

Where is Keith Haring's art now?

How radical, socialist, graffiti art has been displaced for the sake of commodification.



Subway car, 1983

Photograph taken by Tseng Kwong Chi (Haring's friend and photographer)

Courtesy of Tseng Kwong Chi's Keith Haring Archive

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Introduction

I'm gay. The fact that I can use that statement to open a college paper with little to no repercussions is no small feat. Such an explicit admission of queerness could get someone fired, expelled, disowned, overall shunned within a heteronormative society. Modern queer people have *some* laws in *some* places to protect us from discrimination based on sexuality in a legal setting, but not in social settings. Being explicitly queer (an archetype that varies widely from person to person) runs the risk of setting off homophobes and driving them to violence as extreme as murder. Some of these perpetrators have gone so far as to use the "gay panic defense" in an effort to get a lesser sentence on the grounds that when they found out someone was gay, they got so panicked that they murdered the queer person (Salerno et al., 2015). Fortunately, the gay panic defense is often thought to be farfetched in a legal setting, but Salerno et al. found that it still has the power to sway a jury. As a result, some states have chosen to pass legislation that bans the use of the gay panic defense ("LGBTQ+ 'Panic' Defense," n.d.). However, only 19 states have officially banned it, including California, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, and Delaware; California being the earliest to ban it in 2014 and Delaware being the latest in 2023 ("LGBTQ+ 'Panic' Defense," n.d.).

This is the society queer people live in today, some of us have the privilege of living relatively peaceful lives thanks to laws that push society to be tolerant of queer people. Now imagine forty years ago: no laws, no rights, and significantly less acceptance within society; homosexuality was still called sodomy in some states and had only just started being decriminalized in the 60s (Kane, 2007)! On top of all that, a horrible disease begins to affect your marginalized community at extremely disproportionate rates; so much so that it was originally named Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) and assumed to only affect gay

people (Ayala & Spieldenner, 2021). Your community is literally dying before your eyes and the government does absolutely nothing which they are legally and (perhaps more importantly) socially allowed to do because not enough people in heteronormative society care about the lives of gay people. Author and AIDS Historian, Sarah Schulman lived in New York City during the height of the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) epidemic, which she defines as 1981-1996 wherein “folks sickened and died consistently for fifteen years” (Schulman, 2013, p. 45). One of those folks was artist, Keith Haring who passed away from AIDS in 1990 (Gruen, 1991).

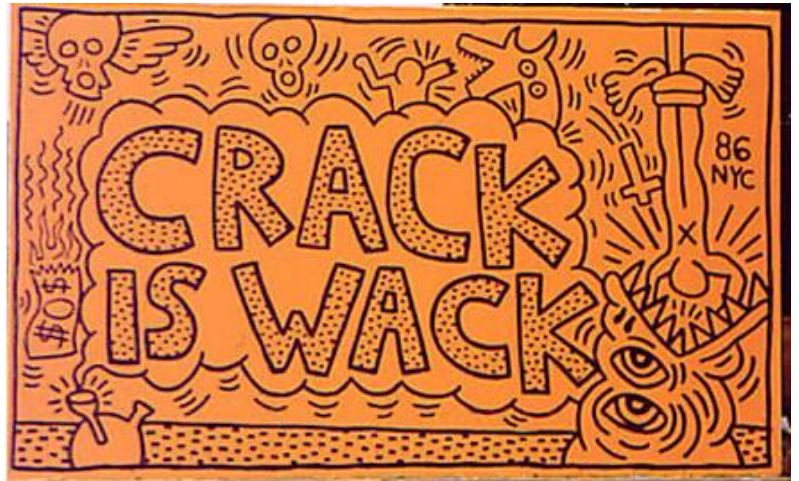
“Do you know any artists who died of AIDS who no one’s ever heard of?’ ‘There are thousands,’” Schulman informed an unnamed friend (Schulman, 2013, p. 9). It’s already difficult to imagine the sheer number of people who were lost and to then add on their ideas and art, the loss becomes incalculable. Keith Haring died when he was only 32 years old and, in that time, he made thousands of drawings and pieces of art; now imagine if he, or any of the other thousands of artists Schulman could name, had lived past their young ages, how much *more* art they would have made. With that in mind, Haring was very lucky to be remembered; he “made it” in the Art World and was so wildly successful that his art was displayed all over New York City and in international galleries in London and Tokyo. He had a classic rags to riches story which gave him a vast amount of resources that many other artists (and non-artists) can only dream of earning. As a result, he was able to establish the Keith Haring Foundation to help ensure he was remembered, unlike the “thousands” of other artists’ work that was lost to AIDS and time (Gruen, 1991; Schulman, 2013, p. 9). His memory and legacy were secured. However, I don’t think Keith Haring is remembered in a way that is respectful to who he was and what he believed in. Haring’s designs appear on practically anything that can have a design printed onto it; from

the everyday rug, water bottle, and tshirt to a pair of skis and a chess set made with his figures. What do skis and the game of chess have to do with Haring, his life, his interests, and what he fought for?



I can see how we got to Keith Haring rugs, water bottles, and tshirts; during his life Haring had opened the Keith Haring Pop Shop with the idea that “not only collectors could come but also kids from the Bronx” could come get a tshirt, a poster, a button with Haring art on it (Gruen, 1991, p. 148). He sold affordable items with his art on it to bring joy to his adopted city and its people, so I can see how the next step would be more everyday products with Haring’s art on it. What I do not see is how we arrived at Keith Haring skis retailing for thousands of dollars

without losing the message of his original beliefs. Even the art that appears on everyday objects has been watered down from his original art. He used to have statements accompanying his art such as “Crack is Wack” (1986), “Free South Africa” (1985), and “Ignorance = Fear, Silence = Death, Fight AIDS, ACT UP” (1989), pictured below (Images courtesy of the Keith Haring



Foundation Archive). However, his radiant babies, barking dogs, dancing figures, and three eyed smiley faces are now printed onto products alone, with no trace of the original meaning or context within this social movement. I argue Keith Haring’s art has been purposefully undermined in an effort to sell more politically neutral objects to a wider audience. If companies tried selling Haring’s more explicitly queer and liberal art on products, they could guarantee a loss of sales from homophobes taking their money elsewhere. Therefore, they alter Haring’s politically and socially charged art, so they only have to worry about advertising his

dynamic figures; they no longer have to sell consumers on queerness, environmental consciousness, or social consciousness; they only have to sell appealing figures, in appealing colors, on appealing products. His queerness, his message, have been erased.

Literature Review

In this section I will provide a brief biography about Keith Haring and explore (1) how he fits into the Marxist conflict, commodification, and fetishization of commodity theories, (2) how his life embodied Howard Becker's theories on the intersectionality of Art History and Sociology, and (3) how his life was affected and ultimately ended by the AIDS epidemic in New York City.

Who was Keith Haring?



