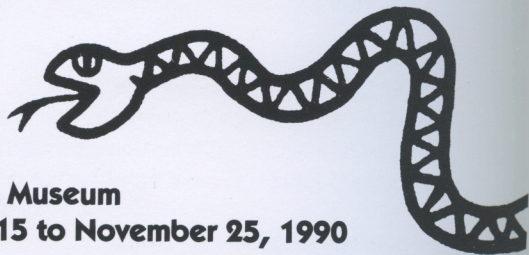


KEITH HARING FUTURE PRIMEVAL

DRAWINGS, PAINTINGS & ARTIFACTS: 1979-1985



The Queens Museum September 15 to November 25, 1990

An Exhibition organized by Barry Blinderman, Director, University Galleries of Illinois State University, with support from the Illinois Arts Council, a State Agency, Martin Lawrence Limited Editions, and Larry Warsh.

The Queens Museum

New York City Building
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park
Flushing, New York 11368-3398
(718) 592-2405

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Hours

Tuesday through Friday: 10 am to 5 pm
Saturday & Sunday: 12 noon to 5:30 pm
Closed Monday

A fully illustrated, 128-page color exhibition catalogue for **KEITH HARING: FUTURE PRIMEVAL** will be available in October at the Museum Bookstore, with a retail price of \$35. For mail order, please send \$39 (post paid) to University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 61761-6901.

The texts in this brochure are excerpted from essays in the exhibition catalogue.

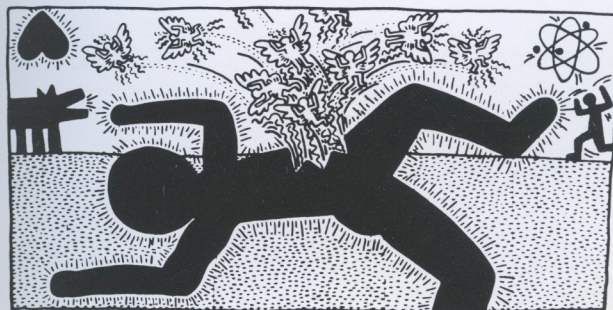
While riding the subway in the early '80s, just sighting one of Keith Haring's chalk drawings nearly always exhilarated me, calmed that pervasive sense of urban alienation... or at least got me through the day. As a noncommissioned public artist you could count on for scintillating pictograms that were renewed on a weekly, or even daily basis, he thoroughly expanded the parameters of site-specific art. His infallible sense of scale and spontaneity enabled him to tackle 100-foot murals and even the Berlin Wall with no preparatory sketches.

Keith invented a wondrous image-vocabulary which simultaneously captures the mysteries of ancient ritual and the obsessions of high-tech society. He was a rare modern believer in the magic of graven images, and made a convincing case for mythology's relevance in the post-Christian era. Writer Brion Gysin referred to Keith's mark as a "carved line," a line you could "feel in the dark" like those of the ancient cave drawings of Altimira. Straight from the mind and soul to the wall or paper. Liquid, seamless, with no more chance of error than a bird in flight. An artist with such a distilled vision of such widespread impact comes along only once or twice a century.

Curating an exhibition of an artist who virtually created around the clock for ten years is an unwieldy task. I decided early on to concentrate on works that have had minimum exposure in publications or exhibitions in the U.S. Haring's curious eschewal of traditional art mediums in favor of discarded or commercial materials such as vinyl, metal shelving, automobile panels and garden statuary has been given great emphasis in the exhibition. More than two dozen subway drawings are presented for the first time in an above-ground context to illuminate their importance in the artist's oeuvre. The earliest work included is the prefigurative Sumi ink drawing done in 1979; the latest painting included (1985) directly alludes to the death knell of AIDS. Haring made art until the last days of his brief yet incredibly prolific and benevolent life.

As one who is convinced of Haring's unique place in the pantheon of 20th century art, I believe it is time for more widespread critical acknowledgement of his mission to create art that conveys the aspiration, traumas, desires and fears of people of any age or culture.

