

New Years Baby
Keith Haring



Date : 1988
Screenprint
21 x 25 in.
Pencil signed

Artist bio

Keith Haring was born on May 4, 1958 in Reading, Pennsylvania. He started developing 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, Haring moved to New York City and enrolled in the School of Visual Arts.

Keith 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 Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat, as well as the musicians, performance artists and graffiti writers that comprised the burgeoning art community. 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. Haring was able to push his own youthful impulses toward a singular kind of graphic expression based on the primacy of the line.

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 1986, Haring achieved international recognition and participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions. His first solo exhibition in New York, held at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in 1982, was immensely popular and received critical acclaim. During this period, he participated in highly renowned international survey exhibitions such as Documenta 7 in Kassel Germany, the São Paulo Biennial and the Whitney Biennial. Haring completed numerous public projects in the first half of the 1980’s.

Throughout his career, Haring devoted much of his time to public works, which often carried social messages. He produced more than 50 public artworks between 1982 and 1989, in dozens of cities around the world, many of which were created for charities, hospitals, children’s day care centers and orphanages

Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988. He enlisted his imagery during the last years of his life to speak about his own illness and generate activism and awareness about AIDS. During a brief but intense career that spanned the 1980’s, Haring’s work was featured in over 100 solo and group exhibitions. By expressing universal concepts of birth, death, love, sex and war, using a primacy of line and directness of message, Haring was able to attract a wide audience and assure the accessibility and staying power of his imagery, which has become a universally recognized visual language of the 20th century.

Keith Haring died of AIDS related complications at the age of 31 on February 16, 1990. Since his death, he 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.