



# KEITH HARING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

**NOVEMBER 8 – DECEMBER 21**  
**4 – 40 44TH DRIVE, ON THE EAST RIVER, LONG ISLAND CITY**

*The Ten Commandments*, one of Keith Haring's most powerful series of paintings, will be presented at Deitch Studios, Long Island City, from November 8 – December 21, 2008. The works portray the Ten Commandments from Haring's point of view, combining a traditional Biblical interpretation with the artist's liberating spirit and apocalyptic vision. *The Ten Commandments* were painted for Haring's first solo museum show, a 1985 exhibition at the CAPC, Bordeaux, a reconverted wool warehouse with a span of twenty-five foot high archways supporting the roof. Thinking about how to best use the space, known as "the nave," Haring had the inspiration to order ten tablet shaped canvases to fit within the arches. While on the dance floor at the Paradise Garage the day before leaving for Bordeaux, he had a vision to paint *The Ten Commandments*.

Haring did not remember all of The Ten Commandments, so he consulted a Bible when he arrived in Bordeaux. He decided to interpret some of the commandments metaphorically rather than literally. For others, like "Thou Shalt Not Steal," he decided to portray the antithesis, in that case showing someone stealing as an example of what not to do. Haring found some of the commandments, like "honor the Sabbath," to lend themselves to a more abstract interpretation. Haring used the color red, which he viewed as a representation of power, to link the imagery through the ten panels. Haring also liked the color red's association with the devil, fire, hell and stop signs.

Keith Haring is one of the few vanguard artists of recent generations to take on the tradition of large religious paintings that were installed in churches and public buildings. Haring attended a Christian camp as a youngster in Kutztown, Pennsylvania and went through an Evangelical phase before finding his focus as an artist in his late teens. He channeled his youthful religious fervor into his belief in personal liberation and social justice, creating his own apocalyptic theology. His works like the Ten Commandments are impassioned visual sermons in addition to being riveting images.

This is the first time that *The Ten Commandments* have been exhibited in the United States. Their twenty-five foot height requires a large cathedral-like exhibition space. Twenty-three years after their creation, *The Ten Commandments* will finally be able to be shown in New York in the large gallery at Deitch Studios.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, another major Haring work from 1984 that has never before been exhibited in the United States, will be installed in the street side gallery at Deitch Studios. This 26'2" x 36'8" painting was created as a curtain for the ballet *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, choreographed by Roland Petit for the Ballet National de Marseilles. The ballet was based on the poem of the same title by William Blake, written between 1790 and 1793.

*The Ten Commandments* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are being exhibited as part of a year of special exhibitions and projects commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Keith Haring's birth in 1958. Deitch Projects also helped to sponsor the re-creation of Haring's celebrated 1982 mural at the corner of Houston Street and Bowery in collaboration with the Estate of Keith Haring and Goldman Properties. *The Ten Commandments* exhibition also coincides with the release of *Keith Haring*, a major book on the artist edited by Jeffrey Deitch, Suzanne Geiss and Julia Gruen and published by Rizzoli. The book reproduces Haring's major works, documents his public projects, and features the extraordinary photographs of Tseng Kwong Chi, who created a visual archive of Haring's career.

Deitch Projects is the exclusive representative of the Estate of Keith Haring.

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