Understanding Keith Haring Through the World of Ancient Greek Revelry

Benjamin Ward '22

Keith Haring's simplistic yet charged figures have become instantly recognizable, even to those who are unfamiliar with the artist himself. His art is visible everywhere from major art institutions like the MoMA and the Guggenheim to massive retail stores like Urban Outfitters who sell sweatshirts with his designs.[1] In attempts to better understand these figures, connections have been drawn between Haring's forms and the world of archaic art. A host of archaic influences from Aztec art to Egyptian drawings have been identified in his work.[2] However, one area left surprisingly unmined is the world of ancient Greek art. This paper will explore the art of ancient Greece and the wealth of information that helps to better understand Haring's style.

Born in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, with a penchant for art, Haring quickly outgrew his life at home, getting into drugs and running with a crowd of what he described as "troublemakers."[3] In 1978, Haring moved to New York City and enrolled in the School of Visual Arts.[4] He first gained notoriety as a street artist, creating chalk drawings in empty subway advertisement slots in the winter of 1980.[5] It was in these drawings that Haring began to develop the archetypal figures that would define his artwork for years to come: the radiant baby, the dogs, the flying saucers, and his simplistic yet energetic humans.[6]

Within these images, there is one constant theme that permeates throughout. That is the theme of dance and movement. Haring's works, like Haring himself, are full of energy. It is rare to see a drawing or painting that does not contain images of people in motion and dancing together. This is not surprising as dance played an important part in Haring's own life. He was constantly listening to music and moving as he worked.[7] Just as essential to Haring's life were dance clubs such as Paradise Garage and Club 57. These places offered more than just a recreational activity for Haring – they became his community and his way of life.[8]

Similarly, dance permeated ancient Greek culture; it was used to teach, in funeral and military processions, and celebrations.[9] These rituals are documented and depicted most frequently on Greek vases created between 700-400 B.C.E. More specifically, it seems that in both depiction and context, it is the Dionysian rituals such as the Dithyramb, and symposiums that have the most similarities to Haring's work.

[1] "Keith Haring Hoodie Sweatshirt," Urban Outfitters, last accessed April 5, 2020, https://www.urbanoutfitters.com/shop/keith-haring-hoodie-sweatshirt

[2] "Keith Haring: New Wave Aztec," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, last accessed April 6, 2020, https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/keith-haring-new-wave-aztec; Keith Haring, Keith Haring Journals (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 48.

[3] John Gruen, Keith Haring The Authorized Biography (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 1, 18.

[4] Gruen, 32.

[5] Gruen, 67.

[6] Gruen, 65.

[7] Keith Haring 1978-1982 (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2010), 84.

[8] Deitch Projects, "Paradise Garage," Paradise Garage Catalogue, 2001, http://www.haring.com/!/selected_writing/paradise-garage#.XowWf9NKjGI.

[9] Lillian Lawler, "The Dance in Ancient Greece," The Classical Journal 42, No. 6 (1947): 344.

Dionysus, perhaps best known as the god of wine, is often called upon in festivals and times of revelry. This is the case in the Dithyramb, a wild choral dance performed in the name of Dionysus.[10] The god is also often invoked in symposiums, the male-dominated drinking parties.[11]

In Ancient Greek depictions of this revelry, the movement and sexuality show a connection to Haring's own artwork. Yet, the connection to the art and dance of ancient Greece goes beyond this low-hanging fruit as these images hold deeper meanings of community, divine inspiration, revelry versus control that are folly to ignore.[12] Just as it would be a mistake to view Haring's own images of dance as independent from the ethos of his life, it would also be a mistake to view the connection between images of revelry on Greek vases and Haring's art without looking at the rituals and customs within the Dionysian dances and symposiums that informed this imagery in relation to Haring's world of 1980's New York. It is the goal of this paper to not only show a connection between Haring's work in the early 1980's and Greek vase imagery of Dionysian rituals, but also to use these ancient Greek rituals of revelry, rebirth, and community to better understand Haring's own world of dance and art in 1980's New York. The foundation of this relationship lies in establishing a visual connection between depictions of Dionysian rituals on Greek vases and Haring's artworks. Once this is established, it is then possible to use Greek rituals to create a lens through which to view the world of Haring's art. For those familiar with Haring's work, the most obvious source of connection with Greek art is Haring's ceramic vases.

