

Keith Haring



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Do you see that guy there on the left with the glasses?

Well, that's Keith Haring. In a moment we'll be taking a closer look at his art and the many different things that his artwork involves. Also, we'll learn from different kids what they think about when they see his art. But first a quick question: What do you think is the most important thing to Keith in this picture? Right! His sneakers, which get better the older and more worn out they are! He always seems to have them on, whether with a T-shirt and jeans or a blue suit.

**LET THE WORLD
OUT THERE KNOW!**

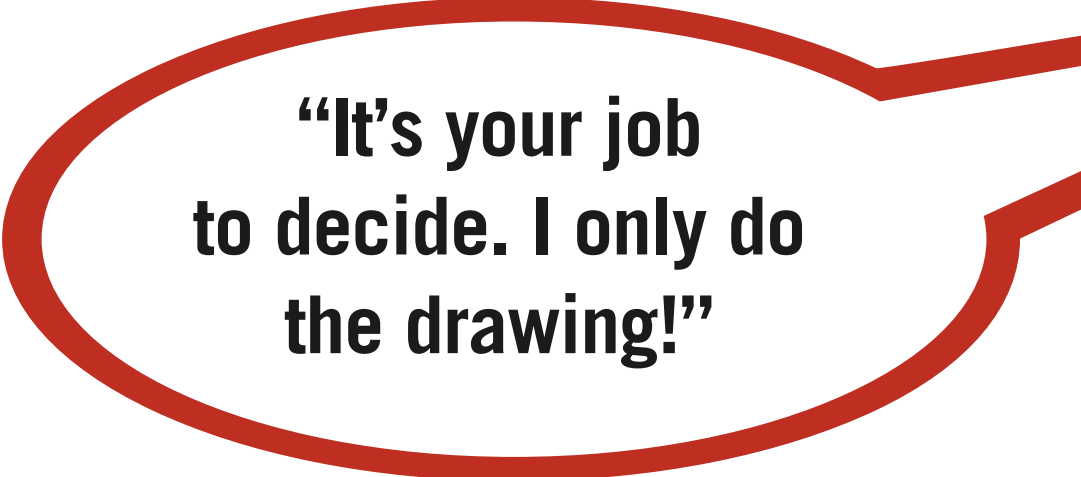
Keith Haring was always drawing pictures. Even as a young boy he used to create short comics with his father and once he won a prize at school for a comic he made. After graduating from high school in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, where he grew up with his parents and three sisters, Keith went to graphic design school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the suggestion of his parents. But Keith quickly discovered that he didn't want to make only commercial designs, and that he liked making his own art even more. He was interested in exploring his own imagination. When he was twenty years old, Keith left Pennsylvania for the one place he felt was big enough for all the art he wanted to make: New York City.

SUBWAY ART!

While he was an art student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, Keith realized that he wanted to bring art to *everyone* rather than creating art only for museums or individuals. He wanted to work with lots of different people, inspiring their imaginations and emotions. The most important thing to Keith was to be able to communicate to the whole world.

One day, while riding the subway, Keith noticed the plain black paper hanging in all the unused advertising space. He ran to a store and bought plain white chalk, returned to the subway, and started drawing. Keith knew that he could get into trouble with the police if he was caught drawing on the paper, so he had to work fast. With just a few lines, his simple figures came to life. Sometimes they became barking dogs or a group of heads. Sometimes they became little characters hugging each other, pyramids, light bulbs and flying saucers. After drawing in the subway stations a few times, Keith had attracted a lot of attention. People often simply stood and watched him work, but sometimes they asked him what his drawings really meant.

He used to reply:



