

# KEITH HARING

5/4/1958 – 2/16/1990

*“My contribution to the world is my ability to draw. I will draw as much as I can for as many people as I can for as long as I can.”*



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As a young artist living in New York City in 1980, Keith Haring had an epiphany: “One day, riding in the subway, I saw this empty black panel where an advertisement was supposed to go. I immediately realized that this was the perfect place to draw. I went back above ground to a card shop and bought a box of white chalk, went down and did a drawing on it. ... I kept seeing more and more of these black spaces, and I drew on them whenever I saw one. ... People were completely enthralled.”

His artistic influences ranged from Jean Dubuffet and William Burroughs to Walt Disney and Dr. Seuss. Haring’s vibrant visual vocabulary included crawling babies, pyramids, barking dogs and flying saucers.

Haring felt that art should not be a precious commodity accessible only to the privileged. He went on from his subway chalk drawings to place his images and sculpture in public places throughout the world. His

personal symbol, the Radiant Baby, appeared on an electronic billboard in Times Square. He painted a mural on a section of the Berlin Wall, and he often included the public in the making of art, once engaging 10,000 children in the creation of a 100-foot banner for the Statue of Liberty’s centennial.

In 1986, Haring’s desire to make his art available to the public led him to open the Pop Shop, a retail store selling t-shirts, posters and other merchandise bearing his signature images. The entire interior of the store was painted in his unique style.

After Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988, he established the Keith Haring Foundation to provide funding to AIDS organizations and children’s programs. Near the end of his life, he used his imagery to promote AIDS activism and awareness.

Keith Haring died of AIDS-related complications at the age of 31 on February 16, 1990.

**Keith Haring was one of the most influential visual artists of the late 20th century. His bold, cartoon-like images have become indelible icons of American art and popular culture.**

