

WHY WE CHOSE THIS MASTERPIECE

Keith Haring (1958–1990)

Keith Haring was an American artist whose bold, graphic visual language positioned him at the intersection of street culture, Pop Art, and social activism. After moving to New York in 1978, he gained rapid recognition through his subway chalk drawings, introducing iconic imagery such as dancing figures and radiant babies that continued to dominate his works throughout his career. Rendered in vivid colors and decisive lines, Haring's work addressed urgent social themes—including AIDS awareness and civil rights—while remaining instantly recognizable and widely accessible. His impact on art history continues to resonate and, today, Haring counts as one of the most influential Pop Art artists alongside Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol. His work forms part of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Berlin Wall Collection (murals on the Berlin Wall) and many important private collections among others.

1980s

Haring's short career centers around the 1980's and his works are often coined a time capsule: his creations from that period are of a specific time and place and turn his work into a document of the vibrant scene in 1980s New York of which Haring became a revelatory figure. By 1985, Haring had been included in Documenta and the Whitney Biennial and was becoming an integral part of the burgeoning cultural scene of the Big Apple. However, far from becoming egotistical and falling into the trap of celebrity, Haring continued to create works that were accessible and went beyond the individual. Balancing the stressors of the real world with a more free, animated ethos, Haring opened up the door for generations of artists to come.

At auction, his 1980s paintings have realized multi-million-dollar results — for example, Untitled (1982) achieved \$6.5 million at Sotheby's in 2017, setting a record for the artist's market. Even outside the very top tier, Haring's work consistently outperforms expectations. At Christie's Post-War & Contemporary Art Day Sale in 2024, Untitled (1984) sold for \$1.22 million, nearly 60% above estimate.

Works on paper

So-called works on paper form an important part of Haring's oeuvre, exemplifying the immediateness that defines his style. Haring often used unconventional mediums as support, including packaging cardboard, envelopes and other daily-life stationary. The demand for Haring's work in general and works on paper in particular is on a surge since 2000 as visible in the ever-growing number of works sold per year and especially evident since 2016. Curiously, the Bought-In rate is declining over the same period evidencing growing demand and a liquid market for Haring's works on paper.

Iconic imagery

Demand remains particularly robust for large-scale canvases, works from the early 1980s, and pieces featuring his most iconic imagery. Motifs such as the Radiant Baby, Dancing Figures, Barking Dog, and Flying Saucer became a shared visual language, recognizable across cultures, social classes, and media. Today, the market values these motifs and all of the top ten best-selling works by Haring include one or more of these instantly recognizable forms.