“Keith Haring in front of subway drawing, New York, 1984.” (Gruen, 1991, pg. 71)

I will discuss just a fraction of Keith Haring’s life pieced together from three different biographies: *Keith Haring: The Authorized Biography* by John Gruen (published 1991); *Keith Haring Journals* by Keith Haring (2010); and *Keith Haring* by Alexandra Kolassa (2016). Gruen’s authorized biography covers the entirety of Haring’s life from birth to death, literally. There is a detailed account about Haring’s actual birth from his mother Joan herself and a beautiful description of the moments and days following his

death. Its author, John Gruen, was a notable art historian, critic, and author who seems to have known Haring quite personally. Just as Keith Haring was becoming famous, he realized he would have to learn to delegate certain aspects of his career to other people in order to continue making art the way he wanted (Kolossa, 2016). Therefore, he hired an assistant named Julia Gruen, John Gruen's daughter (Kolossa, 2016). From this point on Haring and the Gruens became permanently linked, Haring would task John with writing the authorized biography and have Julia become the executive director of the Keith Haring Foundation after his passing (Kolossa, 2016). While they may have provided some exclusive insight due to their close relationship with Keith Haring, it's important to note that this could also create bias and alter the responses or reports from Haring's friends and family that are present in the book. Especially if those giving the responses have the knowledge of how famous Haring was and knew what they were saying was going to be immortalized in a book that was started before he even died.

Kolossa's book is far more focused on Haring's art and its content as opposed to the biography; there is still biographical information, and the book is classified as a biography, but it's not nearly as detailed as the authorized biography. "Alexandra Kolossa studied art history, German literature, and business administration," earned a doctorate in 2003, and "has been a freelance author and contemporary art exhibition curator" since 1998 (Kolossa, 2016, p. 96). Kolossa's art history education definitely shines through in her Haring biography, only adding in details about his personal life if they are relevant to the art and what it conveys. Gruen's biography is almost the opposite of Kolossa's, with a lot of detail about his life and rarely discussing the content of the art itself. After reading both books and reading about both authors, I'm not surprised by their stylistic differences. Gruen has written many other biographies and has even created some art himself, so it becomes very clear that his interests lie in the life beyond or

behind the art itself. Kolossa on the other hand, is much more interested in the analysis of the art itself. For example, she points out how, at its core, graffiti is a communicative art form wherein Haring used recurring “non-verbal symbols” “of simple comprehension...for a public who were running or riding past” (Kolossa, 2016, p. 19 & 27). This kind of literal description of Keith Haring’s art and how it works alongside a subway system would not be found in Gruen’s book. Kolossa even defers the reader to Gruen’s authorized biography for more in depth information on Haring’s personal life, allowing her book to focus more on the stylistic, compositional, and functional aspects of Haring’s art.

Keith Haring was born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania on May 4, 1958, to parents, Joan and Allen Haring who would have three more children after Keith, his sisters, Kay, Kristen, and Karen. From a young age, Keith did not want to be contained in his hometown, he said he often “felt suffocated by the town” and wanted to break “out of the conformity of Kutztown” (Gruen, 1991, p. 20) Keith Haring’s father, Allen, was the one who had originally been interested in art; he enjoyed doodling and drawing and even made paintings for his school yearbook (Gruen, 1991). Keith’s mother, Joan even remembers as early as Keith being a year old, sitting on Allen’s “lap just drawing some gobbly-goo with crayons he’d been given” (Gruen, 1991, p. 4). Haring had been working minimum wage jobs during his childhood and teens and continued to do so after he graduated high school. Therefore, when applying to colleges and universities in New York City, he was offered many grants and scholarships due to his socioeconomic status and was ultimately able to attend the School of Visual Arts (SVA) (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016).

He would eventually intern at Tony Schafrazi’s gallery, who would later become Haring’s art dealer; it was during this working experience that Haring realized that his goals with art did not revolve around having his art in a gallery (Gruen, 1991). He decided to adjust course in his

academic career as well but when he met with a college advisor, realized he didn't have anything more to learn from SVA (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016). So, Haring ultimately dropped out of college in order to experiment with his art outside of institutions. It was during this time that Haring created the symbols and characters that we know and love today, the colorful radiant babies, barking dogs, dancing people and many more. While many products today show Haring's art as bright colors with bold, black outlines, he did not begin with color. He had been taking the subway when he saw some blank, black panels among the usual bright NYC advertising for movies, makeup, food, drinks, you name it (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016). The sheets of matte black paper were used as placeholders to cover up old advertisements before they would be replaced by updated ones (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016). Haring saw a canvas in these placeholders. He had been working odd jobs and gigs to just get by for nearly his whole life, so he bought a very cheap and accessible medium: white chalk. I like to imagine an onlooker on the streets of New York City seeing this lanky guy with thick glasses come up from the subway, go into a store, and immediately return to the subway in an inspired hurry. While something like that would not be considered noteworthy or catch any regular New Yorker's attention, this is the scenario I gleaned from Haring's firsthand accounts in the Gruen Biography. And that's where Keith Haring's art as we know it today began: quick, simple characters drawn in school teacher's chalk, on a piece of paper that did not belong to him, in the grimy 1980s New York Subway stations (this isn't exclusive to the 80s they're still grimy to this day). Here he was able to gain the type of notoriety he wanted, being the artist that regular people, not just Art World (see next section) people got to enjoy. Haring adored making anyone and everyone happy with his art so the next step he took from subway drawings was providing small, portable pieces of art to hand out to anyone who approached him: pinback buttons (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016).

Coincidentally, handing out buttons with his own designs on them has become a hobby of my uncle's and when he heard about my paper, he introduced me to a friend of his who claimed to have received one of Haring's original buttons! While the friend didn't remember if he still had the button, he did remember getting it; he told me he saw a guy just drawing on the subway walls and when he went to go say hi, Haring just silently offered him a button before scurrying off, likely to his next "canvas."

Keith Haring began writing his own journals in 1977 when he was around the age of twenty, up until a few months before his death (February 16th, 1990) with the last entry being dated September 22nd, 1989 (Haring, 2010). Haring's own writing is, naturally, the most casual of the three, the entries are often bullet point-like sentences or run ons that talk about his day-to-day thoughts. Some entries are as simple and literal as describing where he went, what he did, who he spoke to, such as "Today we got to Interstate State Park and camped and met people and sold T-shirts. Tripped. Met people going to see the Grateful Dead in Minnesota" (Haring, 2010, p. 41). Other entries feature long musings about his art, his role as an artist, and his poetry; one of my personal favorites being: "Thinking you know the answer is as dangerous as not thinking about the possibility of no answers. Poetic sentences that make no sense might as well be poem/ Keith Haring thinks in poems./ Keith Haring paints poems./ Poems do not necessarily need words./ words do not necessarily make poems" (Haring, 2010, p. 53). Haring's journals also reveal that he was very interested in philosophy, particularly about how art and individuality are essential to life, therefore he would live as his authentic, individual, artist self (Haring, 2010). He was very adamant about *everyone* being allowed access to art: "The public has a right to art...The public needs art, and it is the responsibility of the 'self-proclaimed artist' to realize the public needs art" (Haring, 2010, p. 57). Little did Haring know (or maybe he did) the official,

academic combination of art and sociology, Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* would soon be published.

Sociology and Art

While interning at art dealer Tony Shafrazi's gallery, Keith Haring came to realize that the gallery industry only reached a certain kind of people who have access to galleries, and he wanted his art to reach a wider range and variety of people. While some may wonder: how are you going to get more people to see your art if it's not going into a display space like a gallery? But Haring was onto something. Haring himself grew up white, middle class and wanted his art to reach more everyday people like himself as opposed to only those in the upper socioeconomic class (Gruen, 1991; Kolossa, 2016). While I don't know the extent of Keith Haring's knowledge of sociology, he clearly had a very Marxist opinion towards his art and even stated artists shouldn't be "mak[ing] bourgeois art for the few and ignore the masses" (Haring, 2010, p. 57).

