

November 08, 2008 - February 15, 2009
4-40 44th Drive, Long Island City

The Ten Commandments, one of Keith Haring's most powerful series of paintings, will be presented at Deitch Studios, Long Island City, from November 8, 2008 - February 15, 2009. The works portray the Ten Commandments from Haring's point of view, combining a traditional Biblical interpretation with the artist's liberating spirit and apocalyptic vision. The Ten Commandments were painted for Haring's first solo museum show, a 1985 exhibition at the CAPC, Bordeaux, a reconverted wool warehouse with a span of twenty-five foot high archways supporting the roof. Thinking about how to best use the space, known as "the nave," Haring had the inspiration to order ten tablet shaped canvases to fit within the arches. While on the dance floor at the Paradise Garage the day before leaving for Bordeaux, he had a vision to paint The Ten Commandments.

Haring did not remember all of The Ten Commandments, so he consulted a Bible when he arrived in Bordeaux. He decided to interpret some of the commandments metaphorically rather than literally. For others, like "Thou Shalt Not Steal," he decided to portray the antithesis, in that case showing someone stealing as an example of what not to do. Haring found some of the commandments, like "honor the Sabbath," to lend themselves to a more abstract interpretation. Haring used the color red, which he viewed as a representation of power, to link the imagery through the ten panels. Haring also liked the color red's association with the devil, fire, hell and stop signs.

This is the first time that The Ten Commandments have been exhibited in the United States. Their twenty-five foot height requires a large cathedral-like exhibition space. Twenty-three years after their creation, The Ten Commandments will finally be able to be shown in New York in the large gallery at Deitch Studios.

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