

KEITH HARING: ART IS FOR EVERYBODY

An Experience L.A. Event

Friday, August 25, 2023

The Broad, Downtown Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Keith Haring (1958–1990) created some of the most widely recognized art of the twentieth century. His vibrant, socially engaged art was inspired by graffiti, street art, and a commitment to accessibility, and often addressed important political concerns of his time.
- This is the first Los Angeles museum exhibition dedicated to Haring's work.

KEITH HARING


Keith Haring's "images could be found as often on T-shirts as in museums," the *New York Times* reflected in its obituary of the young and widely influential artist, who died in 1990 at age 31 of AIDS-related illness.

Indeed, Haring wanted his art to be for everybody, and that meant in museums and galleries as well as in subway stations and emblazoned on affordable retail products. Vibrant, graphic, and full of energy, Haring's art addressed many of the pressing issues of his time, including AIDS, the anti-apartheid movement, and nuclear disarmament.

Haring created art in public spaces, including murals and chalk drawings made on unused advertising spaces in subway stations. Even when he began exhibiting in galleries and museums and doing commercial work, including ads for Absolut vodka and designs for Swatch watches, Haring continued to make public art.

In 1986, Haring opened Pop Shop, a retail store in SoHo that sold shirts, toys, buttons, magnets, and posters featuring Haring's art at affordable prices. "My shop is an extension of what I was doing in the subway stations, breaking down barriers between high and low art," he said.

Keith Haring grew up in Pennsylvania. He learned cartooning skills from his father and briefly studied to become a commercial graphic artist at the Ivy School of Professional Art in Pittsburgh before moving to New York in 1978 to attend the School of Visual Arts. While at SVA, Haring supported himself by working as a busboy at the nightclub Danceteria. In New York, he became involved with the city's thriving art scene alongside artists and friends including Jean-Michel Basquiat and Kenny Scharf, as well as musicians, graffiti artists, performance artists, and many others.



"Art should be something that liberates your soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further."

—KEITH HARING



Keith Haring working in the subway, 1983. (Photo: Chantal Regnault)



Keith Haring, *Red Room*, Acrylic on canvas, 1988

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

This exhibition includes over 120 artworks and archival materials. The Broad suggests you keep an eye out for these highlights:

- Popular heart paintings including *Untitled*, 1982
- The iconic hand-painted pink suit that Madonna wore at Keith Haring's 26th birthday party
- Photos of Haring's chalk drawings in New York City subway stations
- A room full of works focused on Haring's AIDS activism
- Posters and merchandise from The Pop Shop

Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988 and died in 1990 of AIDS-related illness. The Keith Haring Foundation, established by Haring in 1989, provides funding and imagery to AIDS organizations and children's programs.

Keith Haring's career was short but full. He made hundreds of works of public art, and his work was featured in more than 100 solo and group exhibitions in the 1980s.

“Almost immediately upon my arrival in New York in 1978, I had begun to be interested, intrigued, and fascinated by the graffiti I was seeing in the streets and in the subways . . . So the time spent en route to a gallery or to a performance or to a concert was just as interesting and educational as that which I was going to see. . . Graffiti were the most beautiful things I ever saw. This being 1978-79, the war on graffiti hadn't really begun yet. So the art was allowed to blossom into something amazing.”

—excerpted from “Conversation with Keith Haring” by John Gruen in *The Keith Haring Show* (Milan, 2005) and on haring.com

THE 1980s NEW YORK ART SCENE

New York in the 1980s was home to a dynamic art scene that spanned the avant-garde and underground, visual arts and music, graffiti and street art, hip hop, performance art, punk, and more at venues including Club 57, CBGB, and downtown lofts where artists could access abundant space with cheap rent.

Some of the many artists converging in New York at the time include Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, David Wojnarowicz, Cindy Sherman, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Patti Smith, Lady Pink, Kenny Scharf, Barbara Kruger, Nan Goldin, and Kiki Smith.

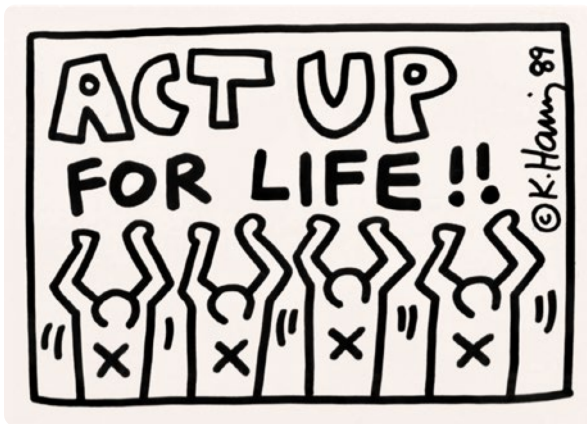
Many of the artists in the '80s New York scene were political, responding to the conservative presidency of Ronald Reagan and deeply engaged with issues including censorship, AIDS, the nuclear arms race, and inequality.

POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN 1980s NEW YORK

Keith Haring's work addresses some of the issues that were of greatest concern to social movements and activists in the 1980s, including:

AIDS AND AIDS ACTIVISM

New York City was especially hard hit by the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, with people getting sick and dying without much information about how the disease was spreading, let alone research into treatment and care. Gay community organizations including Gay Men's Health Crisis, ACT UP, and American Foundation for AIDS Research organized community-based care services and support, demanded public investment in research while conducting research



Keith Haring, *Keith Haring Act Up for Life*, 1989



One million people demonstrated in New York City's Central Park June 12, 1982, against nuclear weapons and for an end to the cold war arms race. (Photo: WagingNonViolence.org)



The Broad

themselves, raised awareness, created and proliferated strategies to reduce harm, and much more. Many artists were affected by AIDS and involved in community activism around it.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Nuclear disarmament was another important social movement in the 1980s. Protests for peace and nuclear disarmament emerged in response to the horrific dropping of atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 and continued throughout the Cold War era, when the threat of nuclear annihilation was palpable. On a June day in 1982, one million people from all over the world demonstrated in New York's Central Park to demand nuclear disarmament and an end to the Cold War arms race.

THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

In the 1970s and 1980s, uprisings broke out across South Africa in protest of the apartheid regime of racial segregation. By the 1980s, the anti-apartheid movement was supported by allies around the world. College students across the U.S. were active in the movement, including organizing to pressure their schools to divest endowment funds from companies doing business in apartheid South Africa.

THE BROAD

The Broad was founded by Eli and Edythe Broad to present the Broads' contemporary art collection to the public. The 120,000-square-foot building was designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Gensler. The "veil and vault" design combines gallery space with views into collections storage.

Eli Broad (1933–2021) was a founder of SunAmerica Inc. and KB Home (formerly Kaufman and Broad). His philanthropy focused on education, science, and the arts.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- 🕒 What are some of the visual characteristics of Keith Haring's work?
- 🕒 How did Haring address political and social concerns through art?
- 🕒 How was Haring's life and work informed by the time and place in which he lived and made art?
- 🕒 Do you see Haring's influence in any art of today?
- 🕒 How do you understand the idea that "art is for everybody"?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- 🕒 The Keith Haring Foundation | haring.com
- 🕒 Related programs at The Broad thebroad.org/art/special-exhibitions/keith-haring-art-everybody



@USCVandV

VISIONSANDVOICES.USC.EDU

- ⦿ Jean-Michel Basquiat, *King Pleasure*, on display in Los Angeles through October 5 | kingpleasure.basquiat.com
- ⦿ Exhibitions and events at Beyond the Streets beyondthestreets.com
- ⦿ The Museum of Contemporary Art | moca.org
- ⦿ Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles | theicala.org
- ⦿ The Feminist Center for Creative Work | fccwla.org
- ⦿ Classes and events at the USC Roski School of Art and Design | roski.usc.edu
- ⦿ Upcoming Visions and Voices Event
9/30/23: Arts, Activism, and Reproductive Rights: Creative Workshops, Panel, and March

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Melissa Miller of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

ARTICLES

- ⦿ Elizabeth Bush, “[Art Is Life!: The Life of Artist Keith Haring by Tami Lewis Brown \(review\)](#),” *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* 74, no. 3 (2020): 124.
- ⦿ Lynn R. Huber, “[Pulling Down the Sky: Envisioning the Apocalypse with Keith Haring and William S. Burroughs](#),” *CrossCurrents* 68, no. 2 (2018): 283–308.
- ⦿ Kevin Howell, “[Keith Haring Journals \(review\)](#),” *Library Journal* 147 (2022): 36.

BOOKS

- ⦿ John Gruen, *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1991).
- ⦿ Keith Haring et al., *Keith Haring* (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2019).
- ⦿ Keith Haring et al., *Keith Haring: Subway Drawings e la New York Street Art* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1997).
- ⦿ Amy Raffel, *Art and Merchandise in Keith Haring’s Pop Shop* (New York: Routledge, 2021).
- ⦿ Ricardo Montez, *Keith Haring’s Line: Race and the Performance of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

VIDEOS

- ⦿ [Keith Haring: Street Art Boy](#) (Public Broadcasting Service, 2020).
- ⦿ [Keith Haring documentary](#) (Keith Haring Foundation, 2019)
- ⦿ [Interview with Keith Haring](#) (1983).

