



Haring, above, "wanted his art to be accessible to the world, not just for some elite group," says painter friend Kenny Scharf.

KEITH HARING, THE BAD BOY MASTER OF WRIGGLY URBAN ART, LEAVES A LEGACY OF COURAGE AND HEART

TRIBUTE

Crawling babies that emit a radiant glow. Barking dogs with alligator jaws. Flying saucers hovering above faceless humans. When Keith Haring first drew his strange chalk hieroglyphics in New York City subway stations in the early 1980s, he was arrested for defacing public property. By the time of his death from AIDS-related complications on Feb. 16, his cartoonlike images had made the 31-year-old Haring one of the most widely known pop artists in the world. "Thousands of kids are running around in his T-shirts," says his friend, perennial pop guru Timothy Leary. "That's quite a tribute to his art."

For many critics, Haring's success was more a tribute to his brilliant salesmanship than to art, but, even as his life came to a close, Keith was not content with his

accomplishments. "The hardest thing is just knowing that there's so much more stuff to do," he said last summer. "I'm so scared that one day I'll wake up and I won't be able to do it."

He had reached the top with an express-train speed typical of the '80s art market. Less than a decade after he sketched his first figure on the black paper that covers canceled subway ads, Haring was selling his work for as much as \$350,000, decorating the hippest clubs and partying with the heartiest. "He was definitely the quintessential 1980s artist," says fellow painter and close friend Kenny Scharf. "He started with nothing but a lot of ideas, devised a plan of getting his message out into the world and was relentless until he succeeded."

Haring battled AIDS with the same

kind of energy, talking openly about his illness and meeting with groups of children to teach them about the disease. Until two weeks before his death, Haring continued to work—creating huge sculptures for playgrounds and public spaces, painting murals for inner-city walls and hospital wards, and teaching art to disadvantaged youths. "I don't think there's much more you can do but pass stuff on to the next batch of humans," says Haring's pal actor Howard Hesseman. "I think he was trying to say, 'Hey, art is fun.'"

"Even with his massive success, Keith still came out and said, 'I have AIDS, I'm gay,'" says his friend Madonna. "He didn't worry if it was going to jeopardize his career, he just went with it. He gave all people courage to be strong and to stare death in the face." □