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Art Gallery Shows to See in February

By Andrew Russeth

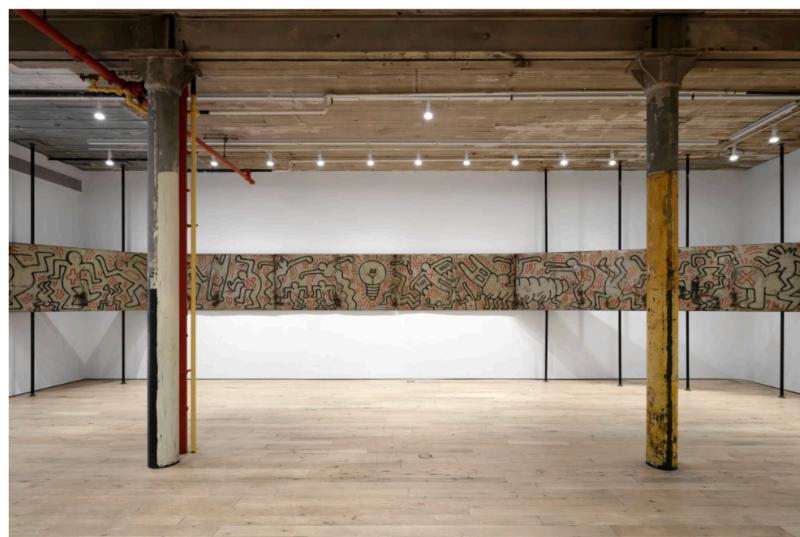
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This week in Newly Reviewed, Andrew Russeth covers Keith Haring's rollicking murals, John Duff's gritty inventiveness and a group show focused on the human body.

CHINATOWN

Keith Haring

Through Feb. 7. Martos Gallery, 41 Elizabeth Street; 212-560-0670, martosgallery.com.



Installation view of “Keith Haring: FDR Drive Mural.” via Martos Gallery; Photo by Steven Probert

In a time of ostentatious public art — Thomas Heatherwick’s vile [“Vessel,”](#) Anish Kapoor’s more endearing [“beans”](#) — Keith Haring’s approach represents a refreshing tonic. Working quickly and often spontaneously, he [chalked](#) drawings in New York subway stations and [painted](#) walls around the world, intent on delight.

MARTOS GALLERY

In 1984, he sprayed a rollicking scene on 30 metal panels affixed to a fence in a Manhattan park along the East River, a roughly 300-foot-long mural visible from cars on the nearby Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive; 14 are now installed in a dazzler at the Martos Gallery.

Outlined in black, more than 50 of Haring's trademark cartoon humans dance, flip, jump and fly (some sport wings, others pregnant bellies), accompanied by the odd dog, caterpillar or lightbulb. Everyone is going wild, and crisp red lines and squiggles punctuate their fluid movements. One figure is labeled "T.K.C.": the photographer [Tseng Kwong Chi](#), who documented many of Haring's pursuits. (Tseng died in 1990, at [39](#), a few weeks after Haring did, [at 31](#), both of AIDS-related illnesses.)

Haring made far more intricate works, but this punchy party seems apt for drivers cruising or crawling along the highway near East 91st Street (a stretch of road that would still benefit from charismatic art).

Inside a gallery today, the joyous picture registers also as a moving artifact. Removed in 1985 and now dispersed, its panels are scrapped and bear graffiti. "Angel + Lisa 104 St," one addition reads. (Where are they now?) The critic and curator Bob Nickas notes in an [accompanying essay](#) that, after Haring saw the weathered work in 1989, he wrote in his [journal](#) that it was "in really bad shape, but somehow that makes it look even better."

It's a convivial artwork about the pleasures of being together in public, and so it would be ideal if a museum would snap up these panels and reunite them with their peers.