ON THE FENCE
KEITH HARING'S MURAL
FOR THE HAGGERTY, 1983
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January 27 – March 27, 2005

Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art
Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Organized by the Patrick and Beatrice Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University

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The exhibition On the Fence: Keith Haring’s Mural for the Haggerty, 1983 celebrates Keith Haring’s visit to Marquette University in April, 1983. The artist was invited to paint a mural on the construction fence built in anticipation of the ground breaking event for the new Haggerty Museum of Art. The exhibition On the Fence is part of the Museum’s Twentieth-anniversary activities.

The aim of the exhibition is to share the genius of Keith Haring who was an exceptional artist and communicator. The current exhibition is the first time that the entire mural will be on display since its creation in 1983. From the exhibition, it is clear that the mural represents a significant early work in the artist’s career and an important moment in the history of the Haggerty Museum. It represents a significant project for the artist and a fine representation of his evolving iconography.
The exhibition will include the 24 original panels painted by Haring, archival photographs and a video of the project, along with drawings created on site during Haring’s visit. The construction fence was 8 feet high by 96 feet long made of 4 x 8 foot sheets of plywood. While it was still standing, the mural served as a centerpiece for the ground-breaking ceremonies for the museum that took place on April 25, 1983, a few weeks after its completion. The mural is one of several public art projects created by Haring, whose work has since received acclaim throughout the world.

I would like to thank Julia Gruen, Director of the Keith Haring Foundation for her comments on the catalogue essay and for the cooperation of the Keith Haring Foundation. My thanks also to the Marquette University Instructional Media Center for providing video footage of the event and the Raynor Library Special Collections and University Archives for assisting in preparation of archival material. Funding for this exhibition was provided by the Mary Martha Doerr Endowment Fund and the Wisconsin Arts Board.

Curtis L. Carter
Director
Haggerty Museum of Art director Curtis L. Carter watches Keith Haring at work on the Marquette mural.
Revisiting the Keith Haring Mural at Marquette University

Curtis L. Carter

In April of 1983 while the Haggerty Museum was under construction, Keith Haring, then a young artist living in New York, was invited to the Marquette University Campus in Milwaukee to create a mural on the construction site where the building for the new museum was to be built. The aim of the Keith Haring Mural Project was to publicly announce with a site specific original work of art the creation of a new museum of art in the Milwaukee community. The fresh and energetic images of Keith Haring brought a life to the site of the new museum that more conventional efforts would not have been able to achieve. This exhibition catalogue with original photographs of the mural taken during its creation will place Haring's Marquette Mural in the context of his developing career, document the events surrounding the mural, and provide commentary on its iconography.

Keith Haring (1958-1990) was born in Reading, Pennsylvania and grew up in a rural town called Kutztown. Following high school he moved to Pittsburgh where he studied at the Ivy School of Professional Art, a school for commercial and fine art. He was particularly interested in the paintings of Pierre Alechinsky on
exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in 1977. While living in Pittsburgh, he and a friend made a cross-country tour in search of a better art school and adventure. The tour found him hitch-hiking to Minneapolis, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and back to Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh, he continued to develop his art, at the Center for Arts and elsewhere, seizing every opportunity to advance his knowledge of art and to make and exhibit his works. In 1978, he moved to New York and enrolled in the School of the Visual Arts where he studied art and semiotics, or the theory of signs. The latter helped him formulate his own ideas concerning the use of art symbols as communication.

From the beginning of his time in New York, Haring admired the drawing skill and accomplishments of the graffiti artists. During the winter of 1980, Haring began drawing graffiti on the street, with a black Magic Marker using his own pictographic language. Haring was becoming active in the New York downtown club scene (Club 57, the Mudd Club, Danceteria and others) where he exhibited his works and came into contact with artists including, among others, Andy Warhol, Ann Magnuson and Madonna, as well as leading graffiti artists such as Lee Quinones and Fab Five Fred (Fred Brathwaite) who later hosted a popular show on MTV. During this period he observed carefully the works of many other artists working in New York including Christo, Andy Warhol, and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Before being accepted into the New York art galleries, Haring was already becoming famous for his drawings in the subway stations and throughout the clubs and city streets. His quick sketches in the subways were chalk drawings made on the black paper that covered expired advertising. These illegal drawings in the subway led to numerous arrests, sometimes by admiring New York police officers who on
occasion sought his autograph. After mounting exhibitions around town in non-gallery spaces, and a show of drawings at PS 122, an alternative space for artists to work, Haring landed his first major New York gallery exhibition at the Tony Shafrazi gallery in 1982. With this exhibition, Haring had succeeded in crossing the line from popular street artist to the mainstream art world of galleries and museums. Despite his life-long frustration over neglect by the main American museums, Haring’s successes would guarantee him a significant place among late twentieth-century artists in the international art world. Today there is scarcely a major museum or private collection of contemporary art anywhere in the world that does not include works by Haring.