**“It’s your job
to decide. I only do
the drawing!”**



SYMBOLS

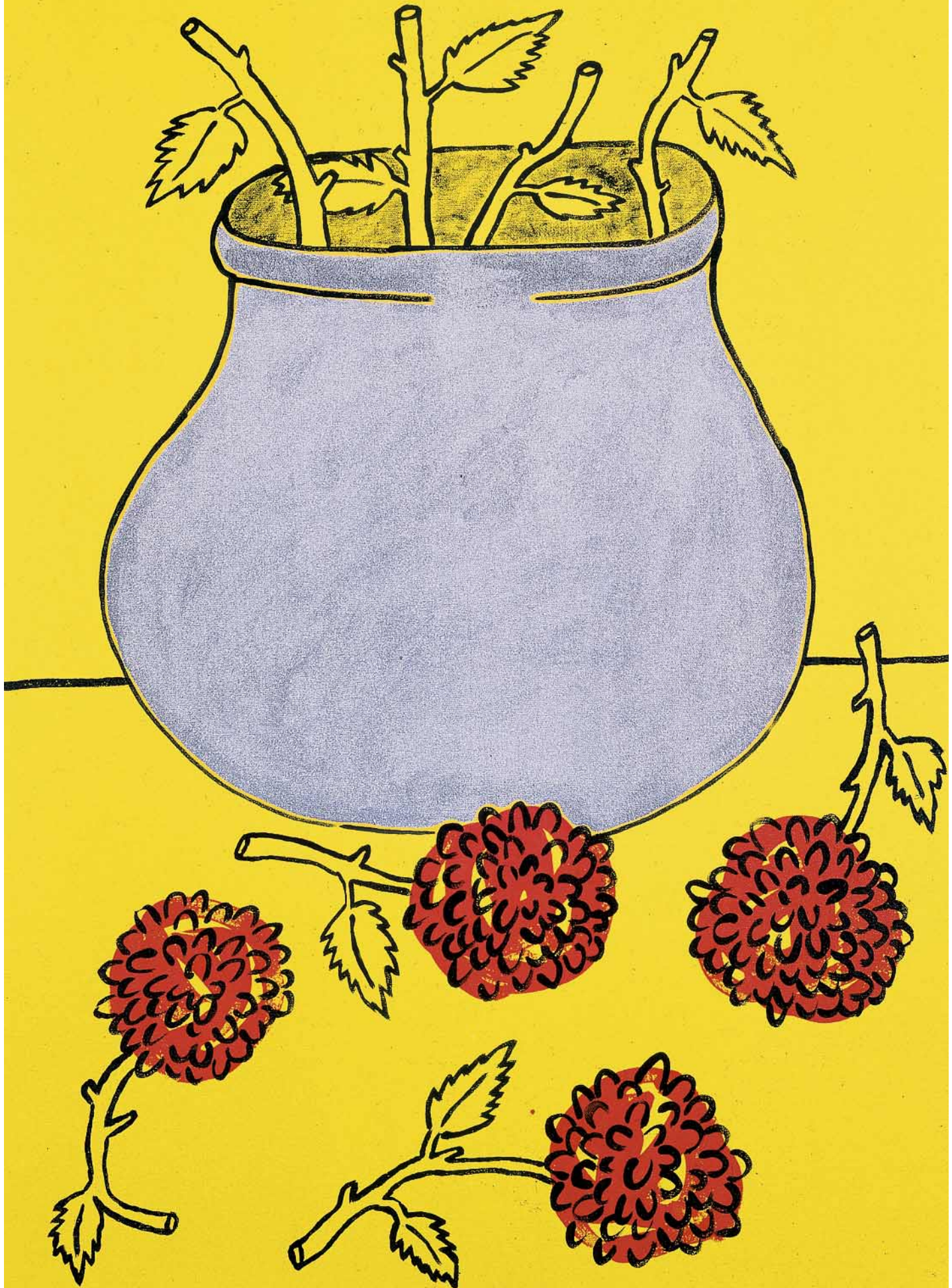
Artists have different ways of letting others know a painting is theirs. They might sign it with their name or put a special symbol on it. Keith often drew a “Radiant Baby” as his signature on an artwork. The rays around the baby are not radioactive, they symbolize energy. Because Keith felt that art should be everywhere, he put drawings like the “Radiant Baby” on everyday items such as posters, buttons and T-shirts. But there are other images besides the “Radiant Baby” that Keith used again and again that are now recognized around the world. He also drew the “Barking Dog” and dancing people in different colors. By rearranging the same pictures in different ways, Keith was able to change the meaning and feeling of every picture.

Soon Keith was invited to paint on walls all over the world. Instead of getting into trouble for it, Keith was asked by city officials to paint murals! Sometimes kids helped him but, mostly, they just came to watch Keith work. They wanted to let him know that they liked what he was doing, and sometimes they asked him to draw on their T-shirts, jeans, and even on their shoes.

