

## Keith Haring Teacher's Notes **A2** **B2**

**Tate Liverpool is running an exhibition of Keith Haring's iconic street art, which will then transfer to Bozart in Brussels. We've concocted activities to work with Haring's art at different levels from A2 to B2. It would be interesting to compare Haring with another street artist from a different generation and continent: Banksy, the subject of Shine Bright 2de Snapfile 8: "Will You Get Banksy-ed?".**

The Tate exhibition on Keith Haring explores this iconic artist's work and activism. His works are still celebrated today. In fact, not only do they look familiar to the young generation but they also denounce issues that are still topical and unsolved. Browsing (or even rummaging!) through various pages Tate has devoted to Haring on its website site pages gives a thorough insight into the artist's world and his rather short career.

We've suggested 4 different webpages on the Tate site to help students, no matter what their level is, to get a glimpse of Keith Haring's work and philosophy. They are in order of difficulty: A2, B1, B1-B2, B2. You can use all four together, with differentiated groups, or pick out specific ones for specific class groups.

### Language and structures

- Art and street art: *artists, denounce, chalk, paint, galleries...*
- Critical analysis: *to imply, to suggest, to stress, to highlight...*
- Changing the world: *convey a message, raise awareness, tackle problems, denounce...*
- Society & its problems: *AIDS/ diseases, political issues, gay rights, drugs, topical issues...*
- Linkwords: Contrast (*whereas, yet...*) and paradox (*however...*). Adding ideas: *moreover, what's more, furthermore...*
- Past / preterite
- Why? vs What...for?

### Listening, speaking, writing

- We suggest starting with a speaking

activity to make sure everybody has heard of (or at least seen?) Keith Haring's works. Have the students look at the three works on the first page of the worksheet and have them react: have they seen these works before? Do they recognise the style? Do they know the artist?

- Then, focus on *Ignorance = Fear* and ask them to look closer in order to understand what the message could be / what may have been being denounced by the artist.

- We suggest showing the short teaser trailer for the exhibition at this point. It is only available on Twitter or Facebook:

<https://twitter.com/tateliverpool/status/1136958482274344961>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=647024799038967>

Ask pupils as they watch to identify the

artist's name and the different places mentioned (NYC + street / subway). They can react to what they've seen (colourful paintings, young artist..)

■ Then, divide the class into 4 different groups. Each one will be in charge of a different article/ page, with a different worksheet to focus on some of Keith Haring's characteristics and take notes. This will enable differentiated teaching as each article / page varies in length and difficulty. The group 2 text is relatively short. If they have spare time, they can watch the video on the same page, not for listening comprehension but for extra visual clues.

■ A collective answer sheet will be provided and used after their group work so they all have the same written summary and "basis" for the final task: conducting an imaginary interview. Or if you prefer, interviewing a modern day street artist on their influences (Haring of course!)

**NB:** depending on the students, their levels and your objectives, you can choose not to use the 4 articles / worksheets

## Transcript Teaser Video

**Journalist:** Now we're going to interview a famous New York painter. What's your name?

**Haring:** My name's Keith Haring

**Journalist:** THE Keith Haring?

**Haring:** Yes, THE Keith Haring.

**Haring:** It would be just as elitist for me to be doing things just in the street and ignoring things in the galleries.

## Solutions

**A.1. Réponses selon les élèves.**

*Eventuellement introduire les expressions: it rings a bell, it looks familiar*

2. The artist may want to denounce people's

lack of interest / he is/was criticising people's blindness to topical / burning issues. He was implying that ignoring a topical issue is dangerous. He is suggesting we should all tackle the current issues.

3. Keith Haring, NYC / streets / Subway. He must have been very famous / well-known at the time because the journalist calls him "a famous New York painter" and says "THE Keith Haring," implying he is the "real" one.

### B. Group 1 (A2)

**The artist:** Born in 1958, in Pennsylvania, USA. Loved drawing cartoons and visiting museums.

**His artworks:** Colourful, cartoon artworks and certain characters such as crawling babies, barking dogs and spaceships. Inspired by graffiti artists. He drew hundreds of drawings on New York's subway. He used chalk to make his art.

