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Keith Haring, whose works incorporate a range of shapes, is one of the most creative and skilled artists of the last half of the twentieth century. As a result, his artworks might be seen as a fusion of classical art, comics, graffiti, performance, and, of course, these media. In his very particular way, he exposed both the outside world and his own inner world. People are still interested in discovering where Haring's inspiration came from. In addition to his artistic prowess, Haring is now admired for his capacity to utilize his work to bring attention to issues that are close to him. In New York, he groups in with other graffiti and street artists. He is known most for his colorful and iconic motifs such as the “Radiant Baby” and the “Barking Dog”. However, most of his work was a response to the social and political events that transpired during that time including the battle to end Apartheid, the massive AIDS epidemic, and ongoing drug abuse. All his artworks show that he made something unique and meaningful to him. He impacted not just the art community but society as well by delivering vibrant and symbolic artworks.

Keith Haring was raised near Reading, Pennsylvania. At a very young age, he fell in love with sketching and began to acquire the fundamentals of cartooning from his father and the popular culture around him, including Dr. Seuss and Walt Disney. Following his high school graduation in 1976, Haring enrolled in Pittsburgh's Ivy School of Professional Art, a college for commercial arts. After two semesters, he dropped out after quickly realizing that he had no interest in pursuing a career as a commercial graphic artist. In 1978, Haring held a solo show of his work at the Pittsburgh Arts and Crafts Center. During his stay in Pittsburgh, he continued to study and produce independently. Haring moved to New York City later that year and enrolled at the School of Visual Arts (SVA). Haring discovered a bustling alternative art scene in New York that was emerging outside of the system of galleries and museums, in the streets of the city's

downtown, the subway, and areas in clubs and disused dance halls. Here, he made acquaintances with musicians, performance artists, and graffiti writers that made up the growing art scene, as well as fellow artists Kenny Scharf and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Haring was caught up in the excitement and enthusiasm of this movement and started planning exhibitions and performances at various locations.

Haring is most known for his street art, which also drew inspiration from the pop art movement and contemporary art and made use of the bold colors and thick black lines that have come to be associated with his works. The repetition of stylized shapes that are sometimes filled with warm, vibrant hues and are edged in black is what makes Haring's art distinctive (yellow, green, red, blue). Despite the very straightforward and basic drawing technique, the lines that are adapted from the world of comic books frequently give the sensation that the characters in these works are in motion. The line is the essential component that distinguishes Haring's style regardless of the media. The line is still a flowing constant whether it is drawn with markers, chalk, felt-tip pens, ink, acrylic, or spray paint. Haring worked with a variety of media for his creations, never making any draft sketches or revisions, even for his largest pieces of art. He produced posters, paintings, drawings, paintings, painted objects, t-shirts, badges, and murals.

Throughout his years as an artist, he made many unique artworks including “Radiant Baby”, “Ignorance = Fear”, “Free South Africa”, “Barking Dog” and many more. Every one of his artworks has a symbolic meaning and a very creative way to represent it. Most artworks symbolized political or social events that occurred during his time. This made a huge impact that related to many people with what the artworks meant, which popularized Haring even more.



Keith Haring, Radiant Baby (from icons series), 1990

The "Radiant Baby," Keith Haring's primary tagline, logo, or emblem. This artwork, which is arguably one of Haring's most iconic images, is a straightforward sketch of a child or someone crawling on all fours on the ground, with lines emerging from them. Keith Haring transformed the New York City subway into his art studio in the 1980s, etching his now-famous images anywhere he could find room using chalk. The "Radiant Baby" design was one of these creations. Haring frequently depicted Jesus as an infant next to crosses or in nativity settings. Through Haring's portrayals of nuclear proliferation, in which the baby appears inside atomic mushroom clouds and images of conflict and bloodshed, the "Radiant Baby" gradually took on a darker resonance. Although "Radiant Baby" has several possible interpretations, it was Haring's

particular favorite among his classic works and has come to be regarded as the artist's trademark. According to Haring, this baby denotes purity, goodness, and youthful innocence.



Keith Haring, Ignorance = Fear, 1989

Keith Haring created this billboard in 1989 after learning he had AIDS the year before for the New York-based AIDS activist group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). Haring refers to the public's ignorance about Aids in this artwork and urges critical understanding of the "facts." The graphic by Haring, which links three people of unspecified ethnicity and gender to symbolize those with AIDS, reads "Ignorance = Fear." The three figures are hiding their ears, mouths, and eyes while sporting a pink "X" across their chest to represent AIDS victims.



Keith Haring, Free South Africa, 1985

The Free South Africa series, which is depicted in the artist's instantly recognizable style, is an illustration of how Keith Haring used his comical figurative drawings to address societal injustices throughout the world, particularly racism and oppression in South Africa. To rally opposition to apartheid in New York City in 1986, Haring printed and distributed many Free



South Africa posters. Each print in the series depicts two stick figures fighting, and as the series goes on, we see this fight develop. Haring depicts the interaction between the white minority and the black majority in South Africa over the decades of institutionalized racial segregation using his bold, linear style. The stark contrast between the black majority and the few white people who held political and social authority during the period is represented by the black figure on the left is portrayed as significantly larger than the white one. By depicting the white character holding a rope around the black figure's neck, Haring effectively illustrates the power disparity between the white and black men.



Keith Haring, Barking Dog, 1990

One of Haring's most recognizable images is the Barking Dog, which initially appeared in his 1980–1985 series of drawings depicting the New York subway system. It became a representation of oppression and hostility, alerting viewers to the power abuses that permeate

both American culture and society more broadly. Haring subverts the dog's traditional meaning as a symbol of loyalty, affection, and obedience to urge viewers to question those who make the loudest noises. Haring used symbols like the barking dog to convey a new message of mistrust toward authorities.

Haring was able to draw a large audience and ensure the accessibility and tenacity of his imagery, which has become an internationally known visual language of the 20th century, by portraying universal notions of birth, death, love, sex, and conflict with the primacy of line and directness of message. The renowned New York art scene of the 1980s included Keith Haring, a well-known artist, and activist. While he is well recognized for his vibrant paintings and famous images like the "Radiant Baby", "Ignorance = Fear", "Free South Africa" and the "Barking Dog", a lot of his work was a reaction to current social and political events. His life's work was to spread the message of art to a broad audience, freeing it from the confines of gallery walls and bringing it into regular settings. Also spreading important messages in a symbolic way. Haring created a large number of public works of art all throughout the world during his lifetime.



## Works Cited

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