In Marx's Communist Manifesto he outlines the separation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as "the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor" and "the class of modern wage laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live" (Marx, 1848, p. 14). Marx explains that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have existed in many forms throughout history such as master and enslaved person, feudal lords and their serfs (Marx, 1848). Regardless of form, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are always separate and unequal with the bourgeoisie being the few and the proletariat being everyone else (Marx, 1848). Given Haring's previous statement about the bourgeoisie, he has defined them as people who have the financial

means to be allowed to access galleries and gallery art while the proletariat are the “public” or the “masses” (Haring, 2010). Once again, Haring was not far off from Howard Becker’s theories.

Before the original publishing of sociologist Howard Becker’s *Art Worlds* in 1982, the fields of art history and sociology were two separate studies that very rarely overlapped, if ever. Becker argued that the only sociology that had previously been involved with art history was in discussing the life of the artist and their particular place in history respective to other artists (Becker, 1982). Becker strived to go beyond discussing just the content of art and its artists. His main argument was that art was a collective action not limited to just one artist which is how most people think of famous icons of art history: as being the sole creator of art (Becker, 1982). For example, Pablo Picasso and his *demoiselles D’avignon*, many see it and know Picasso painted it but what would it be without the mademoiselles, without the African peoples and their masks he referenced, without those who made his materials, paint brushes, canvases, paints. If all of those people are included for just one piece of art made a little over one hundred years ago then imagine the number of people behind every historical and non historical art piece that is made to this day. As a result, there are infinitely more sociological lenses by which we can view not only the finished piece of art, but how it came to be and the people who made them. Therefore, rather than strictly observing Keith Haring’s radiant babies, dogs, and dancing people, which colors he chose, and how neat his lines are compared to other artists, we can look at how his life, art, and philosophies are all intertwined.

One of sociology’s primary focuses is inequality, how it came to be, and how to alleviate its effects. Examples of inequality include racism, sexism, classicism, and ableism and more recently sociologists have been looking into Intersectionality; how experiencing multiple forms of inequality can negatively affect a person or group of people. For example, a woman in a

workplace is likely to experience sexism in the form of being paid less than her male coworkers (Collins & Bilge). Now imagine if the woman was also Black, Black people are often paid less than their white coworkers (Collins & Bilge). Therefore, a Black woman in this situation will experience the combination of both sexism and racism wherein not only is she paid less for being a woman, but she is also being paid less for being black (Collins & Bilge). Now let's take a look at Keith Haring's intersectionality. Yes, he was a white man which is, historically, the group with the most societal advantages, but he was gay and poor which clearly did not work to any queer persons' advantage in the 1980s AIDS Crisis.

Art Worlds

Howard Becker essentially coined the practice of studying an artist's societal advantages and disadvantages and how they influenced the creation of art. He decided to call these many moving parts that come together to make art "art worlds" hence the title of his book (Becker, 1982). By that same logic he deemed the professional art world consisting of museums, high end galleries, auctions, collectors, and exorbitant sums of money, the Art World with capital letters to refer to its place at the top of the art making hierarchy (Becker, 1982). Art produced and exchanged within Art Worlds are thought to be the most pure form of art, the best of the best and that Art is backed by billions of dollars and the approval of institutions like museums and galleries (Becker, 1982). Here is where Keith Haring's dream of reaching people beyond the Art World comes in.

While he did not explain his thoughts in as an academic manner as Becker, Haring made his statement about an artist's responsibility to not make art only for "the bourgeoisie" in his journal in 1978, four years before the publishing of *Art Worlds* (Becker, 1982; Haring, 2010). Haring's wish to move away from gallery work clearly shows that he knew the difference

between the Art World for the bourgeoisie and the art worlds of everyday people (Becker, 1982; Gruen, 1991). Keith Haring started removing himself from the Art World by dropping out of art school and beginning to make public surfaces his canvas (Gruen, 1991; Haring, 2010; Kolossa, 2016). While Haring would eventually return to the Art World, at this time he was becoming what Becker would call a “Maverick artist” (Becker, 1982).

The Four Types of Artists

Becker also theorized that all art is made by four types of artists in respect to the Art World: Integrated Professional Artists, Mavericks Artists, Folk Artists, and Naive Artists (Becker, 1982). Integrated Professionals are Artists who create with the knowledge and conventions of the Art World. These artists often go into their careers with knowledge of the Art World and how it works (Becker, 1982). Perhaps they were taught at art school or knew a friend or family member to introduce them but no matter the way of entry, they end up knowing how it works whether it be to make art, sell art, collect art, they know how to do it for the most profit (Becker, 1982). Next is the Maverick Artist, an artist who has knowledge of the Art World and may have even been trained to become an Integrated Professional but vehemently rejects the Art World (Becker, 1982). Becker explains that being a Maverick is a difficult kind of artist to be due to preconceived conventions or the lack thereof (Becker, 1982). Conventions are the usual, widely accepted and known way of doing things to bring a piece of art to life (Becker, 1982). Take painting for example, the process of making a painting has widely agreed upon rules such as what materials are to be used, in what order, how it should be displayed, and ultimately how it should be consumed by a viewer. Conventions allow Integrated Professionals to make a lot of their art more easily as there are always rules to fall back on; in a Maverick’s rejection of the Art

World and its conventions, it can often become more difficult for them to get their art made (Becker, 1982).

Next, Becker defines Folk artists as those who happen to participate in artistic activities because they are either personally motivated or socially expected to, such as singing “Happy Birthday” (Becker, 1982). Finally, Naive artists are those who, in the eyes of the Art World, have “no idea” they are making art but make it out of some internal drive to do so (Becker, 1982). Becker’s definitions of Folk and Naive are quite similar and often used interchangeably since *Art Worlds* was published but Integrated Professional and Maverick remain distinct categories from each other and Folk/Naive (Becker, 1982). Furthermore, Professionals and Mavericks tend to have formal training (even if unfinished training) versus the Folk/Naive Artists who are usually thought to have no training and/or create out of an innate drive to create art as opposed to a potentially business or financial drive that can be created with formal training.

In this frame of reference, I argue that Haring may have started out as a Folk/Naive artist when he was a child and would create art casually with his father and sisters. However, because he attended art school, experienced working in a gallery, and ultimately dropped out of art school to pursue art in his own time and in his own way, he became a Maverick Artist. Furthermore, he used some of the knowledge and conventions he had gained to begin with his public drawings. Haring knew he needed a surface, a material, a display space, and an audience; he simply found a form of the professional gallery that was far less strict in the subways.

A Changing NYC

In this section I discuss the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) epidemic in New York City in particular as that was where Keith Haring first made his mark and where

AIDS Historian Sarah Schulman watched AIDS consume her community. In her book *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, Schulman defines AIDS as ongoing AIDS and past AIDS (Schulman, 2013). Ongoing AIDS being the AIDS we know today: a disease which still persists in non western countries as a result of globalization and “the need for our side of the world to live off the other” creating very different qualities of life (Schulman, 2013, p. 42). As a result, non western countries such as Africa, do not have as strong of a healthcare, education, or science system as western countries, allowing AIDS to persist and for the west to remain in power (Schulman, 2013). Schulman defines past AIDS as the time of the epidemic, 1981-1996 where she lived in NYC amidst mass death and extreme governmental and societal neglect because only gay people were dying (Schulman, 2013). Furthermore, the AIDS epidemic is not remembered in a way that reflects the immense amount of death that Schulman witnessed and caused New York City to change right before her eyes. She goes on to show this mass misremembrance by comparing the victims of AIDS to the victims of 9/11 (Schulman, 2013). On 9/11, 2,752 people died and New York City has since made sure that the victims are properly remembered in the form of memorials and the 9/11 Museum. “These human beings have been highly individuated. The recognition of their loss and suffering is a national ritual, and the consequences of their aborted potential are assessed annually in public” (Schulman, 2013, p. 46). The 9/11 Memorial Museum even has fountains installed at the site of the tragedy with every victim’s name carved into the stone. Meanwhile “81,542 people have died of AIDS in New York City as of August 16, 2008,” that’s nearly 30 times the amount of people who died in 9/11 (Schulman, 2013, p. 46). But the 81,542 do not get a monument or yearly acknowledgement, nevermind the acknowledgement of their “aborted potential” (Schulman, 2013).