[10] Matthew C. Wellenbach, "The Iconography of Dionysiac Choroi: Dithyramb, Tragedy, and the Basel Krater," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 55 (2015): 75.

[11] Barbara Graziosi, Barbara Graziosi, Phiroze Vasunia, edt., The Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 276-280.

[12] Jane Harrison, Themis, A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 37.

1. Dithyrambic Vase Paintings and Haring's Art

Especially in composition, it is easy to see the similarities between Haring's vases and the ceramics of ancient Greece. Haring's 1983 vase (fig. 1) contains multiple levels of images; the largest section of images comes right before the bend of the neck of the vase with the second largest section of images directly beneath it. Geometric shapes and wavy lines divide the different levels of images. This is very similar to the archaic krater vase from the 700's B.C.E. (fig. 2) which also sports its largest level of images right before the curve up to the neck and divides its levels with geometric shapes and wavy lines. However, this connection comes as no shocking revelation. Haring himself comments on the creation of these vases saying, "The confrontation between the history of vase paintings and the contemporary approach of drawing with marker and the mixture of contemporary and ancient symbols produces an ironic mixture of opposites."[13] While not

Figure 1: Untitled Sculpture, 1983, Keith Haring Foundation

[13] "Untitled Vases, 1984," Keith Haring Foundation, last accessed April 6, 2020, http://www.haring.com/!/art-work/185.

Figure 2: Terracotta Krater, 750-735 B.C.E. Acc. 14.130.14 Metropolitan Museum of Art

groundbreaking, these vases nonetheless prove that Haring did not turn a blind eye to the art of the classical world and that he was open to dialogue and influence from this era.

A theme within Haring's art that deserves attention in relation to Greek vases are his dancing figures placed besides images of smiling faces. These images first seem to appear in Haring's work during the early 1980's and consist of a procession of dancing or acrobatic figures that are clearly in motion. These images are then either flanked or punctuated by faces with bulbous eyes at the end of the line of figures.[14] An excellent example of this is the now destroyed 1982 Houston and Bowery Street mural (fig. 3). On their own, the images of the dancing figures seem rather unrelated to the bulbous faces that accompany them. However, an interesting parallel can be found in the Kylix eye-cups of ancient Greece.

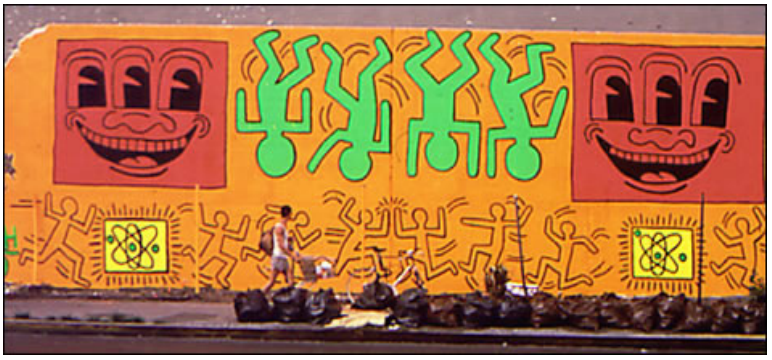

Figure 3: Keith Haring, Houston Street and Bower Mural, 1982, Keith Haring Foundation

These cups were used at symposiums for drinking a mixture of water and wine.[15] The symposiums were after-dinner parties where upper-class men would relax and come together in a communal bond of brotherhood. The act of sharing a cup generated strong bonds between members of such symposiums.[16] The Kylix used in these ceremonies often contained images or revelers on the outsides as well as large eyes and other facial features. These details are evident on a Kylix from the 6th century B.C.E. (fig. 4). The eyes were placed on the cup so when the drinker lifted the cup to their lips, the eyes of the bowl would cover the face like a mask. This allowed

Figure 4: Terracotta Kylix eye-cup (front and back), 520-510 B.C.E. Acc. 96.18.50 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

[14] "Art" Keith Haring Foundation, last accessed April 6, 2020, http://www.haring.com/!/year/1982.

