



Keith Haring
(American, 1958 - 1990)

Biography

Keith Haring, born in 1958 in Reading, Pennsylvania, was raised in nearby Kutztown, Pennsylvania. He developed a love for drawing at a very early age, learning basic cartooning skills from his father and from the popular culture around him, such as Dr. Seuss and Walt Disney. Upon graduation from high school in 1976, Haring enrolled in the Ivy School of Professional Art in Pittsburgh, a commercial arts school.

He soon realized that he had little interest in becoming a commercial graphic artist and, after two semesters, dropped out. Haring continued to study and work on his own and in 1978 had a solo exhibition of his work at the Pittsburgh Arts and Crafts Center. Later that same year, Haring moved to New York City and enrolled in the School of Visual Arts. In New York, Haring found a thriving alternative art community that was developing outside the gallery and museum system, in the downtown streets, the subways and spaces in clubs and former dance halls. Here he became friends with fellow artists like Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Haring was swept up in the energy and spirit of this scene and began to organize and participate in exhibitions and performances at Club 57 and other alternative venues. He was drawn to the public and participatory nature of Christo's work, and by Andy Warhol's unique fusion of art and life, so that Haring was determined to devote his career to creating a truly public art.

As a student at SVA, Haring experimented with performance, video, installation and collage, while always maintaining a strong commitment to drawing. In 1980, Haring found a highly effective medium that allowed him to communicate with the wider audience he desired, when he noticed the unused advertising panels covered with matte black paper in a subway station. He began to create drawings in white chalk upon these blank paper panels throughout the subway system.

Between 1980 and 1985, Haring produced hundreds of these public drawings in rapid rhythmic lines, sometimes creating as many as forty "subway drawings" in one day. This seamless flow of images became familiar to New York commuters, who often would stop to engage the artist when they encountered him at work. The subway became, as Haring said, a "laboratory" for working out his ideas and experimenting with his simple lines.



Between 1980 and 1989, Haring achieved international recognition and participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions. His first solo exhibition in New York was held at the Westbeth Painters Space in 1981. In 1982, he made his Soho gallery debut with an immensely popular and highly acclaimed one-man exhibition. During this period, he also participated in renowned international survey exhibitions such as Documenta 7 in Kassel; the São Paulo Biennial; and the Whitney Biennial. Haring completed numerous public projects in the first half of the 80's as well, ranging from an animation for the Spectacolor billboard in Times Square, designing sets and backdrops for theaters and clubs, developing watch designs for Swatch and an advertising campaign for Absolut vodka; and creating murals worldwide.

In April 1986, Haring opened the Pop Shop, a retail store in Soho selling T-shirts, toys, posters, buttons and magnets bearing his images. Haring considered the shop to be an extension of his work and painted the entire interior of the store in an abstract black on white mural, creating a striking and unique retail environment.

The shop was intended to allow people greater access to his work, which was now readily available on products at a low cost. The shop received criticism from many in the art world, however Haring remained committed to his desire to make his artwork available to as wide an audience as possible, and received strong support for his project from friends, fans and mentors including Andy Warhol.

Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. In 1989, he established the Keith Haring Foundation, its mandate being to provide funding and imagery to AIDS organizations and children's programs, and to expand the audience for Haring's work through exhibitions, publications and the licensing of his images. Haring enlisted his imagery during the last years of his life to speak about his own illness and generate activism and awareness about AIDS. Keith Haring died of AIDS related complications at the age of 31 on February 16, 1990. A memorial service was held on May 4, 1990 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, with over 1,000 people in attendance.

Since his death, Haring has been the subject of several international retrospectives. The work of Keith Haring can be seen today in the exhibitions and collections of major museums around the world.