**The Marquette Construction Fence Mural**

I first saw Keith Haring’s work in New York beginning in the early 1980s, including the subway drawings, as well as the paintings in the clubs and galleries. It was my friend and colleague in aesthetics, Noel Carroll, who suggested that I invite Haring to paint a mural on the construction wall for the Haggerty Museum site in 1983. I then proceeded to call Keith Haring in New York and explained that Marquette University was building a new art museum and invited him to Milwaukee to paint the Marquette mural. Despite the fact that there was little money to offer (travel and lodging expenses for himself and a friend), Haring responded enthusiastically to the proposal and agreed to do the project.

At this time, Haring was just beginning to be recognized as an international artist. In the same year (1983) that he came to Milwaukee to paint the Marquette University mural, he also exhibited in Naples (Galleria Lucio Amelio), London (Robert Fraser Gallery), Antwerp (Gallery 121), and Tokyo (Galerie Watari). This in addition to domestic exhibitions in New York (the Fun Gallery and Tony Shafrazi), Philadelphia (Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania), and Hartford (Wadsworth Atheneum). (It was during this period in 1983 that Haring met Andy Warhol and Madonna.) The week that he arrived in Milwaukee, he had just been featured in Newsweek and a number of other national and international publications.

Unmistakable in his appearance, Haring exuded a friendly unassuming manner as he stepped off the plane from New York’s LaGuardia airport wearing metal rimmed nerdish glasses and dressed in a brightly colored red and black leather racing jacket, blue jogging pants and sneakers, with a bag slung over his shoulders. Accompanying him was his friend Juan Dubose, a New York deejay who shared his life during this period.
As soon as we met at the airport, Haring appeared excited about the project and was ready to begin working immediately. We headed to the National Hardware store on North Third Street to buy paint. Black deck paint was selected for the outlines of the images. A second stop at a specialty paint store on Milwaukee’s south side produced the bright orange Day-Glo paint costing $45.00 per gallon required to complete the images. Haring’s striking presence attracted the attention of the people in the paint stores. They sensed that something out of the ordinary was going to take place.

In advance of Haring’s visit, a construction fence running north to south 8 feet high by 96 feet long made of 4 x 8 foot sheets of plywood was installed and primed with white oil based primer. Marquette University Students for the Fine Arts took part in the fence preparation in anticipation of Haring’s visit. Soon after his arrival at the site located on the west edge of the Museum construction area, Haring began the piece by drawing broad black outlines of the images on the white primer, which would later be filled with the orange Day-Glo paint. Haring drew all of the outlines and did most of the filling in himself. But he allowed student volunteers to paint the orange spaces in some sections.

As soon as he began painting, Haring started to attract a crowd. Over three days several hundred visitors each day gathered to watch the artist at work. There was a continuous stream of people present at the site. Among them were students from Marquette and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, artists and community visitors curious about the project.
The painting of the mural soon turned into a performance with Haring at center stage for audiences including the students, artists, patrons from the Women's Council who had pledged to raise the funds to build the Museum, as well as children and their parents. Television, radio and newspaper reporters came to report on the event, and Haring responded by painting a TV monitor with angel wings into the mural as a local TV cameraman shot the scene. (Intermittently deejay Juan Dubose supplied the music from his portable boom box.)

Here and throughout the visit to Milwaukee, Haring demonstrated his genius for communication. His remarkable skills in communicating were evident, whether in painting, speaking before a classroom of students in my aesthetics class, or in a television studio interview with local talk show hosts Howard and Rosemary Gurnett of Channel 12 in Milwaukee. He was equally at ease in speaking with the people who gathered at the construction fence. In every instance, but especially in the classroom, Haring explained with great clarity and candor his approach to life and to art. Haring was absolutely clear what he was doing and the reasons for it. He wished to communicate through art with as wide an audience as possible, and in this sense his work...
was very focused. His command of both his art and how to market it were evident. This is why he chose first to work in the streets and on the blank advertising walls of the subway where hundreds of thousands pass by every day. Throughout his visit he generously handed out his “radiant baby” buttons (first fabricated in 1983) and his own printed images to whomever he met. This was one more way of sharing his life-affirming attitude. Haring’s positive view of life is in marked contrast to other artists of his time such as David Wojnarowicz whose angry images cried out against social injustices and the plight of AIDS-riddled lives. If Haring had a cause at this point, it was to create images that would provide enjoyment, provoke discussion and energize people. Later on, he lent his support to numerous socio-political causes, including the fight against AIDS, which claimed his life in 1990.

