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Keith Haring: Before Street Art Had a Name

Piper | Poet · Curated by Gil Vazquez · Opening reception Thursday, November 12, 2026, 6–9 pm

NEW YORK — October 29, 2026 — Piper | Poet will open Keith Haring: Before Street Art Had a Name, an exhibition of the artist's subway drawings curated by Gil Vazquez. The opening reception is Thursday, November 12, 2026, from 6 to 9 pm at the gallery, 458 West Broadway.

Between 1980 and 1985, Keith Haring drew in white chalk on the matte black paper covering unused advertising panels in New York subway stations. The drawings were quick and simple by necessity, made between trains, in public. They were unsigned and free. Haring called the subway his laboratory. Much of the vocabulary later recognized around the world took shape there: the radiant baby, the barking dog, the flying saucer. His audience was people who had not set out to look at art. For New Yorkers who did not go to museums, he made the subway into one.

The work was fugitive by design. Chalk smudged, and new advertisements covered the panels. The photographer Tseng Kwong Chi documented many of the drawings in place. A selection appeared in the 1984 book Art in Transit.

The exhibition puts forward Vazquez's reading of the drawings as the beginning of street art as it came to be understood. They were pictures rather than lettering, made for a general public, recognized by style rather than a signature, and moved between the street and the gallery. Graffiti writers had already claimed the trains in the 1970s with their names. Haring, working alongside that culture, offered images. The name for what he was doing came later.

Opening Reception

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Piper | Poet, 458 West Broadway, New York

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About Piper | Poet

Piper | Poet is a gallery at 458 West Broadway in New York.

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