

On until April 11 at the Museo di Roma (Palazzo Braschi) is “Keith Haring,” a comprehensive exhibition dedicated to one of the most famous and beloved artists of the second half of the 20th century. It traces the career of this generous social activist, who often donated his art to causes or needy people, from his arrival in New York as a student to his death there, through more than 140 works: paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, posters, and documents. These are primarily on loan from the only museum dedicated to him, the Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, founded in 2007 in Hokuto, Japan.

The exhibition’s five thematic sections, each in chronological order, begin with his early white-chalk drawings on empty black billboards in the New York subway and end with the spiritual pieces he created shortly before his premature death from AIDS at age 31 in 1990.

In addition to these five sections—street art, political and social engagement, the body and vital energy, the accessibility of art, and the symbolic and spiritual dimensions—a special focus is placed on Haring’s relationship with Italy. Paintings, murals (only “Tuttomondo” in Pisa survives), posters, and documents recount his connections to Naples, Milan, and especially Pisa and Rome. The famous “Poster for Pisa” (inspiration for “Tuttomondo” 1989) and “Motorcycle,” painted in Rome in 1984, highlight his collaborations with the gallery owners Lucio Amelio in Naples and Salvatore Ala in Milan, where he also painted Fiorucci’s flagship store. Also on display are photographs by Stefano Fontebasso De Martino of the works Haring created in 1984 for his exhibition “Arte di frontiera. New York Graffiti” at Palazzo delle Esposizioni, now lost. He also painted a large-scale (6 by 2 meters) urban artwork in white acrylic on the transparent walls of Rome’s subway along the Pietro Nenni Bridge, but it was later deleted.



Keith Haring sitting in front of his “Tuttomondo” (1989) Courtesy of The Keith Haring Foundation in New York City.

The first section, “Street Art and Art in Transit,” explores the origins of his artistic style via his iconic “Subway Drawings” and

the seven panels from the “Untitled (FDR Drive #10–#16)” series, spray-painted in 1984 on metal sheets at a construction site along Manhattan’s FDR Drive. These works aim to recreate the cultural context of 1980s New York, a turbulent city undergoing profound social changes. Here Haring developed his recognizable artistic style, rooted in the belief that art should be accessible to everyone. His brightly colored, pop-art, pre-digital figures—beaming children, barking dogs, dancing men, angels, hearts, televisions, and pyramids—become his visual alphabet, without any linguistic or cultural barriers. He firmly believed: “Art is for everyone.”

The artist’s social activism is evident in the second section, “Political and Social Resonance,” where posters and works address issues such as racism, apartheid, nuclear disarmament, AIDS prevention, LGBTQ+ rights, violence, and drug addiction. Among the works on display are “Free South Africa,” “Crack Down!,” “Safe Sex” (although he didn’t practice it and was proud to have lovers of all races), posters created for ACT Up and the AIDS Hotline, as well as the series “The Blueprint Drawings.”



One of Keith Haring's Angel icons (1990). Courtesy of the Nakamura Keith Haring Collection.

In the third section, “Radiant Eros—Celebrate Life,” the exhibition focuses on the body, desire, and vitality through large-scale paintings and installations with Haring’s favorite fluorescent lights.

The fourth section, “Art Is for Everybody,” emphasizes Haring’s desire to make art a shared and accessible tool. Sculptures, posters, objects, musical collaborations, and public projects confirm this vision, as does the “Mural for New York’s Mount Sinai Hospital” that Haring created to cheer up hospitalized children. It was a symbol of his faith in the power of art for inclusion and hope.

The last section, “Symbolic Imagery & Religion,” concerns the spiritual aspects of Haring’s work. Totems, pyramids, icons, apocalyptic images, and works such as “Apocalypse,” “Chocolate Buddha,” “Andy Mouse,” and “Altarpiece: The Life of Christ”—all created in 1990, shortly before his death—reflect the artist’s growing curiosity about spirituality, transformation, and the

relationship between life and death.

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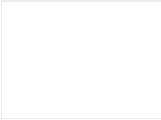
 



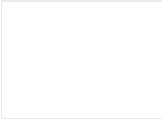
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