Gentrification is a term often associated with buildings or architecture wherein one can easily see the aesthetic and cultural differences between a family-owned cafe and when it has been bought out and replaced by a Starbucks. Schulman uses this association to explain how both the buildings and culture of gay people in the 60s, 70s, 80s, were completely written over to make way for non gay people (Schulman, 2013). Firstly, the buildings: Schulman lived in the East Village along with many other queer people at the time as there was affordable housing and people could live relatively peacefully with their same sex partners (Schulman, 2013). Unfortunately, this is where real estate agencies began to take advantage of the lack of legal rights, specifically marriage rights, for queer people (Schulman, 2013). A common scenario began to play out: if someone's partner died and the surviving partner's name was not on the lease, the survivor would have no legal right to the apartment and would be forced to leave. If the queer couple had been allowed to get legally married, then the apartment would have been passed on to the surviving spouse. Instead, the apartment would be left to the lease holder's next of kin, who were often homophobic family members who would rather sell the space to real estate companies than allow the partner to stay (Schulman, 2013). Therefore, the surviving partner would have no choice but to find somewhere else to live while mourning the loss of someone they maybe would have married had they simply been allowed to.

There were no queer people left with any legal standing to prevent the real estate companies from taking over. Therefore, the physical gentrification of the East Village and the mental gentrification of the queer people that lived there became even easier (Schulman, 2013). This was the backdrop of Keith Haring's career, yes, he was becoming a famous artist, but his community was suffering and soon enough he was suffering in the same way. Furthermore, he

wanted to help himself and his communities, wanted them to be remembered, but as Schulman spelled out, they were all purposefully written over, gentrified.

Adoption of Visual Aesthetics but Not the Culture

In this section I discuss how the fine Art World decided that graffiti aesthetics were marketable but graffiti writers and the actual act of illegally graffiti-ing something was not. *Graffiti Lives* is an ethnographic study by assistant professor, Gregory J. Snyder who was welcomed to temporarily participate in the graffiti community by tagging along (no pun intended) with graffiti artists and writers while they made their tags. Snyder kept a record of these excursions in what he called “The Blackbook” wherein he wrote about the experiences and had the artists he followed “sign” a page however they wished (Snyder, 2009). It seems Snyder’s ethnography was an attempt to get access to real graffiti art (lowercase) as opposed to the Graffiti Art (uppercase), that he explains makes SoHo (New York), SoHo (Snyder, 2009). In his study, Snyder asserts how SoHo has held onto the original graffiti aesthetic in order to sell the “gritty” New York City aesthetic that tourists now expect of it (Snyder, 2009, p. 52). One store he pointed out to be particularly guilty of this marketing trick was a clothing store called Yellow Rat Bastard (Snyder, 2009). Yellow Rat Bastard allowed anyone to come into their store and graffiti their walls in an effort to insinuate that the store and company are “cool” and in line with true, authentic graffiti art (Snyder, 2009, p. 53). However this seems to have only worked on tourists, “real New York City Writers see this act of co-optation... a way of using graffiti to sell products” (Snyder, 2009, p. 53). This is exactly how I see the use of just Haring’s pictures being sold without the context of who he was and what he stood for.

Taking the Train by Professor Joe Austin is a book about the graffiti movement in New York City, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s (Austin, 2001). They pay particular attention to the graffiti *writers* of the time, as opposed to the more pictorial works of Keith Haring and Jean Michel-Basquiat, both of whom are mentioned briefly. Graffiti writers primarily worked on tagging (writing their graffiti name) the New York City subways at the time hence “the train” in the title (Austin, 2001). The train cars were easy targets when left unattended in the yard or underground and the writers could guarantee that a lot of people would see the writing the next time they *took the train* (Austin, 2001). This is the foundation that Haring got started on, literal “underground art.” However, Keith Haring seems to also have been aware of the preexisting space and culture as he initially avoided spray paint and trains in favor of chalk and empty ad space. Perhaps this is why Haring was one of the earlier graffiti artists to be taken in by the Art World as he followed the conventions of a blank space on a wall being filled with pictures, as opposed to the perhaps more “offensive” (to conventions) use of a train as a canvas.

However, not all graffiti artists strived for the same kind of fame that Haring achieved. For example, one graffiti writer known as Crash had their art in galleries but later stated ““I can’t say that my art today is Graffiti. Because, once you remove it from its elements, the trains and yards, it’s not Graffiti anymore”” (Austin, 2001, p. 199). Unfortunately, it was not in Crash’s, graffiti artists’, or even Haring’s power to say what belonged in the Art World and what didn’t; they were the proletariat, outsider, underground artists (Becker, 1982; Marx, 1848). The bourgeois Art World holds the power, and they decide what makes it past their gates and what doesn’t.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu theorizes that this power comes from the bourgeois people in the Art World holding high amounts of cultural capital; having greater access to a wide

variety of culture resulting in more opportunities than someone who doesn't (Bourdieu, 1979). The example Bourdieu gives is that anyone and everyone has the inherent ability to become a talented violinist but it is much more likely for those in the upper class (Bourdieu, 1979). A wealthier family can afford a violin and violin lessons for their children at an early age thereby giving them a greater opportunity to become a talented violinist (Bourdieu, 1979). On the other hand, a child of a lower socioeconomic status may not be able to pick up violin until a later age or may not have as much time and resources to set aside for learning violin (Bourdieu, 1979). Therefore, the child from the wealthier family has greater cultural capital than the child from the lower socioeconomic class and is thereby more likely to have a wider range of tastes. We can apply the same principles to graffiti: the bourgeoisie in the professional Art World have far more cultural capital and power that allows them to adopt graffiti as legal and legitimate Art. But this is a one-way exchange, the lack of cultural capital in the hands of graffiti artists and writers prevents them from adopting from the Art World.

As a result, the aesthetics of graffiti have become recuperated or adopted into the Art World but the culture behind it is not. Graffiti culture involves illegally marking public spaces with easily identifiable and easily created art in order to spread ideas in a community (Schacter, 2019). However, the Professional Art World has turned this very accessible, radical act into an inaccessible aesthetic that is locked behind paywalls. Instead of making quick, communicative art, professional Artists take their time making commissioned art that emulates graffiti style (Schacter, 2019). Furthermore, because there is more focus on aesthetics and emulation than speed and communication, much of graffiti Art becomes void of any meaning, much like how Haring's art has become (Austin, 2001; Schacter, 2019).

This is what Marx defines as commodification, wherein a capitalist sees something that is free but still holds value to people so they decide to make it a commodity that people have to pay for (Marx, 1887). Haring believed everyone had a right to art and embodied this statement by always providing at least some of his art, completely free of charge on buttons or public surfaces (Haring, 2010). Herein lies the problem with the many, many products with Keith Haring's art on them, we can no longer view his art in the real world for free. One would have to pay for a museum ticket and/or buy something in order to see Haring's art. Furthermore, when an artist dies, the value of their art skyrockets since they can no longer make more; making Haring's previously free art even more expensive and inaccessible to the exact people he made it for. In the following section I describe my methods for showing how Keith Haring products, in particular, have become void of any meaning or context to give them meaning.