Barry Blinderman, Curator



...“**FUTURE PRIMEVAL**” really gets it right. Keith’s art spanned the history of the human spirit. Keith could have jumped out of the time-capsule in the paleolithic age and started drawing on cave walls and they would have understood and laughed—particularly the kids. I showed his drawings to the Australian aborigines who initiated me and they grinned and nodded their heads. Keith communicated in the basic global icons of our race.

And here we see another awesome dimension of this young man’s genius. As we move into the information-age of the 21st century it is clear that a global language will develop. Literacy—the use of letters to communicate, is the major barrier between classes, races, nations. This new language will be iconic. It will be communicated in digital patterns through fiber-optic lines flashed on screens and VR (Virtual Realities) eye-phone receivers. ... Television passivity will be replaced by personal expression. Just as everyone was expected to “read and write” in the factory society, everyone will be expected to “receive and graphicize” in the 21st century. ...The graffiti impulse seen now in our inner cities is an interesting forecast. And who taught this future?

from: “One Rent In The Fabric Is All It Takes For Pandemonium To Sluice Through”

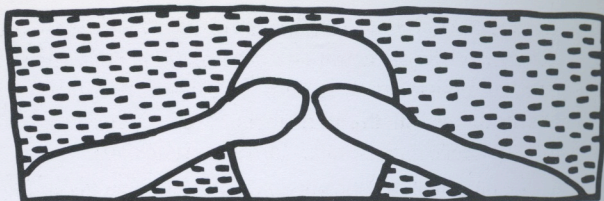
catalogue essay by Timothy Leary



For some time Keith Haring’s relationship with ethnographic art has aroused the curiosity of authors as diverse as Suzi Gablik and Robert Farris Thompson. Both have called attention to aspects in Haring’s art that appear to have strong visual links with non-Western art. Gablik juxtaposed Haring’s famous logo of a crawling baby (the “Radiant Child,” as it was christened by the poet Rene Ricard) to an Eskimo carving of a *tupilak* (spirit) from East Greenland. Emphasizing the “complex cultural anthropology” of Keith’s graffiti influences and activities, she called him a “New Wave Aztec” (see: Suzi Gablik, “Report from New York: The Graffiti Question,” *Art In America*, October, 1982). Robert Farris Thompson, the cultural anthropologist well-known for his work on African and Afro-American art and aesthetics, wrote an “In Memoriam” for Keith Haring (see: Robert Farris Thompson, “Requiem for the Degas of the B-Boys,” *Artforum*, May, 1990). There he wrote: “The story of Keith’s art bears witness to a rising multi-traditional state of affairs where Europe-derived art history and criticism must hack it, democratically, in terms of competing streams of influence from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. Keith’s work helped ‘deterritorialize’ art and criticism, pushing as far into the vernacular, as far into academic idioms, and as far into commerce as he wished, all at once.”

...What has been the rationale behind Haring’s process of borrowings and quotes from ancient and non-Western art systems? Haring was not a visual ethnographer, doing the required field-work in search of quaint old symbols. He did not have the time. He was not the type. Keith Haring “recycled” images from an immense mnemonic pool of art styles and cultures. The appealing aspect of his activity was the dialogue in which he engaged.





applicable to Haring's subway work: an avant garde—a secret, stealthy or illegal activity—a clandestine political movement—and, of course, another term for subway. And then there are associations with the art of antiquity: prehistoric cave paintings, the symbolic murals within Christian catacombs.

...As unsettling as the subject matter of the subway drawings became at times, there was always something reassuring about their continuous renewal, day after day, week after week. Haring took on a mission with these drawings. For four years he conveyed the hopes, fears, fantasies and nightmares of a media-saturated, violence-numbed culture. With the stamina and discipline of an athlete, he continued doing the drawings long after he had any economic need to ride the subways. ...Any way you look at it, Haring's thousands of subway drawings comprise a heroic project the like of which New Yorkers have never seen, and are not likely to see again.