As Keith became more popular and well known, he still took the time to work with kids on projects that he felt were important. Keith designed a poster to encourage kids to read, painted an anti-drug mural, and donated art to raise money for AIDS research.



"RADIANT BABY"



STORIES

Once upon a time . . . Haring's first drawings were comics. He always had a talent for telling stories with pictures. Simple lines and symbols can mean so many different things. What's happening here?

I think in this picture these are poisonous flowers and they have died. They were cut off by a good person who realized they were bad flowers.

Who would tear off the flowers for no reason and just leave them on the floor? That's bad manners!

It was a hurricane.

I think this person is very pessimistic and when he got the flowers he cut off the pretty part and just left the stems.

What do you think happened?

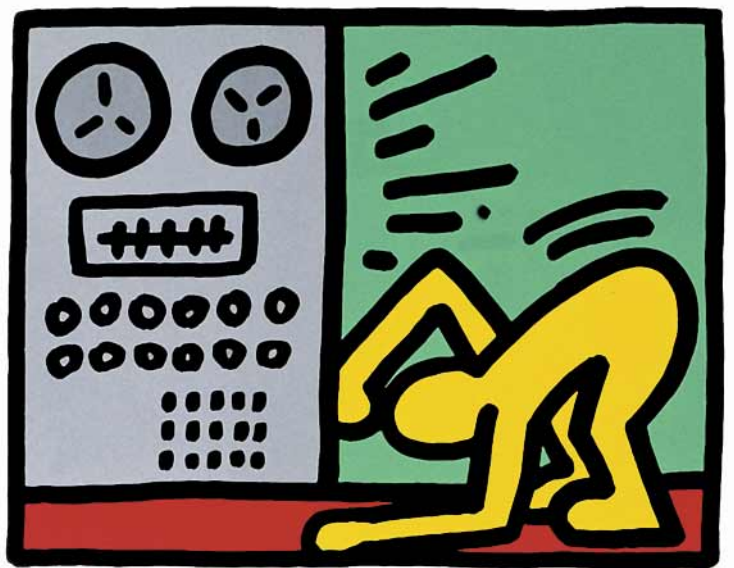
MORE STORIES

I see a radio and the people don't like what they're hearing on the radio so they cut the wire.

They're putting people through this thing.

How do you know he's putting him in the machine? I think he's taking him out of it.

It looks like those kids have been kidnapped and this guy is getting them out. Out of that big machine that they're in. And he is pulling them out and they look very scared like they're trying to get out of the evil place. And then the wire—it looks like they're cutting the wire off the machine—the machine is broken. He seems to be checking if the machine is working or if it has stopped.



What story do you see?



MORE STORIES

He took a tea cup, a really big tea cup,
and cut two holes through it.

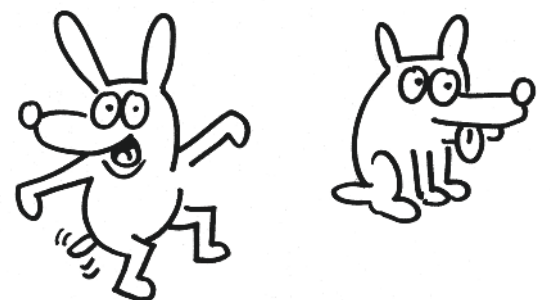
I think this person is very big and tough on the
outside and on the inside he's all weak and he's
very sensitive and he has a lot of feelings.

He has a really big big big butt! **Humongous!**

It's a Jack in the Box.

OK. There's this guy and he goes to the store to
buy a pair of pants. He likes all three of them and
the salesman says: "Buy them all" and so he does.

What do you think is going on?







EMOTIONS

Joy, love, excitement, anger, confusion, sadness. We all feel different emotions at different times. Can you tell how the people in the artwork feel? Sometimes the artist expresses how he feels through the use of pictures. You may feel certain emotions when you look at pictures.

They're at the doctor's getting x-rayed.

Maybe it's just a toy and these are the kids.

He feels betrayed by the world!
Betrayed by his own feelings. I don't think he feels very good about himself. They're pulling out all his feelings.

How does this make you feel?