[15] Matthew Naglak, "Turning the Cup: Thematic Balance in the Greek Symposium," Inquiry: The University of Arkansas Undergraduate Research Journal 11, no. 6 (2010): 25.

[16] Naglak, 20.

the drinker to embody the spirit of the reveler and invoke the god Dionysus with which the symposiums were associated.[17]

In form alone the connection between Keith Haring's dancing figures and faces is hard to ignore. While the figures featured on the Kylix vase are far more stylized than the figures featured on Haring's mural, the way that movement is conveyed in their limbs is very similar. Additionally, the faces on Haring's mural that flank his dancing figures create a composition comparable to the Kylix, if it was flattened onto the wall with the two masks on either side of the reveling youths. While it would be presumptive to make the assumption that Haring's design is derived from these Kylix eye-cup forms, masks are commonplace in the celebrations and dances of many different cultures and often signify a transformation into the divine through dance.[18] At the very least, then, these Dionysian drinking cups lend a framework through which to view and interpret Haring's works. However, Haring's depictions of dolphins offer evidence that the Kylix eye-cup imagery can be seen as a direct influence on Haring's work.

Haring's dolphin imagery serves as a major motif in his artwork. Sometimes they are shown with just their heads above the water,[19] but most often they are shown in a cycle of transformation from human to dolphin while jumping up and out of the water.[20] They are also depicted with human figures riding them.[21] In ancient Greece dolphins were often associated with Dionysus through a myth where Dionysus, seeking retribution towards pirates who captured him and did not believe he was Dionysus, turns the sailors into dolphins as they jump over the sides of the boat in panic. Not only is this a common myth associated with Dionysus, but it is also referenced on Kylix eye-cups.[22] Comparing one of Haring's depictions of the dolphin-to-man transformation (fig. 5) with an ancient Greek depiction of the Dionysian myth from a terracotta vase (fig. 6) shows inarguable similarities. Interestingly both images show stages of transformation where there is a human on the top half and a dolphin on the bottom, and vice versa. Even the depiction of the dolphins' eyes appears similar.

Figure 5: Keith Haring, Untitled, 1983, Keith Haring Foundation

Figure 6: Metamorphoses of the Tyrrhenian Pirates, Attributed to Micali, 510-500 B.C.E.; 1982.134 Toledo Museum of Art

[17] "Dionysus and the Symposium Wine, Poets, and Performers in Ancient Greece," Museum of Fine Arts Boston, last accessed April 6, 2020, https://www.mfa.org/collections/featured-galleries/dionysos-and-the-symposium.

[18] Harrison, 27.

[19] "Art" Keith Haring Foundation, last accessed April 6, 2020, http://www.haring.com/!/art-work/, 227.

[20] "Art," Keith Haring Foundation, 594.

[21] Keith Haring 1978-1982 (Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 2010), 196.

[22] Antike Am Koenigsplatz Museum, https://www.antike-am-koenigsplatz.mwn.de/en/ancient-masterpieces/museum-highlights/archive-of-museum-highlights/dionysos-cup.html.

However, in addition to being a popular image associated with Dionysian myths, dolphins also played a key role in the Dithyramb, the Dionysian choral dance ceremony. Images of men riding dolphins on the vases have been connected to a more humorous aspect of the Dithyramb through the cult of the dolphins associated with it.[23] Given the prominent role of Dolphins in the Dithyramb and the similarities their portrayals hold with Haring's own depictions, the assumption that Haring drew influence from these images seems well-founded.

