

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Joan Gannij: Three Poems

Joan Gannij · Thursday, August 15th, 2024

Haring's Back

Keith Haring's back in the building

Sly street sleuth/ who took on the Stedelijk ceiling

Greedy for space/ that he can't help stealing.....

An urban Michelangelo/ with his Sistine chapel

Haring spilled ink for the pristine rabble

On Downtown streets/ of the Big Bad Apple

With a posse a poppers

Lookin out for coppers

In the subways On the buses.

People asked what all the fuss was

He took advantage—went on a rampage

Shiny baby / Back of his hoodie

No turf safe—and!! Why shoulddy?

Around the clock, On every block

Dodgin piggies like a hawk

With his paint can/ and his chalk

His work could soothe/ and sometimes shock.....

Sometimes he got cuffed,

A little bit roughed

15 minutza fame/ was not enough

He had a vision/ to be showed

But didn't include

That he'd grow old

Art outlaw on the slink

An epidemic of spitting ink

And don't y'all find it thrilling

We got Haring back in that building!

*

Anarchy from a paint can

Instead of bombs there were

more benign explosions

Erupting at peak hours in subway stations

And other public thoroughfares

Throughout NY City 1984

This highly combustible kamikaze

movement of straat kunst was igniting

Led by bespectacled Keith Haring and his

tribe of merry anarchists

Enflaming enraging, ultimately informing

the engaged and the ignorant about

sex, drugs, apartheid and AIDS,

not necessarily in that order

Undercover, underground

Methodically marking their turf

They emerged, the images stayed.

And though Haring left the playground too soon.

He clearly made his mark. Indelibly. Eternal Ink.

*

Neon Haring

It was Joe's first visit to NYC and he was determined that I show him a good time.

Not the usual stuff like

the Empire State Building or

the World Trade Center,

We didn't want to pay a price to

look down on my city when

we could look up for free on any corner

uptown or downtown. East side or west.

We followed the waterfront in that spring of '84.

From the low numbers to Alphabet City

We didn't have the bread or the threads

to drop in at Odeon, Indochine or

the other hip watering holes that Andy

and his crowd had taken over.

We grabbed hot dogs on the run, ate Piroski at

Yonah Schimmel's, noodles at the hole

in the wall in Chinatown.

One night we got into CBGB's after I distracted the doorman with a magic trick that involved matches

and a banana.

We were packing Cuervo Gold and the Butthole surfers—or was it Thelonious Monster?—were destroying the decibels, so we blew the joint and wandered

to a nearby playground

Perching ourselves on the top rung

of the jungle gym.

in a tranquil tequila haze.

Out of nowhere the 2am silence got broken

As a skinny guy in a hoodie, black jeans and Chucks

raced by like his hair was on fire.

Followed by two of NY's so-called finest,

Was that him? Could it be?

All we caught was a ghost with a paint can

in a neon reflection

from a silent storefront.

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