

AUDIO 1

Tree of Life

1985

acrylic on canvas tarpaulin with metal grommets

Private collection

Audio description of the work

This large painting is hung in landscape orientation and is approximately 10' high x 12' wide. It is created in Haring's instantly recognizable style which repeats brightly coloured and stylised shapes outlined in black. Tree of Life is a painting of a large green tree contrasted against a bright pink background, underneath it, four yellow dancing figures are shown from the waist up. It is mounted directly to the wall with screws through grommets, 13 across and 11 high.

The top two thirds of the painting are taken up by the trees leaves which sprout off two main branches that split off at the trunk. The branches corkscrew, as do twiggly offshoots. Each offshoot results in either an oval leaf shape with one line down the centre indicating the fold of the leaf shape or, sprouts a similar shape with an added round head and pumping arms with rounded hands on the ends. In total there are 9 tree leaf figures with arms bent at elbows and raised up and there are 12 leaves. The crown of the tree is painted so that it fills up the canvas giving it a rectangle shape. Outlining the tree leaves and bodies, are stacks of dashes which indicate movement and seem to cause the tree to visually quiver, vibrate and shake in a chorus of celebratory movement. Filling up all the available space around these shapes, Haring adds another familiar element. Straight black lines radiate outward around the heads of the tree leaf figures, using a visual shorthand for what could be interpreted as awareness, enlightenment, anger, confusion or something else. The following exhibition wall quote speaks to this: "I am interested in making art to be experienced and explored by as many individuals as possible, with as many different individual ideas about the given piece with no final meaning attached." Keith Haring.

Spread out in the lower third of the work are the head, torso and arms of four larger figures, two on each side of the tree trunk. Their arms are raised up with elbows bent, motion lines in effect. Their yellow bodies are filled in with a pattern of brighter orange squares. In the centre of their round heads in face position is a single black "x" shape.

Some of Haring's favorite party music can be heard emanating from a nearby room which celebrates his use of Day Glo paints. Day-Glo colors are shades of orange, pink, green, and yellow which are so bright that they seem to glow.

The walls outside this room and in close proximity to Tree of Life are vertically striped in orange paint and pink Dayglo paint. They back a pair of architectural columns that Haring created and painted in a similar style.

Also close by is a large triangular canvas entitled, "A Pile of Crowns for Jean-Michel Basquiat", in which Haring pays homage to his contemporary, artist Jean Michel Basquiat. Haring has painted Basquiat's signature symbol, a three pointed crown, in a triangular mound of crowns. It has black lines emanating outward around the pile. He includes a small letter c copyright symbol in the lower right corner of this work.

End of Audio Description.

AUDIO 2

Untitled

1984

acrylic and enamel on canvas

The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles

Exhibition label text:

During the 1980s, wealth inequality in the United States grew significantly under Ronald Reagan's neoliberal trickle-down economics policies known as Reaganomics. Haring criticized greed and capitalism in several works featuring the image of the "capitalist pig." This tarp painting portrays a pig spewing money-green vomit made up of computers, televisions, clocks, airplanes, and other modern-day objects. The green bile pools on the ground from which little figures climb, suckling the sickly pig's teats. This work is a monstrous depiction of the struggle of production in an era when everything was deemed consumable.

End of Exhibition label text.

Audio description of the work

This 10' high by 15' wide rectangular painting is in landscape orientation and is mounted directly on the wall with screws and grommets. The painting has a bright peach background. It features a creature with a pig snout and teats and humanoid figures with very long noses. The figures emerge from an all-green stream of the creature's consumer-goods-filled vomit. They suckle on the creature's teats.

Dominating the painting is the large distorted head of a pig-snouted creature in profile facing left. It has two blue, bloodshot human eyes stacked atop one another with stars at the centre of their pupils. Its dull pink skin is riddled with curving lines, a human ear and wrinkles. Motion lines indicate that its head vibrates with movement. Its snout has slits for nostrils and is open, displaying large square teeth as it vomits. Just right of centre, the back of its head is connected to two muscular appendages ending in pigs feet. Beneath these are pairs of conjoined teats with pig nipples in a vertical stack of 6 pairs which stretches down to the lower right corner. Thirteen yellow-dotted grey humanoid figures with long noses vie to suckle from the teats. All seemingly identical, two are positioned in a way that shows their long or erect penises. At the bottom of the painting, the figures emerge from the green stream of vomit with cash, people and items including space rockets, fast cars, Christian crosses, guns and stereos which flows out of the creatures snout and down along to the right.

