



Stanley Museum of Art

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NEWS RELEASE

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Stanley Museum of Art Presents Keith Haring Mural in Upcoming Exhibition Focused on his Community Impact

Haring painted the 1989 mural at an Iowa City elementary school

Iowa City, Iowa – Keith Haring’s mural “A Book Full of Fun” was painted at Iowa City’s Ernest Horn Elementary School more than three decades ago and has a temporary home at the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art. The imaginative work will be featured in the exhibition “To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City,” opening May 4, 2024, on what would have been Haring’s 66th birthday. Featuring works by the American artist, photographs and archival materials, the show celebrates Haring’s visits to Iowa City in the 1980s for the ways they brought a community together. The exhibition also contextualizes those visits within his meteoric career.

“Haring believed in education as a cornerstone of our civic responsibility and his work not only expressed that, but it also catalyzed it,” said Diana Tuite, the Stanley’s visiting senior curator of modern and contemporary art and the exhibition curator.

Haring (American, 1958-1990) painted “A Book Full of Fun” on May 22, 1989 in Horn Elementary School’s library after corresponding with the students for several years about art, creativity and their thoughts about the elementary school. That one-day stop at the school to create the iconic artwork came years after his first visit to Iowa City in 1984 at the invitation of an art teacher, Colleen Ernst, who explained that her students were fascinated with his work.

Haring corresponded with Ernst’s fifth and sixth graders through letters and postcards before he met them in person as an artist in residence during “Keith Haring in Iowa City,” a series of events developed in partnership with the University of Iowa. He conducted drawing workshops, painted a public mural that was featured in an exhibition of his work at the Stanley (then the University of Iowa Museum of Art) and shared insight into his practice during a public

lecture. After that visit, he kept in touch with the students as his international fame grew. Haring frequently addressed his correspondence, “To All My Friends at Horn,” a greeting that inspired the name of the upcoming exhibition.

“Keith returned to Iowa City in 1989 because he wanted to make his mark here,” remarked Ernst. The retired teacher hopes the importance of the collaboration will be impressed upon visitors. “It’s easy for people to forget what it was and what it stood for,” she said.

At the Stanley, “A Book Full of Fun” will anchor the exhibition that will examine Haring’s art and how it operated as a vehicle for activism. Haring devoted the majority of his artistic career to public works, many of which were created for charities, hospitals, children’s daycare centers and orphanages. Much of his work promoted racial and sexual tolerance while confronting social and political issues, including nuclear proliferation, homosexuality, environmental devastation and the AIDS epidemic. Haring was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988 and died from complications related to the illness in 1990, less than a year after painting “A Book Full of Fun” in Iowa City.

“It’s really incredible to me that the school took the initiative to institute a discussion about AIDS — mostly because of the students’ contact with (and caring for) me,” Haring wrote to his friends at Horn later in 1989. “It makes me proud I had the courage to talk about it in the first place. Education is the key to stopping this thing!”

Before his death, the artist established the Keith Haring Foundation to provide funding and imagery to AIDS organizations and children’s programs. The Foundation continues that work today and has partnered with the Stanley Museum of Art and Horn Elementary School to preserve the mural.

“Murals represent the fullest expression of Keith Haring’s ideals, and ‘To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City’ will frame his visits as examples of his revolutionary commitment to reimagining art’s centers of production and its audiences,” said Tuite. “The Stanley is facilitating oral histories with members of the community to reconstruct this public history and preserve it.”

Additional works on loan from the Keith Haring Foundation champion freedom of expression and highlight activist strategies. In Haring’s first experimental video, “Painting Myself into a Corner,” the artist explores the connection between painting, movement and performance. Completed in the same year as “A Book Full of Fun,” the print “Ignorance=Fear / Silence=Death” calls for people to exercise compassion, take action and educate themselves about AIDS.

The exhibition also touches on the Stanley’s innovative efforts to conserve and restore Haring’s mural while Horn Elementary School undergoes renovations. As conservators examined the painting and prepared to move it, they realized that the seemingly simple task was

much more complex. The plaster-covered plywood panels on which the mural was painted were both glued and bolted to the cinderblock wall and could not be safely removed. To avoid damaging the mural, conservators resolved to move it along with a portion of the wall to which it was affixed. To achieve this, they supported the mural with an acrylic backing and a rigid frame, sawed it free from the rest of the wall and transported the 4,000-pound structure to the Stanley Museum of Art, where it will be conserved and made ready for the exhibition.

“We’re grateful to have been given the opportunity to save ‘A Book Full of Fun,’” said Lauren Lessing, the Stanley Museum of Art’s director. “This rescue mission reflects the love this community has for Haring and his work and the importance of the field of art conservation in today's world.”