Taken together, the vases, the dancing figures with the faces, and Haring's depictions of dolphins make a strong case for Haring's acknowledgement of the Greek vase depictions of dance and ceremonies. When considering the fact that all these images appear between the years of 1980 and 1983, it seems even less of a coincidence. However, whether or not Haring consciously incorporated these designs into his work, or if it was a subconscious absorption of forms and information is difficult, almost impossible to tease out. Remarking on the creation of his own style, Haring simply says, "Out of these drawings my entire future vocabulary was born. I have no idea why it turned out like that. It certainly wasn't a conscious thing."[24] With Haring's own claims in mind, it is worth exploring an artwork with less of a clear figural connection to Dionysian ritual.

This Untitled painting by Haring was created in 1983, around the same time as the other works by Haring that have been examined in this paper. Created with vinylink on vinyl tarpaulin the painting stands at seven square feet, certainly not one of his smaller works, but also not of the monolithic size on which he was also capable of working. The color scheme of the painting is kept very simple, adhering to a strict usage of black, yellow, and red across the entire canvas. The tarpaulin is covered in red paint with a yellow border perforated with red dots. The four humanoid figures within the canvas are also outlined in yellow with red dots in an identical scheme to the canvas border.

The yellow lines appear continuous for the most part, consisting of very long brush strokes. The canvas shows two mirror figures on the left and right sides of the canvas, both have one arm raised in the air and the other arm outstretched so that they connect in the middle of the canvas. These figures appear to be slightly off the ground as a third figure – shown in the middle of the canvas and overlapped by the other two figures – has its feet grounded on the border of the canvas. This figure stands with its legs apart and feet pointing to the edges of the canvas with its arms raised in a "v" shape in the air. Above and between this figure's arms is Haring's signature image of the radiant baby on hands and knees. Surrounding all four figures are yellow lines with red dots, four of which have a circle at the end. Black squiggle lines permeate all parts of the canvas that are within the yellow border and form almost figural images within the bulging stomachs of the two mirror-imaged figures.

This painting can be interpreted to signify creation at almost every turn. The two mirrored figures clearly depict pregnancy, and they appear to be lifted off the floor in dance as the energetic lines emulating off their limbs exude movement. Meanwhile, the stationary figure in the middle is smaller than the two pregnant figures, perhaps symbolizing a younger man or teenager. Bringing the theme of creation full circle are the barely discernible figures in black within the pregnant women's stomachs and the four round balls with tails at the women's backs that can only represent sperm. The theme of birth, life, and maturation is blatantly obvious here, but the composition also leaves the cycle unfinished. The stages of sperm, womb, baby, and youth are present, but nothing beyond this point in the circle of life is. The emphasis is kept on the early stages of life, but the reason is unclear.

The Dithyramb and the legend of Dionysus' own birth can help explain this focus on early maturation. In Dionysus' birth he was taken from his mother's womb and sewed into the thigh of Zeus before being born again.[25] In *Themis*, historian Jane Harrison explains that this myth facilitates the Dithyramb initiation ceremony and dance of young men, the Kouretes, changing children into men. While in one sense this means leaving aside that which is feminine, it has a greater meaning in

[23] Wellenbach, 90.

[24] Gruen, 57-58.

[25] Harrison, 34.

in leaving behind the life of family and being indoctrinated as a member of the community. Through this Dionysian coming of age ritual, it is possible to see this work by Haring as a story of rebirth and rediscovery of himself. The pregnant women dance in ceremony but the younger figure stands slightly apart from them, arms raised up to the baby, ready to be born again as a young man as the pregnant figures leave this younger figure to his new life and prepare to begin the cycle again.

This may seem like a stretch, especially if this interpretation is taken to mean Haring literally recreated this specific ceremony on canvas. However, if the story of the rebirth through the Dithyramb is used as an archetype and a lens through which to view Haring's world, things become much clearer. It is important to remember that Haring was born in the backwater town of Kutztown Pennsylvania, and it was not until he left his hometown and old life behind and moved to New York City 1978 for art school that he began to discover himself. It was in these years that Haring discovered his artistic style and his community within Paradise Garage and other clubs.[27] This was the time of rebirth for Haring, and this rebirth occurred, as it did in the Dithyramb, through dance.