Methods

Because I am specifically interested in products that feature Keith Haring's art, I decided that content analysis was the best method for my study. Interviewing participants would not be ideal as it would require great memory recall of an ad of the countless we see in just one day, or some inherent knowledge of Haring. The reasoning against interviews becomes particularly clear when I bring up my paper to my peers, they usually do not know who Keith Haring is, especially those who do not have art history knowledge. Next, I considered an online survey; a survey could help with getting a large number of respondents and perhaps allow them to write down immediate reactions to images of Haring's art. However, memory recall and inherent knowledge could once again be an issue if a respondent is asked about Keith Haring himself. Therefore, content analysis would be the most effective way to analyze how Haring's art is marketed to a general, neutral audience that is not knowledgeable in art history.

I decided to gather my content from the google shopping tab as it is one of the most accessible ways to view a wide variety of products and shops. However, if I look up listings while logged onto my google account, targeted advertising will skew the results to appeal to me specifically. Therefore, I used a guest google account and a virtual private network (VPN) to make my results as neutral and generic as possible. A VPN allows a user to make their technology believe that it is being used in another geographical location, which allows me to further circumvent the targeted advertising and reduce bias.

Once I've activated the VPN and opened a guest tab, I search "Keith Haring" in the google shopping tab which shows a total of 60 "non-sponsored" products which change every time the window is refreshed. There are also sponsored products purposefully placed first because those companies have paid for premium advertising space but are thereby biased. Therefore, I decided that systematic random sampling would be an effective way to gather a sample in one sitting in order to avoid the window refreshing and altering the data. I counted off the 60 non-sponsored products into 5 groups of 12 and then using a random number generator to select one of the 5 groups to analyze. This can be done multiple times; I'm particularly interested in gathering new samples or looking at repeat samples during Pride Month (June) to see if Haring's queer identity is deemed more marketable during a month celebrating the queer community.

What exactly am I looking for in these listings? This ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) product listing has all of the ideal characteristics: (1) a product with Keith Haring's complete art on it, characters *and* text; (2) Keith Haring's name in the listing title; (pictured below)

ACT UP COVID-19 ACTIONS EVENTS ABOUT MORE ARCHIVE GIVE STORE

KEITH HARING "IGNORANCE = FEAR" T-SHIRT
\$38.00

Size: Choose an option

Returns & Exchanges: 30 Days

1 ADD TO CART

Pay

SKU: HARINGWHT1 Category: T-Shirt

No products in the cart.

PRODUCT CATEGORIES
25-Pack Buttons
5-Pack Buttons
Button
Cap
Face Mask
Sticker
T-Shirt

DONATE
GIVE TO SUPPORT ACT UP
\$38,763 of \$50,000 raised

\$ 25.00
\$10.00 \$25.00

ACT UP COVID-19 ACTIONS EVENTS ABOUT MORE ARCHIVE GIVE STORE

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Original Keith Haring artwork licensed solely to ACT UP by the Haring Foundation. Multi-color artwork with See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil graphic and "Ignorance = Fear", "Silence = Death", "Fight AIDS", "ACT UP" text.

White T-shirt, Preshrunk - 100% cotton. Standard unisex sizes available in: XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL. Made in the USA, proudly, union made, fair trade, and eco-friendly! XS - XXXL sizes \$38. Orders are shipped quickly and also internationally.

WHY BUY OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE FROM ACT UP NY?

ACT UP's Mission Triangle is:

- **Programs/ACTIONS/Demos** (doing what we do).
- **Communications/Social Media** (keeping people up to date on what we do).
- **Fundraising** (raising money to pay for what we do).

When you buy official ACT UP merchandise you not only support our "Programs, ACTIONS and Demos" and our "Communications and Social Media" efforts, but our "Fundraising" point on the triangle is supported by an employee owned, <https://give.actupny.com/our-shops-success-got-way-ahead-of-us/> target="_blank" rel="nofollow noopener noreferrer">Long-term AIDS survivor staffed fulfillment company! What's more, all goods are <https://give.actupny.com/our-shops-success-got-way-ahead-of-us/> target="_blank" rel="nofollow noopener noreferrer">Union Made, in the USA, environmentally, responsibly made—and are not a knockoff or a questionably made, unauthorized imitation!

We fight AIDS! And, we're not going to stop until AIDS is over for everyone!

Custom Amount

Make this donation every month

Donate Now

PRODUCT SEARCH
Search products...
Search

(3) a product description that explicitly mentions that Haring was a queer man and/or had AIDS; and (4) a mission statement describing exactly what ACT UP does and precisely where their profits from sales go (pictured above). These all pay respect to Haring and his art, he is credited, and the profits go towards studying AIDS which he unfortunately, died from. I'm aiming to compare other listings to the ACT UP one to see if they pay the same kind of respect to Keith Haring himself and the community that he fought so hard for.

Over the course of approximately one year (Spring 2023-Spring 2024), I began gathering data on a weekly basis, and more recently gathered on an hourly basis to maximize data collection. In the end, I had gathered a total of 734 listings. 75 of those links led to a product page that was no longer listed; if I were to gather data like this again, I would save a screenshot of a listing as it was when I found it, rather than only saving the link. 23 of the listings made no mention of Keith Haring at all and/or featured art that was not by Haring but credited him, I will be discussing three examples of each (Pictured in the next few pages).

No Mention of Keith Haring and not Haring's Art

DHgate > Apparel > Men's Clothing > Men's Hoodies & Sweatshirts > Men's Hoodies Hoodie MURDER DRONES



Men's Hoodies Hoodie MURDER DRONES Printing Long Sleeve Casual Spring And Autumn Sweatshirt Fleece Streetwear Y2k Clothes

US \$21 - 25.69 / Piece

USD	\$25.69 <small>\$42.96</small>	\$22.48 <small>\$37.59</small>	\$21.00 <small>\$35.11</small>
	1 Piece+	8 Pieces+	29 Pieces+

DHgate > Apparel > Men's Clothing > Men's Tees & Polos > Men's T-Shirts > Men's T Shirts Mechanic Auto Repair



Men's T Shirts Mechanic Auto Repair Check Engine Light T-Shirt Funny Birthday Gift For Men Daddy Father Husband Short Sleeve Cotton Shirt

US \$13.53 - 16.56 / Piece

USD	\$16.56 <small>\$27.69</small>	\$14.49 <small>\$24.23</small>	\$13.53 <small>\$22.63</small>
	1 Piece+	13 Pieces+	45 Pieces+

Sale Detail: 40% OFF 02 days left
 Enjoy fast refund service if your first order exceeds Promised Dispatch Date.
New Buyer Coupon Pack
\$64 OFF DHcoupon \$60 OFF This Store Only \$4 OFF [Claim](#)
 Per \$100 Save \$5
 1* Order **Store Coupon Save \$2**

^Figure 2

abercrombie kids boys girls jeans sale purpose

last day! buy one, get one 50% off almost everything + \$25 off \$99+ 1 free shipping over \$99 [shop boys](#) [shop girls](#)

girls | clearance | tops | t-shirts & tanks



Top Rated
oversized barbie graphic tee
 \$27.99
 buy one get one 50% off
 Pay in 4 interest-free payments on orders between \$30 - \$1,500 with **Klarna** or **PayPal**
 ★★★★★ 4.9 (102)