End of Audio Description.

AUDIO 3

Untitled

1985

Acrylic and oil on canvas

Courtesy of The Parker Foundation

Exhibition label text:

Haring grew up and came out as a gay man during a time that encouraged increased freedom of sexual expression, largely fuelled by the counterculture, women's rights, and gay liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1980s, a new countermovement emerged that was led by conservative politicians and the religious right. Simultaneously, the AIDS epidemic was growing.

Painted in 1985, this untitled work responds to these realities, showing a fiery hellscape of sexual aggression and torture. The theme of hell—often depicted with scenes of uninhibited sexuality—has been addressed throughout art history, from Auguste Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* (1880–1917) to Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1500s). Haring's version remains true to his signature line, while also depicting a cast of human and animal figures as well as Christian symbols such as frogs, serpents, and angels.

End of Exhibition label text.

Audio Description of the work

This large 10' high by 15' wide rectangular canvas is in landscape orientation and is mounted directly on the wall with screws and grommets. This bicoloured red and black painting presents a hellish landscape populated with snakes and naked creatures. They consume one another by sucking and licking one another's penis and nipples under a blanket of raging flames topped by thick black smoke. A black line outlines the sides and bottom of the painting, and Haring leaves a strip of red all the way around as the border.

In the lower half of the work there are 5 large creatures and dozens of smaller ones. The largest creature at the center of the painting faces left. It is a headless creature with a large, erect penis and testicles. It has strong, stocky legs and a strappy high heeled shoe on its foot. From its torso sprouts a group of 5 snakes that hover upright with their mouths open and forked tongues sticking out. The figure rides atop a multi legged creature which has a collection of dangling

teats and much smaller humanoids atop it. This multi legged creature has a pig head shaped head and human tongue. Its body ends in a long appendage, the end of which is in the mouth of another of a third large figure, a humanoid with long breasts and penis. This humanoid stands behind the multi legged creature and penetrates it from behind. The other two large creatures are on either side of the painting and have a frog-like body shape and appear to be eating frogs.

The top half of the work is taken up mostly by swaths of flames. The flames frame the heads of a number of other animal-like creatures. At the top of the work is a pitch black sky. Ten small figures with arms spread and curtain like wings sail and swoop, in and above the fire. Those above it have a syringe needle instead of legs.

Each of the 4 walls of this room display only one large work. The other works in this room are also red and black but with more white and occasional yellow. At the centre of the room are two large sculptures. All of the works recall Haring's familiar characters.

End of Audio Description.

AUDIO 4

The Great White Way

1988

acrylic on canvas

The Keith Haring Foundation

Exhibition label text:

Stretched in the shape of a penis, this massive painting is a critical visualization of what author bell hooks described as “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.” The pink phallus is decorated with black lines that make up an intricate scene of weapons, violence, torture, and other abuses of power—a visual representation of the problems of Euro-American society. Haring’s title implies the white supremacist ideology underpinning these activities. The painting shows a phallogocentric world in which profit and power in the name of “good” and God are used as tools of oppression. The Great White Way is a prime example of what is perhaps Haring’s greatest skill: the ability to make something look like shallow fun—in this case, a massive, cartoonish, pink, candy-striped penis—while simultaneously speaking truth to some of society’s foremost tyrannies.

End of Exhibition label text.

Audio description of the work

Hung on the wall is a 14’ high x 4’ wide painting in the shape of a penis. Also similar in shape to an oblong keyhole, its shaft rises straight up with its head at the top, nearly ceiling height and more than twice the height of an average person.

Painted a bright light pink, the canvas stands out about 5 inches from the wall and the sides of it are striped with its only other colour, black. The stripes continue onto the front to join a line around the perimeter, giving it a striped border. The penis is full of illustrations in black lines that sometimes join one another and are largely in a symmetrical arrangement.

The work will be described from the top to the bottom. At the top of the penis’s shape is a small Flying Devil with wings spread. This forms the divot at the tip of the penis’s head. The devil has a long penis that droops down. Directly underneath it lies a figure marked with the symbol for woman (a circle with a cross underneath). Her legs are spread and her open vulva is lined up directly under the devil’s penis. To her sides are figures that hold up the devil, and hold down the woman’s legs. Close to her, is a torso length sperm. Touching her outstretched arms on either side, float fetuses with lines emanating from them. Her head connects to a body beneath

her which gives birth to a figure that reaches downwards with two arms. On either side of this are pregnant figures, one holding a Christian cross. The pregnant figures are connected by a chain with shackles that float surrounding their knees.