2. Haring and Disco

Keith Haring's life as a young artist in the late 1970's and early 1980's is inextricably linked to the nightclub scene of New York. Keith Haring started hanging out in, and then working at Club 57, a breeding ground for the young underground art scene.[28] Breeding ground is used here both figuratively and literally because, as Haring notes, "Club 57 not only meant dancing and drinking and sex and fun and craziness, but the beginning. . . of some really interesting art shows."[29] Haring began organizing shows at Club 57, and when he dropped out of art school in the spring of 1980 he was offered a job at the Mud Club, a contemporary to Club 57, in which he also formed a community.[30] It was during the summer of 1980 while working at the Mud Club that Haring's signature style -- his saucers, the energy lines, and the simplistic people -- became fully formed, and he began his subway drawings.[31] Also shortly after quitting school, a high Keith Haring stumbled upon Paradise Garage, a club that in his own words, ". . . was really a kind of family. A tribe."[32] Haring was so enamored by the club that he soon after asked to show his art there.[33]

In all instances, these clubs gave Haring a place where he could mingle with, learn from and work with his contemporaries, as well as a place where he could show his own art. They provided a community and space for Haring to become an artist in the world. In 1979 Haring wrote passionately in his notebook about how important experiences like listening to poetry readings in Club 57 were to him.[34] However, these clubs did not just serve as circles for intellectual sharing; they were, first and foremost, places of dance.

In 1978 and 1979 Haring was working with the ideas of space and performance, painting to the rhythm of music where he "lost control"[35] of the process of painting.[36] Beyond this early form of painting, it is noted by art historian Raphaela Platow that ". . .Haring's physical capacity - his limber body squatting, bending, shifting balance as he handled the brush with broad movements of his arms-together with his sense of space enabled him to work in an immediate way, without a preconceived plan."[37] The idea of Haring moving his body in such a way while being aware of the space within which he was working sounds very comparable to dance. More than paralleling

[26] Harrison, 37.
[27] Gruen, 50-52.
[28] "Club 57, Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978-1983," Museum of Modern Art, Oct. 31 2017-Apr. 8, 2018. https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3824
[29] Gruen, 45.
[30] Gruen, 62
[31] Gruen, 57, 61-62.
[32] Keith Haring, Keith Haring Journals (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 230.
[33] Gruen, 89.
[34] KHA NB-6, Keith Haring Notebooks, Keith Haring Foundation Archives, New York, NY, 5.
[35] KHA NB- 4, Keith Haring Notebooks, Keith Haring Foundation Archives, New York, NY, 5, 19.
[36] KHA NB-3, Keith Haring Notebooks, Keith Haring Foundation Archives, New York, NY, 19. KHA NB-4, Keith Haring Notebooks, Keith Haring Foundation Archives, New York, NY.
[37] Keith Haring 1978-1982, 84.

Haring's artistic adventures, these clubs served as a source of inspiration for Haring. In 1985, Haring recalls that when he was completely unsure of what to paint on the arches of the Bordeaux museum in France, inspiration struck him while dancing in Paradise Garage.[38] There is little doubt that these communities and spaces had a profound impact on Haring, helping him to develop his own style and imagery.

Haring's own experiences at places like Club 57 and Paradise Garage were part of a greater movement in the 1970's and early 80's. These places were born out of disco, both the music and the dance clubs that became extremely popular in the 70's. It is also well acknowledged that disco music and these disco nightclubs had their origins in the gay liberation movement of the 1970s. Because dance was just as integral to disco as the music itself, when discussing disco in this paper, it will refer to both the nightclubs and the music itself unless one is specified.