The iconography for the Marquette University piece exemplified the evolving vocabulary of pictograms that had by now become Haring’s signature means of painting. His aim was to make simple images that celebrate life. Babies and dogs, he reasoned, are among the most beloved and accessible images. He first used the baby and dog images as his own graffiti tag or signature, which he drew on the street to mark his identity among other artists.
The way it began, was to draw my tag—tag, meaning signature or what graffiti artists called their name. So my tag was an animal, which started to look more and more like a dog. Then I drew a little person crawling on all fours, and the more I drew it, the more it became The Baby.²

In his Journals, Haring expresses his belief that babies are the most affirmative symbols of the meaning of human life. "The reason that the 'baby' has become my logo or signature is that it is the purest and most positive experience of human existence." ⁴ His interest in babies coincides with his love of children with whom he did many projects.

The back side of the Marquette mural consists entirely of two rows extending the full length of the mural: babies on top and barking dogs below. Late in the afternoon of the second day (Friday) of Haring’s visit, an actual dog took a few moments out from his Frisbee game nearby to peer curiously at Haring and his dogs in the making.
The front of the mural is more complex and embraces a variety of his images. The dominant theme is dancing figures inspired by the multi-ethnic break dancers spinning on their heads and twisting their vibrating bodies to Hip Hop music and Electric Boogie dancing, which involved transferring electric pulsations from the bodies of one dancer to another through fluid body movements. These images are based on Haring’s experiences at the now-defunct Paradise Garage located on King Street off Seventh Avenue in the West Village, and various Lower East Side dance clubs frequented by Haring and his friends. As a work featuring dance, Haring’s mural captures the essence of the Break Dance and Electric Boogie of his time. He celebrates the spirit of break dancing just as Matisse had done for an earlier era of modern dance.

In the brightly colored orange and black Marquette mural, Haring’s highly energized dancing figures are spread across the length of the mural: some spinning on their heads, others
tossed wildly in the air. One figure is arched over backward with tiny moving figures on top. Serpent-like forms emerge out of the heads of two of the dancers, and two other dancing figures bear dog-like heads. Angel wings adorn two additional images. A TV monitor inscribed with the characters "83" marks the center of the mural; it forms the head of a dancing figure. Below the TV monitor near the bottom of one of the panels rests a single dog image, similar to the row of dogs on the back side of the mural. Near the right end of the mural two tiny figures dance in the head of another stationary figure with folded arms. The head is shaped in the form of a chalice, or perhaps a wine glass with XX's for eyes. The final (and the most dominating) image is a signature Haring three-eyed face with extended tongue. Positioned on the right end of the mural, it is similar to three-eyed faces introduced in Haring’s work earlier in 1981. The overall effect is one of a lively celebration of life. The other side of the mural with the babies and dogs also signals a celebratory view toward life, but in a quieter more gentle mode.
The Marquette mural is one of several that Haring did throughout the eighties beginning with his drawing on expired advertising panels in the New York City subways.

Among these are Mural - murals located on Houston Street, New York City, 1982; on Avenue D, 1983; at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1984; at the St Patrick's Daycare Center, San Francisco, 1985; on the Berlin Wall, 1986; Crack is Wack, 128th Street and 2nd Avenue, New York, 1986; at the Casino in Knokke, Belgium, 1987, on the occasion of Easter at the White House, 1988 (a mural later donated to the Children's Hospital, National Medical Center, Washington, D. C.); the Together We Can Stop Aids mural, Barrio de Chino, Barcelona, 1989; and Tuttomondo, 1989, a permanent mural commissioned by the City of Pisa on the exterior wall of the Church of Sant'Antonio. The Marquette mural differs from his later public works in that it, like the subway murals, expresses the spontaneous energy of actual street graffiti. In this respect its simple, yet poignant images represent Haring at his best.

It was not clear how the Marquette mural would be received. The immediate impact was one of great excitement among students at the two Milwaukee universities and from art students at area colleges who came to see Haring at work and, in some instances, to assist with the painting. The mural was widely covered on local television and in newspapers and drew praise from artists and others who came to watch. Haring seemed happy with the responses and interacted freely with the visitors, at ease in giving direction to those who participated in the painting.

