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Kenny Scharf & Keith Haring: K! K!

A Historic Reunion of Two Icons of Downtown New York

Opening June 6, 2026 — Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, Yamanashi, Japan

HOKUTO, YAMANASHI, JAPAN — The Nakamura Keith Haring Collection announces Kenny Scharf & Keith Haring: K! K!, opening June 6, 2026 and running through May 16, 2027. This marks the first museum exhibition to reunite Kenny Scharf and Keith Haring since Haring's death in 1990 — and the first time Scharf's work has been presented in depth at a museum in Japan. Scharf himself co-organized the show, directly shaping its concept and structure.

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.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

KENNY SCHARF (b. 1958, California)

A defining figure of the 1980s New York art world, Kenny Scharf emerged alongside Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat and has been making vital, wildly inventive work ever since. Drawing on American popular culture, science fiction, and the visual language of cartoons, his practice spans painting, sculpture, video, installation, and performance — all of it driven by vivid color, organic form, and a humor that never loses its edge. He has also been a committed environmentalist for decades, and that urgency runs through his work. His career spans fifty years and remains as vital as ever. kennyscharf.com

KEITH HARING (1958–1990)

Keith Haring started drawing on the blank black paper of unused advertising panels in the New York City subway in the early 1980s — and almost immediately, people stopped to watch. His bold, graphic, unmistakable imagery carried messages about love, death, sexuality, and political resistance, and he became one of the most recognized artists of his generation. In 1986 he opened the Pop Shop, selling merchandise as a deliberate extension of his belief that art belonged to everyone. Diagnosed with AIDS in 1988, he established the Keith Haring Foundation the following year and worked without pause until his death at 31 in 1990.

ABOUT THE NAKAMURA KEITH HARING COLLECTION

The Nakamura Keith Haring Collection opened in 2007 at the foot of the Yatsugatake Mountains in Kobuchizawa, Yamanashi Prefecture — and it remains the world's only museum dedicated exclusively to Keith Haring, recognized by the Keith Haring Foundation. The collection, assembled by founder Kazuo Nakamura since the 1980s, comprises approximately 1,000 works and archival items. The museum itself, designed by architect Atsushi Kitagawara, moves visitors from darkness into light — a deliberate echo of Haring's life and work.

The museum has always understood itself as more than a collection. It operates as an ongoing platform for the causes Haring spent his life championing: HIV/AIDS awareness, LGBTQ+ inclusion, sustainability, peace, and environmental realities.

PRESS PREVIEW — JUNE 5, 2026

A press tour will be held on Friday, June 5 — the day before the public opening. Journalists are invited to join a shuttle bus departing from Shinjuku, Tokyo, with light refreshments served en route. Kenny Scharf will be present throughout the day and available for individual interviews by reservation.

Schedule:

- 8:45–9:00 Meetup near Shinjuku Station (Specific details to follow)
- 12:30–1:15 Exhibition tour by curator
- 1:15–1:45 Remarks from Kenny Scharf and Director Ryo Nakamura
- 1:45–2:15 Gallery talk with Kenny Scharf
- 2:15–2:45 Reserved press interviews / free viewing / photography

RSVP by Tuesday, May 26, 2026 (noon JST) to pr_nkhc@keith.jp. Journalists not using the shuttle bus should arrive at the museum independently by 12:30 PM.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Dates: June 6, 2026 – May 16, 2027

Venue: Nakamura Keith Haring Collection, 10249-7 Kobuchizawa-machi, Hokuto-shi, Yamanashi 408-0044, Japan

Hours: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (last admission 4:30 PM). Closed Wednesdays (except national holidays), December 31, and January 1.

Admission: Adults ¥1,500 | Students (16+) ¥800 | Visitors with disabilities ¥600 | Under 15 Free

Tickets: Available at the museum reception only

Organized by: Nakamura Keith Haring Collection

Supported by: Yamanashi Prefecture, Yamanashi Prefectural Board of Education, Hokuto City, Hokuto City Board of Education

In cooperation with: Kenny Scharf Studio, The Keith Haring Foundation, Nanzuka, Sogetsu Foundation

Exhibition Page: <https://www.nakamura-haring.com/en/exhibition/15650/>

Website: www.nakamura-haring.com/en

Instagram: [@nakamurakeithharingcollection](https://www.instagram.com/nakamurakeithharingcollection)

X (Twitter): [@nakamura_haring](https://twitter.com/nakamura_haring)

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