Color: Dark Grey

284 people are currently viewing

Size: [Size Guide](#)

5/6	7/8	9/10
11/12	13/14	15/16
17/18		

Customer says it fits: [True to size](#), [Fit as expected](#)

Size Not Available? [Shop Similar Items](#)

^Figure 3

Mention of Keith Haring but not Haring's Art

elic

NEW ARRIVALS ART BOOKS HOME KITCHEN FASHION KIDS WISHLIST & GIFT REGISTRY



^Figure 4

Keith Haring by Tiggy Ticehurst

\$650.00

Color:

ASSORTED

Size:

OS

Quantity:

MESON ART

WABI SABI WALL ART PLASTER ART TEXTURE PAINTING COLORFUL PAINTINGS POP ART CONTEMPORARY MI FOR DESIGNER ARTISTS ABOUT



KEITH HARING STYLE PAINTING #KS006

★★★★★ (4)

🏠 2 sold in last 65 hours

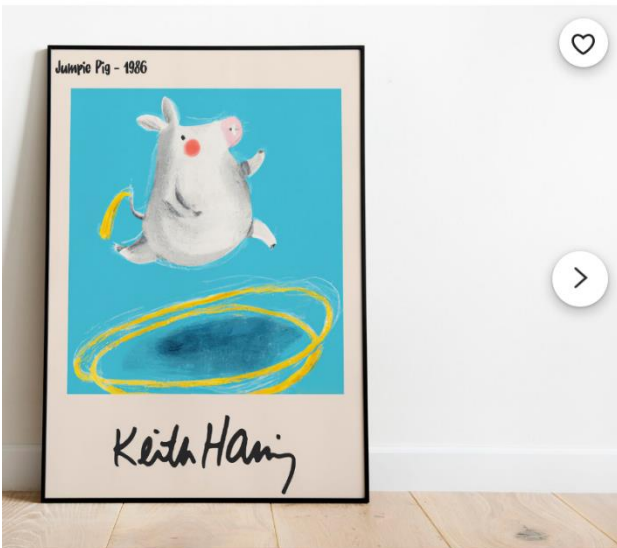
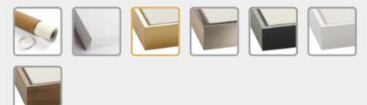
\$494

Big Winter Sale on Now! Shop 25% off storewide! (Note: Automatic discount on checkout)

Size: 24"x 24"/ 61x 61 CM

24"x 24"/ 61x 61 CM

Rolled Canvas/Frameless/Framed: Stretch + Gold Frame



^Figure 6

\$9.11+

Keith haring Poster | Keith haring | famous art print | Minimalist Poster | Pop Art Poster | Summer Prints | Summer Poster

UniqueWarehousez ★★★★★

✓ Arrives soon! Get it by Apr 17-22 if you order today

Size *

Select an option

Quantity

1

Add to cart

Item details

^Figure 5

I found all of these examples quite interesting; in the “No Mention of Keith Haring and not Haring’s Art” group, I can see how the battery with crossbones hoodie (Figure 1) came up in the google results. The design has a graffiti or spray paint aesthetic which is related to Haring,

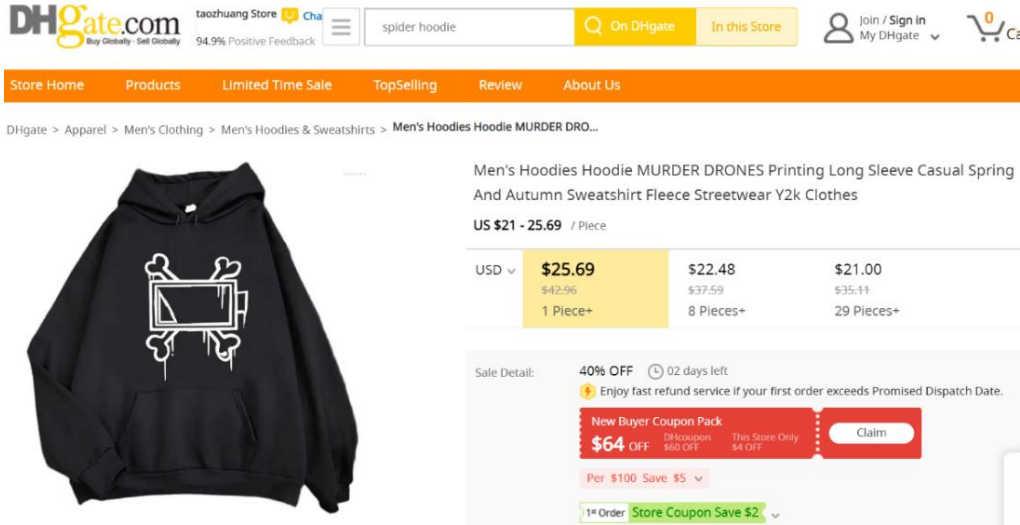


Figure 1

however, I do not know where the check engine t-shirt (Figure 2) and popular culture, Abercrombie & Fitch t-shirt (Figure 3) listings came from.



Figure 2

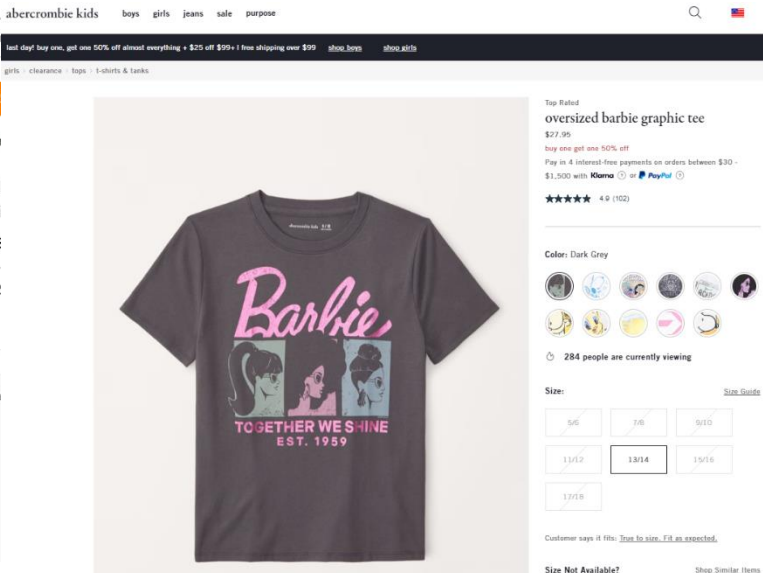


Figure 3

Then in the “Mention of Keith Haring but not Haring’s Art” section there are two pieces that state that they are Keith Haring inspired but were made by other artists (Figures 4 & 5) which was quite odd.