...Keith telephoned me in August of 1981, excitedly alerting me to his most ambitious new project: he and some graffiti artists he knew had been invited by school officials to decorate the walls surrounding the P.S. 22 schoolyard on the Lower East Side. A friend and I trekked downtown with some portable video gear, hoping to record this momentous event on tape. When we arrived, we looked around in awe at perhaps the most spirited and colorful collaborative mural we had ever seen: there were bands of cartoon figures mingling with circus animals, "abstract" sections comprised solely of 3-D blocked letters, and huge Pop renditions of a Skippy Peanut Butter jar and, not surprisingly, a Krylon spraycan. Lady Pink, Futura 2000, Crash, and other subway writers were represented in this jam-packed animated panorama. And there was Keith, wearing love beads and yellow zig-zag patterned eyeglasses, standing on a ladder in order to reach the continuous band of wall at the second story level. Various combinations of his main characters at the time: dogs jumping through holes in figures, two-headed snakes, telephones, computers, and power rods—covered every possible inch of a frieze that was a foot or so high and nearly a thousand feet long. Keith climbed up and down the ladder, advancing with his economy-size refillable marker in six-foot sections at a stretch. Here, in this schoolyard, he was breathing new life into the ancient representational device of continuous narration.

... The summer of 1984, hiking intrepidly to Houston and Avenue D to see a wall Keith had just completed inside a candy/video game store. The mural: an utter vision of Hell's lower circles in anyone's language. Only two weeks earlier I had seen Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* in person at the Prado, and let me say, with all due respect, that the Haring is scarier. Beasts, skeletons, beings of undefinable sex devouring and copulating with each other in any way imaginable, and then some. An all-over Sea of Iniquity, in which de-evolved mutants vie with symbols of

a future already spent: a computer-headed, six breasted monster straddles a jet plane whose nose is a dog's phallus, tweaking it for godspeed. The Wicked Witch of Western Consumerism, flying technology's finest steed through a maze of desire gone awry. Like a *Guernica* for the Nuclear Age, the whole scene is outlined in the bilious clouds of an atomic explosion.

...But let me not forsake the brighter side of Haring's imagination. He could also infuse his creations with an unparalleled *joie de vivre*. He drew us special Valentine's Day messages and Christmas greetings in the subway stations every year. He designed amusement park carousels and installed brightly colored public sculptures of breakdancing figures that rival the grace of any Calder. He opened two Pop Shops—one in New York and one in Tokyo—so that "children" of all ages could wear his art, or play radios bearing his "three-eyed face" emblem, or fill in his coloring books, or post notes with his plastic refrigerator magnets. In the last four years of his life, he completed scores of murals in collaboration with schoolkids all over the globe. He produced posters for the City of New York that promoted literacy and discouraged littering. In 1986 he painted a mural of figures joining limbs on three hundred feet of the Berlin Wall, thus prefiguring the reunification of East and West Germany. And most importantly, the sign-system he bequeathed to us bespeaks animism, the primitive belief that life-force emanates from all things. Burroughs said it best: Haring is KEITH LIFE.

from "Close Encounters With The Third Mind"
catalogue essay by Barry Blinderman



Special Programs for KEITH HARING: *FUTURE PRIMEVAL*

All programs are free with Museum admission, which is by contribution.

EVENTS:

Sunday, September 16, 2:30 pm

Slide Lecture and Gallery Talk:

Given by Exhibition Curator Barry Blinderman, Director, University Galleries, Illinois State University. (Arrive before 12:30 pm or close to 2:30 pm to avoid traffic for 1:35 pm Mets game.)

Sunday, September 23, 2-4 pm

A Tribute to Keith Haring:

Join this afternoon of music and art activities for families.

Sunday, September 30, 2:30-4:30 pm

"Wild Style":

This film is a musical drama which focuses on South Bronx street culture. A discussion by the film's Producer-Director Charlie Ahearn will follow.

Sunday, October 14, 2 pm

Panel Discussion:

"Keith Haring: In Perspective" moderated by Dr. Marc H. Miller, Curator at the Queens Museum, featuring art critic Jeffrey Deitch and author Steve Hager.