The illustrations continue down the penis's shaft. Under the chains, a figure with bound arms dangles by its bound ankles. On its left is a rifle, a space rocket, a cutlass and an atom. On its right is a tank, hand gun, dagger and jet plane. On both sides are "x"es and dollar signs. Flanking the dangling figure's head and arms are pig heads with "x"es for eyes and snouts open showing jagged teeth. Underneath this is a jumble of people. One person at centre has two penises and sets of testicles and is inserting itself into bent over figures at either side.

Now midshaft, are two giant crosses which each impale a figure who is bent over backwards. Between the crosses is a five pointed crown that is held up by two figures standing on a disc. The disc is held up by the penises of identical figures that are partly visible on either side of the shaft. Also bracing the base of the disc are bowing figures. They kneel on top of a horizontal beam which is topping a figure with a dollar sign on it's torso and a very large penis. Clinging to it near its chest and rear are tiny figures. From the horizontal beam hang four glittery gems just out of reach of a crowd of tiny figures in various celebratory postures, most clambering up the legs of the larger figure at the expense of a few figures being trampled underfoot. This scene is being held up by two larger individuals on their stomachs who have shackles on their ankles with chains that stretch out to the sides of the work. Under and between them is a figure with it's arms to either side in a cruciform pose. It has testicles for legs and it's torso is encircled by four rings. Its outstretched arms hold two leashes. The leashes are around the necks of two tiny prostrate figures which kiss the testicles, at the bottom of the entire work. To the left and right of those are two characters who look down on them and who wave their hands. They have enormous erect penises, the shaft and heads of which are Christian crosses.

End of Audio description.

AUDIO 5

Untitled

1988

acrylic on canvas

Private collection

Exhibition label text:

This untitled work shows a human figure struggling to walk up a staircase while carrying a massive egg tied to its back. The egg is cracked and a sperm with devil horns bursts from its shell. The painting speaks profoundly to the AIDS epidemic that took the lives of so many within Haring's community, including his own. Using monumental scale, a palette drained of colour, and graphic imagery, Haring represented the impossible weight of the AIDS crisis.

End of Exhibition label text.

Audio description of the work.

Displayed on a black wall, this enormous 12' high x 18' wide painting is rectangular and is mounted directly on the wall with screws and grommets. It is painted entirely in black paint leaving gaps on the canvas to create the white lines depicting the work. Here Haring's signature outlines make up the work, they depict a horned serpentine creature as it emerges from a large egg which is strapped to the back of a person facing the bottom of a flight of stairs. The painting has a double line border which frames it.

This work will be described in thirds, from left to right. At the bottom on the left is a staircase 7 steps high. It is loosely filled in with rectangles giving the appearance of stone or bricks. A human figure with a long or erect penis feels for footing with their right toe as they step up a stair. Three thick bands around their waist strap an egg shell to their back. Their arms are in the air beside their head shielding them from the falling pieces of the egg shell which tumble down as the creature emerges. One piece which has fallen to their elbow resembles a three pointed crown. In the upper left corner at the top of the stairs floats a sperm shape. It has devil horns that curve towards each other at the sides of its bulbous head. It is a smaller version of the creature emerging from the egg.

The centre of the painting is taken up by the enormous egg shell which is taller than, and four times as wide as the human figure it is belted to. Its top half is riddled with cracks and lines on all sides indicate it is moving rapidly. From a hole at the top erupts the body of the devil horned sperm. The right third of the painting is dominated by the escape from the egg of the sperm's thick squirmy body, large head and long curving horns that point down. Five long vertical snakelike squiggles are under the sperm's head, between and beside its horns.

Keith Haring Verbal Description Recording Script, Nov 8, '23 rebecca@superiordescription.com

On the right of the work is a quote by Haring “I don’t know if I have 5 months or 5 years, but I know my days are numbered. This is why my activities and projects are so important now. To do as much as quickly as possible. I’m sure that what will live on after I die is important enough to make sacrifices of my personal luxury and leisure time now. Work is all I have and art is more important than life.”

End of Audio Description.