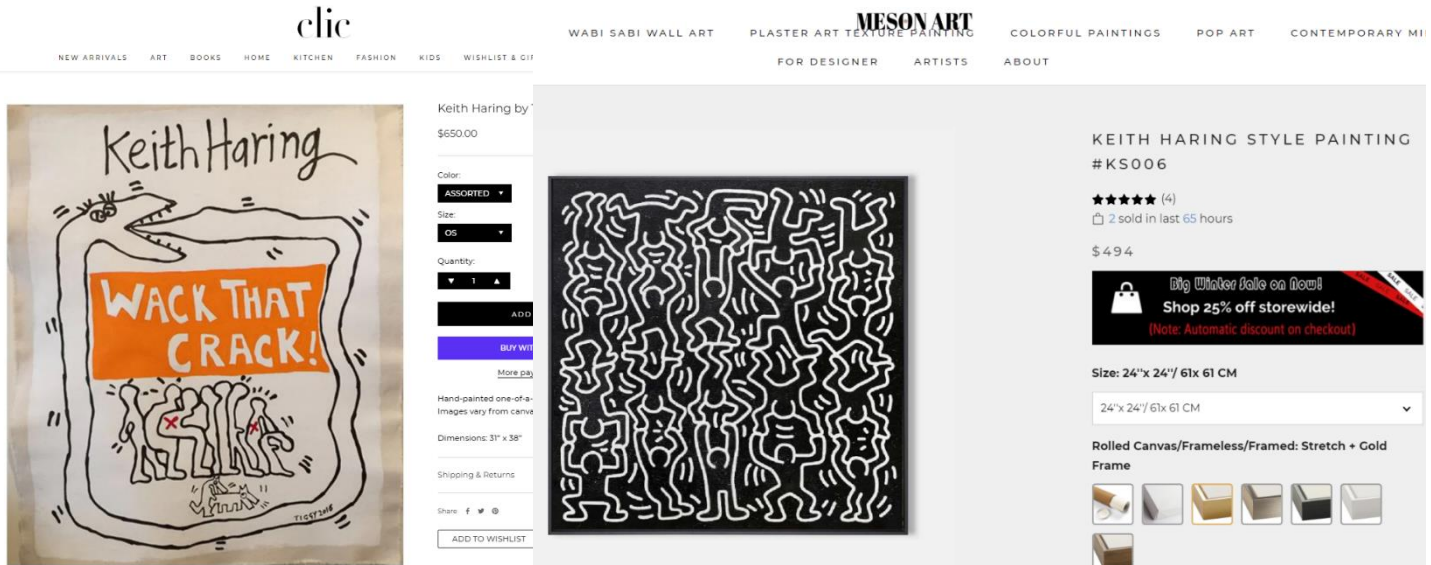


Figure 4

Figure 5

I understand that they came up in the results because both have “Keith Haring” in their listing titles, however the fact that they are so similar to Haring’s style and have such huge price tags (\$650 and \$494) feels very deceptive. I can see someone with an untrained eye purchasing these believing that they are getting at least a reproduction of a genuine Keith Haring piece but are in fact getting art that was made by other people. This is another avenue that can be explored in

further study: who is making these deceptively similar pieces and are they doing it with Haring’s morals in mind? Then, there’s the “Jumpie Pig” print (Figure 6).

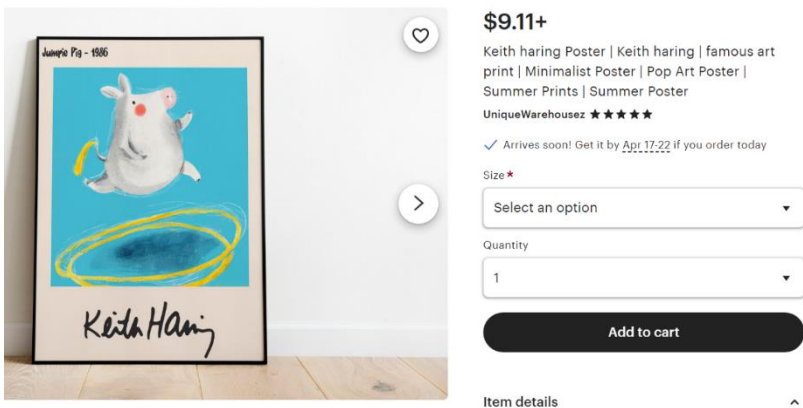


Figure 6

I could not find any evidence that Keith Haring made this piece or anything similar to its children's book, illustration style at any point in his career. Furthermore "Jumpie Pig" is presented with the date 1986 and a copy of Keith Haring's signature, which is also very deceptive. Once again, I can see an average person being tricked by this listing and the seller seems to only be taking advantage of Keith Haring's name and notoriety just to sell something.

Finally, there were 5 listings from 2 different websites wherein the price varied; one site was an art auctioning platform which does not provide a set market price and the other site's prices depended on the size of the print you wished to purchase. Perhaps further research can investigate auction websites and final auction prices to see how much people are willing to pay for Haring's art. I excluded those 103 listings from thorough content analysis due to a lack of concrete information about what the product was, if it featured actual Haring art, and a definitive price. This left me with 631 listings to be thoroughly investigated.

I put all 734 of my links into a microsoft excel spreadsheet for easy access, organization, and analysis. I then opened each link and recorded the following information on another spreadsheet: (1) The retailer that was selling the product; (2) what the object for sale was (t-shirt, hat, jacket, etc.); (3) the original price of the product (I wanted to observe what someone believed they could sell the product for regardless of discounts); (4) what art piece of Keith Haring's was used (if there were 3 or more distinct, recognizable symbols, I deemed it had a "Variety"); (5) Keith Haring was credited for his own art, yes or no?; (6) there is mention of the LGBTQ+ community somewhere in the listing, yes or no?; (7) there is mention of AIDS somewhere in the listing, yes or no?; (8) the original retailer if applicable; and (9) how many times this listing was selected in my simple random sampling (spreadsheet sample pictured on the next page, Table 1).

<u>Retailer</u>	<u>Product Type</u>	<u>Original Price</u>	<u>Art Used</u>	<u>Credit to KH (Y/N)</u>	<u>Mention of LGBTQ+ (Y/N)</u>	<u>Mention of AIDS (Y/N)</u>	<u>Original Retailer</u>	<u># of Occurrences</u>
Limolin	1000-Piece Puzzle	14.95	Variety	Y	N	N	N/A	1

Table 1

This resulted in 179 unique product listings; 106 of them being 100% complete; and 73 missing at least some information, usually the price from secondhand websites. Those 73 also begged the questions how or if they should be analyzed but I ultimately decided to include them for the sake of recording the art that was on them and to see if there was a chance any resellers would mention more information about Haring’s identity than the original sellers. Furthermore, some of those websites were also general retail platforms including Amazon and Walmart, both of which are popular shopping sites for the general public. Even though some of the original retail prices were missing, I still wanted to take a look at the ones I did manage to gather (Table 2) and their descriptive statistics (Tables 3 & 4), both of which are pictured below.

3.96	8	10	12.99	13.95	14.95	14.99	14.99	15	17.90	17.90	17.99	18	18.50	19.99
20	23	23.99	24.15	24.90	24.90	24.90	24.90	24.90	24.95	24.99	25	26.89	27.90	28
29	29.90	30	30	32.90	34.99	35	35	35	36	39	39	39.95	39.99	39.99
40	40	40	44	44.99	45	45	48.49	49.99	50	50	50	50	54.99	57
57.97	58	59	59	59.90	60	60	63.17	68	68	70	79	79	79	79.50
80	80	83.25	91	100	110	110	110	110	119	120	120	128	159	159
159	159	159	159	159	166.50	173.99	219	229	250	259	275	327.72	689	849
2250														

Table 2

Mean	103.676
Standard Error	23.30593
Median	49.24
Mode	159
Standard Deviation	239.9492
Sample Variance	57575.61
Kurtosis	62.78505
Skewness	7.380361
Range	2246.04
Minimum	3.96
Maximum	2250
Sum	10989.66
Count	106

All prices (Table 3)

Mean	71.797
Standard Error	6.444176
Median	49.24
Mode	159
Standard Deviation	64.44176
Sample Variance	4152.74
Kurtosis	3.232361
Skewness	1.815446
Range	314.73
Minimum	12.99
Maximum	327.72
Sum	7179.7
Count	100

Excluding highest three and lowest three prices (Table 4)

The values I'll be discussing in relation to my argument are highlighted in orange. Firstly, the mean or the average price (in US dollars) of the products I gathered is about \$103.68 (Table 3). However, I thought this number may be skewed due to such a large difference between the minimum price value (\$3.96) and the maximum price value (\$2250) (Tables 2 & 3). Therefore, I did another calculation that eliminated the three highest prices as they were significantly higher than the other prices, and in the interest of balance, I also eliminated the lowest three prices (Table 2). This resulted in a mean or average price of about \$71.80 (Table 4) which I would argue is more accurate but is still quite a large price tag compared to the free art that Keith Haring was providing to the public.

