

Kenny Scharf & Keith Haring K! K!

Jun 6, 2026 — May 16, 2027 | Nakamura Keith Haring Collection,
Hokuto, Japan

THE STORY

In 1978, two twenty-year-olds arrived in New York City and enrolled at the School of Visual Arts. Kenny Scharf had come from California. Keith Haring from Pennsylvania. They met, became close friends, and within a few years were central figures in one of the most explosive art scenes the city had ever produced.

The East Village in the early 1980s was a place where art had escaped the gallery and taken to the streets. Subway stations, building walls, downtown clubs — every surface was fair game. Scharf and Haring, alongside Jean-Michel Basquiat and a constellation of artists, musicians, and performers, blurred every line between high art and street culture, between fine art and popular culture. They didn't just document that moment. They made it.

'K! K!' is the first exhibition to closely examine the significance of Scharf and Haring's relationship — the collaborative projects, the shared studios, the mutual influence that shaped both their practices. It also brings Scharf's fifty-year body of work to audiences in Japan in unprecedented depth and on his own terms.

WHAT'S IN THE SHOW

The exhibition moves through three sections. The first centers on Haring, placing early and late works from the museum's collection in direct dialogue, tracing the philosophy that ran through his practice from the subway to the end of his life. The second brings Scharf and Haring together: paintings, sculptures, and collaborative projects that reveal how deeply each shaped the other. The third is Scharf's — recent paintings and sculptures, including new work made for this exhibition, alongside one of his most celebrated installations.

COSMIC CAVERN

Scharf's Cosmic Cavern has been a living, evolving work since he first presented it in 1981 — the year he and Haring shared a studio. Objects fill every surface of a darkened room and blaze to life under black light: you don't look at it so much as fall into it. Reconfigured especially for this exhibition, it remains one of the most iconic works in Scharf's oeuvre.

RESTLESS — KEITH HARING IN BRAZIL (Documentary Film, Japanese Premiere)

On view for the first time in Japan, 'Restless — Keith Haring in Brazil' (2013) follows Haring's deep and unexpected connection to a small fishing village in Bahia, where he made murals and floor works across several visits. It was Scharf who first brought him there, in 1984. Years later, Scharf returned to restore those works. The film captures an intimate side of both artists that the paintings alone cannot — and asks quietly what it means to keep faith with a friendship across time.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS & COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Drawing on Scharf's personal archive and the museum's unparalleled Haring collection, 'K! K!' also presents photographs, original merchandise, and documentation of collaborative projects — much of it never before exhibited publicly.