**Reasons for drawing in public places:** He carried on drawing because he wanted everyone to experience art.

**AIDS?** In 1988, Haring became very sick with a disease called AIDS. Haring kept on drawing and he even made posters to tell people about the sickness

### Group 2 (B1)

**Place:** NYC

**Period:** 1980s

**Sources of inspiration:** graffiti, pop art and underground club culture

**Issues tackled in his works:** Political dictatorship, racism, homophobia, drug addiction, AIDS awareness, capitalism and the environment.

**Other artists:** Musicians RUN DMC, David Bowie, Grace Jones. Punk fashion designers Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood.

**Motivation, reason for his art:** Compelled to speak for his generation, + urgent issues + activism.

### Group 3 (B1-B2)

**Characteristics:** his colourful works and his iconic motifs such as the radiant baby and the barking dog / colourful and animated

**Places:** New York's subway stations

**Why? What for?:** This was the first time I realized how many people could enjoy art if they were given the chance. These were not the people I saw in the museums or in the galleries but a cross-section of humanity that cut across all boundaries.

His aim was to make art accessible to everyone and these works allowed him to interact with a diverse audience.

**His "philosophy" or vision of art:** It is temporary and its permanency is unimportant. Its existence is already established. It can be made permanent by the camera. / All kinds of people would stop and look at the huge drawing and many were eager to comment on their feelings toward it. "This was the first time I realized how many people could enjoy art if they were given the chance. These were not the people I saw in the museums or in the galleries but a cross-section of humanity that cut across all boundaries."

**How KH worked :** I can let my movement and my instant reaction/response control the piece, control my energy (if there is any control at all) ... / Haring had a fun way of working which reflected the content of his work. He often listened to hip-hop music whilst working and painted rhythmic lines to express the movement and energy / used to paint one stroke at a time to the rhythm of whatever he was listening to.

**His activism:** His art responded to contemporary social and political events.

This included the battle to end Apartheid, the AIDS epidemic and drug abuse / tackled some hard-hitting and challenging subjects concerning people, not just in America but, around the world. Haring used catchy slogans to quickly and effectively make his point. / used his platform as an artist to raise awareness of AIDS. / wanted to reach as many people as possible and highlight the importance of AIDS education.

### Group 4 (B2)

**KH's philosophy:** His philosophy was that art was for everyone, not just those who were museum and gallery-goers  
democratising art / his first significant public works was composed of the millions of 'ordinary' people who rode the subway every day. He loved the performative aspect of creating work for, and in front of, the public – particularly children

Art lives through the imaginations of the people who are seeing it. Without that contact, there is no art.

**Street art:** Democratising art / The whole beauty of the drawings was that they were so simple. They told a story that you could see from a moving train and you could get it. Art lives through the imaginations of the people who are seeing it. Without that contact, there is no art.

**Art in museums:** Was also determined to be taken seriously by the traditional art world, to show his work in museums and galleries. This was a goal he would eventually achieve.

**KH's legacy: 1.** Art should be for everyone, that art can heal, that it can bring awareness to social causes, and that artists are activists and have a responsibility to expose injustices of all kinds.

**2.** His invention of a truly unique visual vocabulary, one that caught – and still catches – the attention and imagination of

people of all ages

**3. Establishing the Keith Haring Foundation** in 1989, to carry out his philanthropic goals.

**C.1. Artwork:** NYC / subway stations, bright, colourful pieces that can easily be identified.

**Beliefs, philosophy:** Art should be for everyone + only exists if someone considers it.

**Inspiration and collaboration:** Other pioneers/ iconic artists of his time like Madonna, Warhol, Westwood...

**Legacy:** the idea that art should not only be in museums + denouncing issues.

**Extra info?:** Died of AIDS at 32.

2. Even though his career was short, Keith Haring managed to change the way people consider art. He brought art to everyone by using walls and the street as a canvas, what's more, he got involved by denouncing topical issues of the 80s like drugs and AIDS. Thanks to his work, he raised awareness and is still remembered today, some 39 years / almost 40 years after his death.

**D. The art world:** museums and galleries, chalk drawing...

**Changing the world:** convey a message, raise awareness, tackle problems, denounce...

**Society & its problems:** AIDS/ diseases, political issues, gay rights...

**E. Production libre des élèves.** Les inciter à réutiliser le vocabulaire travaillé au cours de la CE et mise en commun.