After looking at each listing, I found that Keith Haring was credited for his art every time; I did not find a single listing that used his art without mentioning his name. Initially, this seemed like a good sign, as if his art is not being used without express permission from the Keith Haring Foundation, however I don't believe this is always the case. First of all, I searched "Keith Haring," practically guaranteeing that google would generate results that credited Keith Haring and likely skewing the results. Furthermore, the fact there are listings that credited Haring but

didn't actually use his art, seems to show that his name is useful for marketing and generating results regardless of whose art is on the product (Figures 1-6). As stated previously, there were 23 such results out of 734, therefore my data column (5) Keith Haring was credited for his own art, yes or no? did not turn out to be particularly useful especially when I had already separated those 23.

My main argument is that Keith Haring's name and art are being used to sell products without mentioning that he came from a marginalized group, therefore the data columns: (6) there is mention of the LGBTQ+ community somewhere in the listing, yes or no?; and (7) there is mention of AIDS somewhere in the listing, yes or no? are the most significant ones. Ultimately there ended up being 11 unique listings that mentioned the LGBTQ+ community (50 out of 734) and 8 unique listings (39 out of 734) that mentioned AIDS. The table (Tables 5A & 5B) on the next two pages show any and all listings that have a "Yes" for mention of LGBTQ+ and/or AIDS, resulting in only 14 unique products out of the 179 that were analyzed. That is a pitiful number of listings that pay homage to Keith Haring's identity and what he fought for. The 165 other products are appropriating his name to sell politically and socially neutral versions of his art on consumable products.

<u>Retailer</u>	<u>Product Type</u>	<u>Original Price</u>	<u>Art Used</u>	<u>Credit to KH (Y/N)</u>	<u>Mention of LGBTQ+ (Y/N)</u>	<u>Mention of AIDS(Y/N)</u>	<u>Original Retailer</u>	<u># of Occurrences</u>
Tom Of Finland Store C/O CultureEdit	Pullover Hoodie	59	Dancing Figures	Y	Y	Y	N/A	1
Amazon	Hat		Dancing Figures	Y	Y	Y	Ripple Junction	2
Amazon	Hat		Dancing Figures	Y	Y	Y	The Keith Haring Store	3
Amazon	Pullover Hoodie		Figures Holding Heart	Y	Y	Y	Ripple Junction	5
Walmart	Book		Illustration of Haring Himself	Y	Y	Y		2
Human Rights Campaign	T Shirt	30	National Coming Out Day	Y	Y	N	N/A	13
Abercrombie & Fitch	Sweatshirt	39.95	Dancing Heart Figure	Y	Y	N	N/A	8
Abercrombie & Fitch	T Shirt	40	Dancing Figures	Y	Y	N	N/A	1

Table 5A

Abercrombie & Fitch	Sweatshirt	80	Dancing Barking Dogs	Y	Y	N	N/A	24
Macy's	T Shirt		Photographs of Haring Himself	Y	Y	N	Hugo Boss	1
Macy's	T Shirt		Dancing Figures	Y	Y	N	Hugo Boss	1
Rhinoshield	Smart Phone Case	39.99	Dancing Figures	Y	N	Y	N/A	15
Rhinoshield	Smart Phone Case	39.99	Variety	Y	N	Y	N/A	1
The Skateroom	Skateboard Deck	250	Figures Holding Heart	Y	N	Y	N/A	1

Table 5B

Conclusion

The appropriation and commodification of Keith Haring's art was something I had heard about on the internet and generally agreed was happening but had no basis to expand upon it. While my paper is nowhere near the whole truth of how or why this is happening, there is some damning evidence and patterns that indicate that it is indeed happening. I remember beginning this investigation, looking at listings that made absolutely no mention of Haring's identity and wishing that other people could learn what I had been able to learn about him. Finding the ACT UP campaign's ideal listing put everything I was thinking into an excellent visual example that I could compare other products to. The ACT UP t-shirt is explicitly encouraging people to speak

up about AIDS, and the description explicitly tells the viewer that profits go toward funding the fight against AIDS. This helped to define a standard I wanted to hold all the other listings in order to show how Keith Haring's art was being displaced to sell products.

Some may ask why not just put the original, true graffiti on canvases and products to be sold? Well, they tried. In the 1970s and 80s, "adults" and "galleried and commercial art worlds" attempted to redirect the creative energy of graffiti writers into more socially acceptable artistic ventures (Austin, 2001, pg. 186-187). However, the open-air, communal, public qualities of graffiti resisted being contained by the four walls of a gallery, the four corners of the canvas, or even the image of a single artist. If there was anything Keith Haring and those who spoke of him made abundantly clear: Keith Haring's art, graffiti, creativity, was not about him. Yes, it came from him and spoke on issues he personally cared about, but it was about contributing to the public, to the greater good, not about making sales. Haring's art was free for everyone to love. Our capitalist society took advantage of his generosity to hide his art behind paywalls and sell it back to the very people he had made it for. Herein lies the problem with commodification of graffiti. Its rebellious, anti-establishment, public nature makes it impossible to turn graffiti, true graffiti, into a marketable product. Hence why Haring's original art had to be reduced to just his dancing figures, barking dogs, radiant babies; a product with neutral figures on them is much easier to sell to a neutral than one that explicitly states "Silence = Death."



As a queer person, I also feel a very strong personal connection to the erasure of Keith Haring's identity. The AIDS crisis is an often-forgotten piece of American History as its characterized as "queer history" and thereby didn't affect as many people as it could have. However, as Schulman pointed out, over 80,000 people have died from AIDS as of 2008 and during the 80s, enough queer people died of AIDS that the queer identity of the East Village was completely written over. Since then, efforts to erase queer people have not let up. Homophobes still harass queer people today, and some states have gone so far as to pass the "don't say gay" bills which prevent queerness being discussed in schools and books. It feels as if history is repeating itself.

On top of that, the acceptance of queer people seems to only go so far as to profit off us. There is simply another stream of revenue wherein companies can make money: by selling something with a pride flag slapped onto it. Or in this case, slapping a queer artist's designs onto products to appeal to both queer and homophobes and profit off both sides. Further research on this subject could include other artists besides Keith Haring such as the thousands Schulman knew or more specifically Jean-Michel Basquiat. Basquiat and Haring are often mentioned in the same breath when talking about graffiti art from the 1980s and their art is being sold and marketed in a very similar way. One could argue the appropriation of Basquiat's art is even more offensive than Haring's as Basquiat had the more complex intersectionality of being Black on top of being queer and a graffiti artist. That is why I decided to focus strictly Keith Haring, I'm not Black and would therefore not be comfortable or qualified to delve as deep as a Black person with firsthand knowledge of racism and Black cultural appropriation. I have a much stronger connection to Keith Haring as a queer person in the field of art history and wanted to find a way to contribute to the true image of who he was, not the commodified version.

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