Sunday, October 28, 2 pm

Slide Lecture and Workshop:

"People and Culture on the Lower East Side" will be given by Mary Scherbatskoy, Co-director of ARTS Inc.
Sponsored by the New York Council for the Humanities.

Sunday, November 18, 1:30 and 2:30 pm

Storyteller:

Marcia Lane interprets Keith Haring's exuberant visual "messages" in story form. Great for children.

FILM SERIES:

All films on Saturdays at 2 pm. These two series present the Disney/Picasso/Warhol influences on Keith Haring.

Walt Disney: The Magic of Cartoons

September 15

Mickey Mouse Day:

Steamboat Willie, The Band Concert, Thru the Mirror, Mickey's Trailer, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Lend a Paw

September 22

Donald Duck and Pluto:

Donald's Nephews, Wonder Dog, Pluto's Surprise Package, Donald's Crime, Trick or Treat, Up A Tree

September 29

Cartoon Magic:

Tricks of Our Trade, The Little House, The Old Mill, The Three Little Pigs

October 6

For the Ultra Young:

Merbabies, Peter and the Wolf, Little Toot, The Grasshopper and the Ants

October 13

For the Young at Heart:

Ben and Me, The Adventures of J. Thaddeus Toad

October 20

Winnie the Pooh Day:

Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day, Winnie the Pooh and a Day for Eeyore

Keith Haring:

The Picasso/Warhol Connection:

October 27

"Andy Warhol" (1965), "Super-Artist" (1967)

November 3

"Picasso — A Painter's Diary" (1980)

November 10

"Picasso — Artist of the Century" (1973)



...Haring created his art, integrating in a Pantagruelian way everything into his visual language, in an attempt to go beyond and fight. He said: "I see what Dubuffet meant by what he once said about culture and anti-culture, that an obsolete notion of beauty which only appeals to an elite ought to be destroyed."

...The artistic ability and sensitivity for picking up signals was Keith Haring's gift. Knowingly getting closer to death after testing HIV positive, he worked incessantly, putting to use his ideas and experience. Five months before he died, he said: "Drawing is not pure chance anymore, it's a kind of, not training, but experience, layers of experience that have developed into a state where you can see where to go. One of my favorite quotes is this thing Louis Pasteur thought about chance, that 'chance favors the prepared mind.'" (see: Daniel Drenger, "Art and Life: an Interview with Keith Haring," *Columbia Art Review*, Columbia University, New York, Spring, 1988)

from: "Chance Favors The Prepared Mind: The Visual Anthropology of Keith Haring"

catalogue essay by Maarten van de Guchte



Haring's acute awareness of art as a means of interaction with others began, not surprisingly, at home. His father drew cartoons with him when he was growing up in northeastern Pennsylvania, and as a teenager he, in turn, drew made-up cartoon characters with his three-year old sister. Later, after leaving art school in Pittsburgh, he financed a cross-country hitchhiking trip by silk-screening T-shirts with psychedelic abstract imagery and selling them to concert-goers he met along the way. When Haring moved to New York in the fall of 1978 to attend the School of Visual Arts, he painted in a street-level converted warehouse studio with doors that opened onto 22nd Street. Passersby would stop to watch as he covered huge sheets of discarded photographic backdrop paper with drippy biomorphic shapes and patterns. Like Jackson Pollock, Haring wanted to be *in* the painting—but he also wanted that painting to be an experience to which as many different people as possible could relate. Indeed, some casual onlookers ventured opinions or interpretations that the artist valued more than comments by his fellow students.

It was in the subway stations that Haring found a way to make art for the urban multitudes, more so than any other artist of our time. It was simply a matter of discovering means in the obvious: in this case, the black paper used to cover unrenewed advertisements. For four years, Haring turned the Manhattan Transit Authority into his own Museum of the Underground. His ever-changing exhibition was open to the public 24-hours a day, for the price of a token.

...Underground: it isn't stretching it to take metaphorical note of where Haring chose to place his largest body of work, estimated by the artist to number more than five thousand drawings from 1981 to 1985. The multiple meanings of *underground* are so