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**KEITH HARING:  
HEAVEN AND HELL  
THROUGH APRIL 18, 2015**



(New York, NY)— Skarstedt's exhibition of work by American artist Keith Haring, at their Chelsea gallery, uniquely presents 5 major works on canvas, all at a monumental scale and dating from 1984-1985. Exposing a lesser-known side to the iconic artist, *Keith Haring: Heaven and Hell* will be on view at Skarstedt (550 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street) through April 18, 2015.

The exhibition's title, *Heaven and Hell*, recalls William Blake's 18<sup>th</sup> century poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—a study in opposites of good and evil, angels and devils. As William Blake wrote, "Without contraries is no progression."<sup>1</sup> Haring similarly examined the duality between two sides of

contemporary life in his 1984-1985 paintings. The apparent antagonism and struggle between the figures is one of the key features of Haring's art.

Haring's work is replete with paradoxical themes: life and death; religion and sexuality; innocence and experience; heaven and hell; good and evil. Haring often cited two veritable embodiments of such juxtaposition, Dante's *Inferno* and Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1503-1504, as two of the most profound influences on his art. *Untitled (May 29, 1984)* can even be read as a pared down, Pop Art version of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's detailed canvases, drawing comparisons to *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, 1559. David Galloway wrote, "The key to Haring's work is not to be found in 'chapters' or in oppositions, but precisely in the mingling, the marriage of innocence and experience, good and evil, heaven, and hell."<sup>2</sup> Haring's deep black lines do more to complicate this dichotomy than demarcate.

Best known for his cartoonish shapes and oversized red hearts, his more aggressive and at times provocative and sexually explicit imagery is often under-recognized. Incorporating seemingly childlike or naïve shapes, Haring's art is more than just dancing figures, with much of his work exploring deeper societal issues and demonstrating a remarkable grasp of the ambiguities of his generation.

Haring's work strikes a delicate balance between heavy and light, playful and serious—a balance intrinsic not only to his art, but to his life. Creating visual puzzles of iconography from the mythological to the mundane, Haring's oeuvre draws on the influence of street art, with a visual language including his own alphabet of symbols and shapes.

With a strong background in social activism, Haring's canvases respond to the street culture so integral to his artistic development, while making political statements still poignant to this day. Thirty years after these works were created, Haring's paintings seem to anticipate the future with a prescient relevance to today's society.

### About Keith Haring:

Keith Haring was born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania in 1958. He moved to New York City in 1976 to study at the School of Visual Arts, where he developed his trademark graffiti-inspired style. During the 1980's, he found a space for expression in the New York subway, where he created marker drawings on walls and advertisements. These drawings would eventually evolve into paintings, large-scale murals, and varied art objects in which a myriad of interlocking cartoon-style figures would interact. Haring's involvement in the New York club culture of the 1970's and 1980's provided him with a variety of motifs and imagery from contemporary life to incorporate into his bold, colorful works. Haring further blended the boundaries between high and low art when he opened The Pop Shop, where he sold multiple products with what became popular motifs. After being diagnosed with AIDS in the latter part of the 1980's, the political element to Haring's work strengthened as a means to promote awareness about the disease.

Before his death in 1990, Keith Haring exhibited his work extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Recent solo exhibitions were held at the de Young Museum in San Francisco in 2014, the Brooklyn Museum in 2012, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon, France in 2008, and the Fundación Caixa Galicia in Ferrol, Spain in 2007. He also had exhibitions in major institutions including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, and the Kunsthalle in Cologne. After ten years of research, Rizzoli published a comprehensive monograph of Haring's work in 2008, which is closely based on the concept the artist himself wanted to publish before his death.

Please join the conversation with Skarstedt on Instagram (@skarstedtgallery) via the hashtags #SkarstedtChelsea #Skarstedt #KeithHaring #HeavenAndHell

Image Credit: Keith Haring, *Untitled (May 29, 1984)*, 1984. Acrylic on canvas. 94 x 94 inches. 238.8 x 238.8 cm. © Keith Haring Foundation. Courtesy Skarstedt New York.

<sup>1</sup> *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790-1793.

<sup>2</sup> *Keith Haring: Heaven and Hell*, 2002, 52.

## About Skarstedt:



20 East 79th Street  
New York NY 10075



550 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
New York NY 10011



23 Old Bond Street  
London W1S 4PZ

Skarstedt (20 E. 79<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY) was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by Contemporary European and American artists that had become the core of his specialty in Sweden and New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The New York gallery's program focuses on artists of the late Twentieth Century whose work explores concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. Skarstedt's unique relationship with artists allows it to present exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Skarstedt opened its London space at 23 Old Bond Street in 2012 with the inaugural exhibition *Andy Warhol: The American Indian*. Skarstedt London presents exhibitions and publications devoted to the gallery's established area of expertise while also seeking to evolve and expand its focus. Skarstedt is committed to sharing both its aesthetic perspective and philosophical approach through high-quality exhibitions and collaborations with top international museums and private collections.

Skarstedt opened its Chelsea space at 550 W. 21<sup>st</sup> Street in May 2014 with the inaugural exhibition *Klein and Warhol: Fire and Oxidation Paintings*, adding to the gallery's existing locations on New York's Upper East Side and in London. The additional gallery space enables Skarstedt to expand on its core program of museum-quality, historically researched exhibitions from modern and contemporary masters.

The gallery works with the following artists and artists' estates: Francis Bacon, John Baldessari, Georg Baselitz, George Condo, Carroll Dunham, Eric Fischl, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Lucio Fontana, Günther Förg, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Yves Klein, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine, Robert Mapplethorpe, Juan Muñoz, Cady Noland, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, David Salle, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel, Andy Warhol, Franz West, and Christopher Wool.

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