On the last day of Haring's visit, I invited Father John P. Raynor, then the President of Marquette University, to meet the artist and to be photographed with him at the mural site. Haring obligingly posed for a picture with the President who came out on a Saturday morning to view the project. Raynor had to trust that this bold contemporary artist's statement would be an appropriate symbolic gesture for the launching of the Museum. To his credit, he enthusiastically endorsed the project.

The piece remained out of doors at its initial site as part of the museum construc-
tion fence for about three months. During that time there was some concern about its being a potential target for vandalism. The piece was lighted throughout the dark hours and campus security patrolled the site on their rounds. Yet there was ample opportunity. It is a testament to the power of the mural and the respect Haring’s work commanded that the local graffiti artists did not add their signatures, and vandals left it alone. Apart from a tiny mark and exposure to weather, the piece remained in its pristine state until it was dismantled and placed in the museum’s collection.

While it was still standing, the mural served as a centerpiece for the ground breaking ceremonies for the museum that took place on April 25, 1983, a few weeks after its completion. Sections of the mural were installed inside the museum as part of the inaugural exhibition Word and Image, which ran from November 13 to 1984 to March 3, 1985. Portions were displayed in the exhibition Urban Images (June 14 to August 27, 1989) at the Madison Art Center, Wisconsin. Panels two through six remain on continuous display in the Museum as part of the contemporary art collection.
The current exhibition is the first time that the entire mural will be on display since its creation in 1983. As the mural is revisited in this exhibition, it is clear that it represents a significant early work in the artist's career and an important moment in the history of the Haggerty Museum. It encapsulates a moment of the spirit of life found in the artist's experience and offers a fine representation of his evolving iconography.

From the beginning Haring displayed independence and single-minded ambition that led to his inventing his own visual language for painting, mainly without regard to existing schools of art-making. As a basis for his art, he chose drawing over photography and video, the media preferred by many artists of his generation. He strongly believed that art-making was a personal exploration to be shared with all people, as opposed to a collective art-group activity leading to a shared style.
2 This transition from street artist to gallery artist actually was building over the period from 1981 to 1983 when Haring participated in a growing number of group gallery shows, group exhibitions in museums and participation in the international events such as Documenta 82, in Kassel, Germany. See "Selected Group Exhibitions," in Gruen, p. 240.
3 Gruen, p. 65.
6 Elisabeth Sussman provided this list of Haring’s "Murals and Public Works" in Sussman, Keith Haring, pp. 283-4.
7 Haring, p. 12.
Keith Haring, "Untitled", 1983
Ink on Foamcore
40 1/4 x 60 1/2 in.
Gift of the Artist, Haggerty Museum of Art, 83.12.1
©Estate of Keith Haring
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

CONSTRUCTION FENCE MURAL, 1983
(24 panels)
Oil on plywood
115 1/2 x 94 1/2 in.
Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, 83.12.3
©Estate of Keith Haring
Exhibition History: URBAN IMAGES, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin, June 14 - August 27, 1989

UNTITLED, 1983
Ink on Foamcore
40 1/4 x 60 1/2 in.
Gift of the Artist
Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, 83.12.1
©Estate of Keith Haring
Exhibition History:

UNTITLED (For Marquette U.), 1983
9 x 9 in.
Gift of the Artist
Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, 83.12.2
©Estate of Keith Haring

UNTITLED (For Curtis), 1983
9 x 9 in.
Private collection
©Estate of Keith Haring

UNTITLED, 1983
Ink on paper, Marquette University Museum of Art Groundbreaking Ceremonies Program
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 in.
Private collection
©Estate of Keith Haring
Keith Haring Public Works

1981
Began drawing on blank advertising panels in New York City subway stations

1982
Spectacolor Billboard, Times Square, New York
Printed and distributed 20,000 free posters for June 12 anti-nuclear rally, Central Park, New York
Painted fluorescent mural on cement handball court, Houston Street at Bowery, New York

1983
Painted mural, Marquette University, Milwaukee
Painted building in Tokyo, with LA II
Painted mural on Avenue D, New York

1984
Painted mural at National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Painted mural at Collingwood Technical School, Melbourne
Painted mural at Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Painted candy store murals, Avenue D, New York
On-site painting, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro
Painted mural, Children’s Village, Dobbs Ferry, New York
Painted mural for Asphalt Green Park, New York City

