2016

The possibility of an island, KAPOPOULOS FINE ARTS, Mykonos

11/2015

All the world's a stage, GALERIE MARIE DEMANGE, Brussels

10/2015

Fragmentations, GALERIE BERTHEAS, Paris

10/2014

It takes a lifetime to unlearn everything, MAZEL GALERIE, Brussels

04/2014

Looking for Spark, BCK GALLERY, Marrakech

11/2013

L'affaire Spark aux Tournesols, GALERIE BERTHEAS, Saint-Étienne

11/2012

Group show, POP GALLERY, New-York

12/2012

Group show, KELLERMAN GALLERY, Düsseldorf

09/2010

Bad Joke, L'ENTREPOT, Monaco