Selected Collections

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA
The Bass Museum of Art, Miami, USA
Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles, USA
Cathedral of St John the Divine, New York, USA
Citygardens, Missouri, USA
The Denver Art Museum, Colorado, USA
Emily Fisher Landau Foundation, New York, USA
Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, USA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA
The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, USA
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Michigan, USA
The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, USA
The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Albertina Collection, Vienna, Austria
Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria
Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Austria
Palais Razumovsky Collection, Vienna, Austria
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
Eglise St Eustache, Paris, France
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Nice, France
Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France
Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm, Germany
Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany
Neues Museum Weimar, Germany
ZKM/Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany
Groninger Museum, Groningen, The Netherlands
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Ludwig Collection, Budapest, Hungary
François Pinault Collection, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy
Fondation Edelman, Lausanne, Switzerland
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva, Switzerland
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
The Museum of Art, Kochi, Japan
Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan
Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, Hokuto, Japan

Selected Exhibitions

2023
Against All Odds, Akron Art Museum, Akron, USA
Art is for Everybody, The Broad, Los Angeles, USA
Amsterdam Notes, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2020
Keith Haring, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany
Keith Haring, BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium

2019
Keith Haring, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

2018
Art is Life, Life is Art, Dongdaemun Design Plaza, Seoul, South Korea
Drawing Social Impact, Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, Hokuto, Japan
The Chicago Mural, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, USA
The Alphabet, Albertina, Vienna, Austria

2017
The End of the Line, Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan, USA
Posters, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany
Keith Haring: About Art, Palazzo Reale Milan, Italy
Keith Haring and Japan: Pop to Neo-Japonism, Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, Hokuto, Japan

2016
Post Pop: Prints of Keith Haring, Middlebury College Museum of Art, USA

2015
The Political Line, Kunsthal Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Multiplexism, National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan
The Political Line, Kunsthalle Munich, Munich, Germany

2013
Languages, Fales Library, New York University, USA
The Political Line, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France

2012
Keith Haring: 1978-1982, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA
Pisa Mural Restoration Commemoration, Pisa, Italy

2011
Keith Haring 1978-1982, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, USA
The Hieroglyphics of Keith Haring, Musée en Herbe, Paris, France

2010

A New Dimension, Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey, USA
Keith Haring 1978-1982, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria
The Keith Haring Show, SOMA Museum of Arts, Seoul, South Korea

2009

Keith Haring, Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm, Germany
The Keith Haring Show, Musee des Beaux-Arts, Mons, Belgium

2008

Keith Haring Retrospective, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France
Keith Haring: Two Sculptures, UNAIDS, Geneva, Switzerland
Against All Odds: Keith Haring in the Rubell Family Collection,
Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, USA

2005

Keith Haring: Urban Memory, Fundacion ICO, Madrid, Spain
Five Keith Haring Sculptures, Somerset House, London, UK
The Keith Haring Show, La Triennale di Milano, Milan, Italy
The Characters of Keith Haring, Children's Museum of the Arts,
New York, USA
New Wave Aztec, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA

2003

Keith Haring, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Sao Paulo, Brazil

2002

Heaven and Hell, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam,
The Netherlands

2001

Heaven and Hell, Museum fur Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany

2000

Keith Haring: the SVA Years, School of Visual Arts, New York, USA
Sculptures Kurfürstendamm, Berlin Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany

1999

Keith Haring in Pisa, Palazzo Lanfranchi, Pisa, Italy

1998

A Retrospective, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, USA
Also in San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA and
Musee des Beaux-Arts, Montreal, Canada

1997

Complete Editions on Paper, Kunsthalle, Cologne, Germany.
Also in Historisches Museum der Pfalz-Speyer, Speyer, Germany and
Kunsthalle, Dresden, Germany
A Retrospective, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City, USA
The 10 Commandments, Bruderkirche and Museum Fridericianum,
Kassel, Germany
A Retrospective, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia

1993

One Person Show Queens Museum, New York, USA
A Retrospective, Mitsukoshi Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan

1991

Haring, Disney, Warhol, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, USA

1990

Future Primeval, Queens Museum, New York, USA

1989

One Person Show, Casa Sin Nombre, Santa Fe, USA

1986

One Person Show, Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Sculpture Garden,
New York, USA
Art in the Park, Whitney Museum of American Art, Stamford, USA
One Person Show, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

1985

One Person Show, Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux, France

1982

One Person Show, Rotterdam Arts Council, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

1980

One Person Show, Westbeth Painters Space, New York, USA
One Person Show, P.S. 122, New York, USA
One Person Show, Club 57, New York, USA

1978

One Person Show, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, USA