Iowa City and the Stanley Museum of Art have a long history of embracing diversity to provide inclusive spaces for artists and make their work accessible for all people. Bringing Haring’s mural to the Museum and inviting public participation in the exhibition advances that goal.

“Much like the mission of the Stanley, the mural demonstrates the power of education, the reciprocity of inspiration and the role that creative artists play in helping us to see one another and know ourselves,” said Lessing. “Keith Haring’s mural is a poignant manifestation of one community’s embrace of the arts and a love letter from an artist who found acceptance in an adopted community.”

“To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City” will be on view through Jan. 5, 2025. The exhibition is made possible through generous grants from the Henry Luce Foundation and the Keith Haring Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Beth and Nate Tross Stanley Museum of Art Support Fund, the Tom Rocklin and Barbara McFadden Program Fund, the Don Heineking Fund for Exhibitions and Programs, the Friends of the Museum Fund and the Members Special Exhibition Fund.

About Keith Haring

Keith Haring, a product of New York City’s graffiti and hip-hop cultures, discovered his love for drawing at an early age, finding inspiration in Dr. Seuss and Walt Disney. After studying commercial graphic design in Pittsburgh, Haring, who was raised in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, relocated to New York City. From 1980 to 1985, Haring produced hundreds of chalk drawings along New York City’s subway route, engaging with commuters as he worked. By the late 1980s, his work had gained international acclaim and been featured in many solo and group exhibitions.

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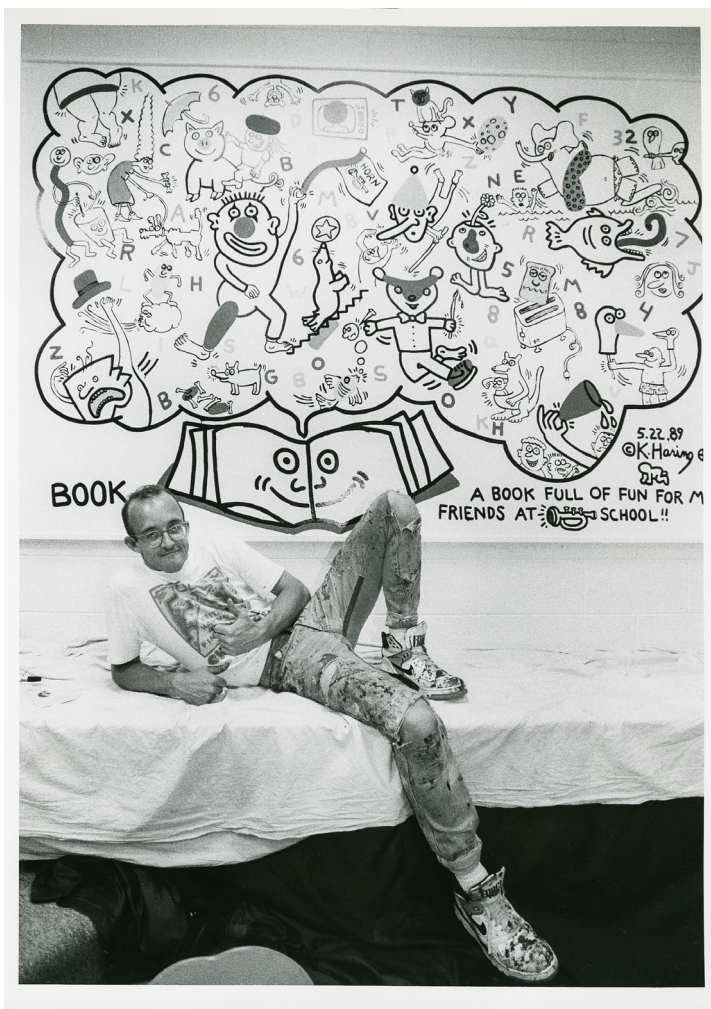
About the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art

The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art is a leading university art museum that serves as a focal point for members of the public as well as a multi-disciplinary tool and creative hub for

students across campus. Striving to provide relevant, thought-provoking experiences, the Museum cultivates experimentation as an innovative teaching and learning resource for the university and beyond.

The Stanley has one of the most important university-owned art collections in the country, including significant holdings of African art, 20th-century painting and sculpture, works on paper, textiles and ceramics. Their world-class collection of modern and contemporary art began with university acquisitions made in the 1930s to support the nation's first Master of Fine Arts program and the belief that students should learn from the best art of their time. The collection continued to evolve as generations of University of Iowa faculty and students, including Grant Wood, Elizabeth Catlett, Mauricio Lasansky, Miriam Schapiro, Philip Guston, Hans Breder, Ana Mendieta and Oliver Lee Jackson, shaped the field of American art.

For more information, visit stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu.