1985
Created mural and distributed free T-shirts and balloons for Keith Haring Day at Children’s Village, Dobbs Ferry, New York
Painted mural on handball court, P.S. 97, New York
Painted St. Patrick’s Daycare Center, San Francisco

1986
Collaborative billboards with Jenny Holzer for Vienna Festival 86, Austria
Painted outdoor mural, Amsterdam
Created mural for Club DV8, San Francisco
Painted Crack is Wack murals, New York
Painted permanent murals at Woodhull Hospital, Brooklyn, New York
Painted mural at Jouets & Cie toy store, Paris
Painted mural on Berlin Wall
Collaborated on outdoor mural with schoolchildren in Phoenix, on Washington and Adams Streets

1987
Painted outdoor mural at Nacker Children’s Hospital, Paris
Painted mural at Casino Knokke, Belgium
Painted mural at Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp
Painted mural at Team BBDO European Headquarters, Dusseldorf, Germany
Painted mural at Carmine Street public swimming pool, New York City
Collaborated on mural with Philadelphia CityKids
Painted mural at Boys Club of New York, 135 Pitt Street, New York
Murals and sculpture commission, Schneider Children’s Hospital, New Hyde Park, New York
Artist-in-residence and mural installation, Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
Collaborated on two murals with 500 children, Tama City, Japan

1988
Easter at the White House: painted mural erected on White House lawn, then donated to the Children’s Hospital, National Medical Center, Washington, D.C.
Painted mural, Grady Hospital pediatrics emergency room, Atlanta
Painted Don’t Believe the Hype mural, Houston Street at FDR Drive, New York City

1989
Painted Together We Can Stop AIDS mural in Barrio de Chino, Barcelona
Designed mural to be executed by students at Wells Community Academy, Chicago
Artist-in-residence for Chicago public schools and Museum of Contemporary Art mural project: painted mural with 300 high school students, Chicago
Painted mural at The Center, a lesbian and gay community services center, New York City

Keith Haring Progetto Italia: a commission by the city of Pisa to paint permanent mural on exterior wall of Church of Santa Antonio

Excerpted from Keith Haring, exhibition catalogue, Whitney Museum of American Art
Keith Haring Biography

1958
Born to Joan and Allen Haring May 4 in Kutztown, Pennsylvania.

1970-78
Moved to Pittsburgh. Briefly studied at a commercial art school. Saw a retrospective of Pierre Alechinsky’s paintings at the Carnegie Museum. Had his first solo show of abstract drawings at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts.

1978-79
Moved to New York City and studied at the School of Visual Arts. Painted on large-scale photo backdrop paper in a street-level studio on Twenty-Second Street where he interacted with passers-by. Videotaped the painting process.

1980
Organized exhibitions and performed at Club 57, in the basement of a church at 57 Saint Mark’s Place. Participated in the Times Square Show, an exhibition of new art. Made the first drawings with flying saucers, animals and human images that recur in the subway drawings.

1981
Made the first white chalk drawings on the black paper pasted over expired advertisements in New York City’s subway stations. Painted on plastic, metal, found objects, and garden statuary. Curated exhibitions of drawings and graffiti art at the Mudd Club. Solo show at Club 57. Participated in the New York/New Wave show in New York City. Painted first mural in a schoolyard on the Lower East Side. Met the graffiti artist L.A. II (Angel Ortiz).

1982
Collaborated with L.A. II. Began painting on tarpaulins. First solo gallery exhibition at Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York City. Participated in Documenta 7 in Kassel, West Germany. Drew a thirty-second animation for the Spectacolor Billboard in Times Square which ran continuously for a month.

1983

1984
Opened the Pop Shop in Tokyo. Painted murals in Chicago and Atlanta with children and conducted workshops. Painted Easter at the White House mural erected on the White House lawn, then donated it to the Children’s Hospital, Washington, D.C. Painted mural at FDR Drive and Houston Street in Manhattan. Showed at the Hans Mayer Gallery, Düsseldorf, and Tony Shafrazi Gallery.

1985
Engaged in widespread campaign for AIDS awareness. Painted murals in Monaco, Chicago, New York, Iowa City, and on the exterior wall of a monastery in Pisa. Established the Keith Haring Foundation, a charitable organization seeking to contribute to a wide range of social concerns. Showed at the Hans Mayer Gallery, Düsseldorf, and Tony Shafrazi Gallery.

1986
Died of AIDS on February 16.


**Untitled**, 1983, Ink on paper, Marquette University Museum of Art Groundbreaking Ceremonies Program, 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 in., Private collection, ©Estate of Keith Haring