

# Communication Arts



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## KEITH HARING: A SMART MAN WITH A SIMPLE STYLE

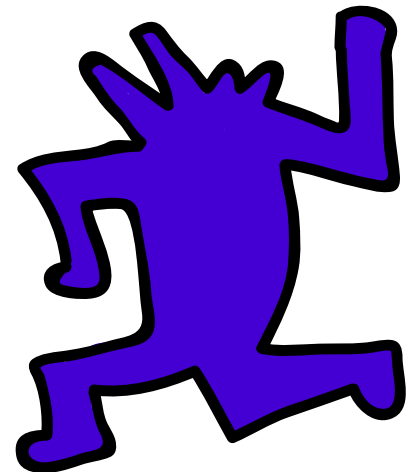
BY LAUREN BEDUGNIS

An American Pop Artist named Keith Haring was responsible for the creation of simple art combined with strong meaning. You may recognize Haring's bold colored stick figure people sharing emotions. Some of his famous images include the stick figure people hugging, holding hands, and being linked together as chains. There are also several others that show love between people and unity between friends. Haring started expressing himself publicly through painting on empty advertising panels in New York City subway stations.

Born on May 4, 1958, Haring grew up in Kutztown, PA with his three older sisters and his parents, Joan and Allen Haring. When Keith was younger, he loved his art so much that he would fill up whole sketchbooks and he even created cartoons with his father. His artistic ability won him many ribbons and medals at both school and community fair events. For a while he was a "Jesus Freak" and was into his own religion. After High school, he enrolled in the Ivy School of Professional Art in Pittsburgh, PA. He soon realized it was not the right school for him and he took up an interest in New York City, where he eventually he moved to. Loving the city so much for its melting pot of street art, he enrolled in the

School of Visual Arts. By this point, he was doubting religion and wasn't worshipping anything at all. He took many trips to art museums all over and studied as much art as he could. While visiting the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, he saw a group of Marilyn Monroe's created by pop artist Andy Warhol. This visit influenced him with modern art and got him started on creating his own street art.

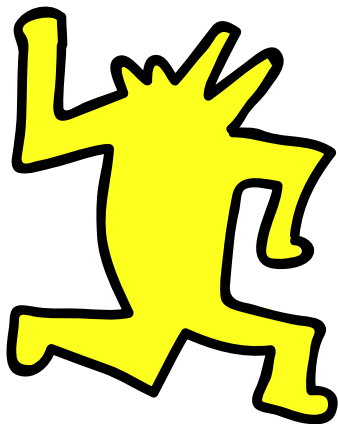
Haring has had a lot of experience with his art work. He started out small, painting in New York City subways and continuously grew to a larger scale with larger media and travel. Some larger scale works include a mural he painted on Easter on the lawn of the White House. The mural was later donated to the Children's Hospital in Washington, DC. Also, a "Together We



Can Stop AIDS" mural was painted in Barcelona, Spain in 1989. Places Haring has traveled to and worked in include Paris, Austria, Belgium, Tokyo, Australia, and many more.

Haring's success can be linked to his pop modern art influences. His images were

bold, simple, and easy to identify with. His main goal was to create art that anyone could understand and enjoy. Haring himself said, "I don't think you should have to know anything about art to appreciate it." Although he tried to reach everyone, he still received criticisms about his type of artwork. Dan Rather from 60 minutes criticized the street art by saying, "people who do graffiti often have two things in common: anonymity and



lack of talent." Many critics see Haring's street art as something that isn't art, but defacement. Haring had strong messages about AIDS, love, and people. As Germano Celant states, "Haring transformed his paintings into events, manifesting artistic life, artistic vitality in its pure state - whereby

"life" meant nonrepetition and live creation. This led to his religious formation and culture." So now, not only was he painting about love and friendship, he was also started to incorporate images of angels.

In April of 1986, he opened the Pop Shop on Lafayette Street in Manhattan, NYC. He felt it was

a good way to spread his art to the public at low prices outside of a gallery setting. The shop sells t-shirts, buttons, patches, magnets, and toys. He also thinks that it was better

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to make lower cost things in large quantities than to make less art and sell it at a higher

price. Having more quantities at lower prices lets the art get out to more people in the community to spread the message and appreciate his art. He also opened a second Pop Shop in Tokyo, Japan.



Haring drawing on the walls of a NY City Subway





*Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, 1985*

In conclusion, Haring had many influences of modern pop art that helped him create his own unique style. He created very simple art that conveyed thoughtful meaning. He made his art so everyone can enjoy it. His art is so easy to recognize that if you see anything that was made by him, you will know it right away. His unique style touched the hearts of so many people and got them thinking about what Haring was trying to say. At the age of 31, he died of AIDS related causes. His art lives on and he is remembered.

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