Keith Haring posing with "A Book Full of Fun," 1989. Photo by Rodney White.
© Keith Haring Foundation



Students posing in front of Keith Haring's mural in progress at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation



Poster for Keith Haring's Iowa City artist-in-residency, 1984. © Keith Haring Foundation



Keith Haring at work on the mural at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation

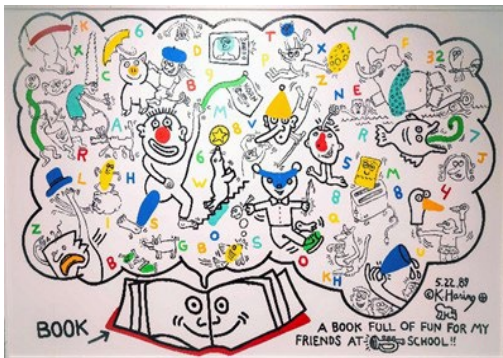


Paul E. Davis, principal of Ernest Horn Elementary School, Keith Haring, and art teacher Colleen Ernst pose in front of the school, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst.

To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City
May 4, 2024 – January 7, 2025

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EXHIBITION IMAGE SHEET



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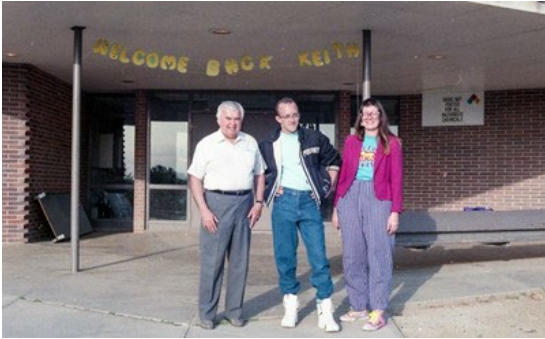
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EXHIBITION IMAGE CAPTIONS

1. Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), *A Book Full of Fun*, 1989, acrylic on plywood, 71 x 107 x 1 ¾ in. Photo by Tim Schoon. Loan of Horn Elementary, Iowa City Community School District © Keith Haring Foundation
2. Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), *Ignorance = Fear, Silence = Death*, off-set lithograph, 24 x 43 in. (60.96 x 109.22 cm). Collection: Keith Haring Foundation, New York, NY © Keith Haring Foundation
3. Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), *Untitled*, 1984, acrylic on canvas tarp, 7 ft. 7 1/8 in. x 12 ft. 2 5/8 in. Collection: Keith Haring Foundation, New York, NY © Keith Haring Foundation
4. Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), still from *Painting Myself into a Corner*, 1979, video, 33 min. Collection: Keith Haring Foundation, New York, NY © Keith Haring Foundation
5. Keith Haring (American, 1958–1990), *Totem*, 1988, painted plywood, 6 ft. x 22 in. x 2 1/2 in. Collection: Keith Haring Foundation, New York, NY © Keith Haring Foundation

To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City

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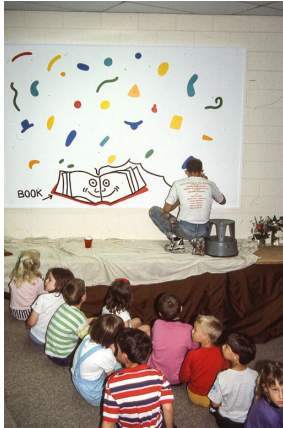
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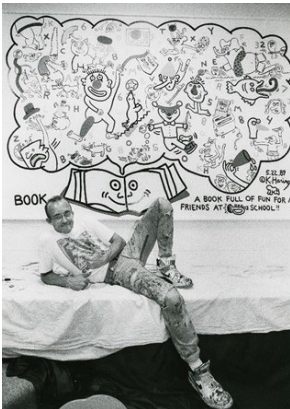
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To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City

IMAGE CAPTIONS

6. Paul E. Davis, principal of Ernest Horn Elementary School, Keith Haring, and art teacher Colleen Ernst pose in front of the school, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst.
7. Keith Haring at work on the mural at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation.
8. Students posing in front of Keith Haring's mural in progress at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst © Keith Haring Foundation
9. Keith Haring with Colleen Ernst, her husband, Bill Radl, and their two children, Sophie Radl (left) and Max Radl (right). Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation.
10. Keith Haring at work on the mural at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Photographer unknown. © Keith Haring Foundation.
11. Keith Haring at work on the mural at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation.
12. Keith Haring at work on the mural at Ernest Horn Elementary School, 1989. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Colleen Ernst. © Keith Haring Foundation.
13. Keith Haring posing with A Book Full of Fun, 1989. Photo by Rodney White. © Keith Haring Foundation.
14. Poster for Keith Haring's Iowa City artist-in-residency, 1984 © Keith Haring Foundation

All Keith Haring artwork © Keith Haring Foundation.

For high-resolution images, contact:

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