Following the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the gay rights movement began to spread across the country.[39] It is worth noting that while progress was made, the starting point for this progress was extremely low, with homosexuality only being declassified as a mental illness in 1973 and the term homophobia being coined in 1972.[40] However, this movement and the progress it made allowed for a more open and communal nightlife within gay communities. It was in these nightclubs that disco music began to gain prominence.[41] As disco entered the mainstream, it began to blend the traditional ideas of masculinity and homosexuality, with bands like "The Village" creating songs that played up the idea of camp masculinity.[42] Songs like "YMCA," "I Will Survive" and "Don't Knock My Love" were not explicitly homosexual, but carried messages and undertones that allowed for gay communities to take ownership of them.[43] Disco came to embody Roland Barthes' idea of "Jouissance" (rapture, bliss, and transcendence).[44]

The music of Julius Eastman is an excellent example of this idea. Eastman's music was played in places like the Lincoln Theater as well as nightclubs such as Paradise Garage.[45] His music transcended the ideas of high and low culture, a point that held true for many of the artists who frequented New York's Nightclubs in the 70's.[46] Eastman was part of the larger melting pot of visual, performance, and musical artists that constituted nightlife in areas of New York like the East village.[47] More specifically to disco, however, as a Black gay man, Eastman's music worked to transform the negative persona surrounding camp culture and homoeroticism from something that was stigmatized into something sacred. As Historian Gillian Frank Notes, in Eastman's work "The Profane aspects of deviant sexuality are recuperated through a dynamic process of resignification and creative juxtaposition of musical signs."[48]

Eastman's work and intentions are worth noting because the ideas of turning camp and homoeroticism into something sacred aligns with descriptions of Paradise Garage. Larry Levan, the Garage's DJ, was considered something of a deity, able to work the crowd into a frenzy screaming his name.[49] If Larry liked a song, he would play it over and over again until the audience got on board.[50] The club created a culture where people came to dance, drugs were heavily used, but rarely, if ever,

[38] Gruen, 135.
[39] Alex Midgely, "Macho Types Wanted: The Village People, Homophobia, and Representation in 1970s," Australasian Journal of American Studies 33, no. 1 (2014): 105.
[40] Midgely, 109.
[41] Gillian Frank, "discophobia: Antigay Prejudice and the 1979 Backlash against disco," Journal of the History of Sexuality 16, no. 2 (2007): 284.
[42] Midgely, 107.
[43] Frank, 284; Midgely, 107; Nadine Hubbs, "I Will Survive': Musical Mappings of Queer Social Space in a disco Anthem," Popular Music 26, no. 2, (2007).
[44] Hubbs, 235.
[45] Ryan Dohoney, Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 117.
[46] Dohoney, 117.
[47] Laam Hae, "Dilemmas of the Nightlife Fix: Post-industrialization and the Gentrification of Nightlife in New York City," Urban Studies 48, no. 16 (2011): 3453-3454.
[48] Dohoney, 123.
[49] Anthony Haden-Guest, "The Last Party: Studio 54, disco, and the Culture of the Night" (New York: Open Road Media, Kindle Edition), Loc. 4154.
[50] Jon Pareles, "Paradise Garage, a Gay Club That Forever Changed Night Life," New York Times, June 18, 2000, n.p.

did participants overdose.[51] Additionally, while predominantly a gay club, the Paradise Garage community consisted of gay and straight individuals of all races because it was a club singularly geared towards dancing and nothing else.[52] Through Larry Levan's music, people dancing entered into a trance-like state.[53] In short, dancing at the Garage was a communal, almost religiousexperience. It was something sacred. As the gay community began to make progress in liberation, disco both became a product of, and an instigator for the movement.

In his journals, Haring makes no mention of coming out, although he does mention in a later interview that the first time he slept with a man was in 1977, right before he went to school in New York. This was while he was still dating his high school girlfriend Suzy, who he eventually broke up with as he realized his sexual orientation.[54] It is interesting that Haring, who spent so much time analyzing himself, his personal transformations, and his place in the world, never wrote in his journals about coming out.[55] Despite this usually intense analyzation, he makes no mention of being gay in his journals until 1979 where he writes that "This sexual energy may be the single strongest impulse I feel. More than art?(!)." There is no direct evidence to suggest how much moving to New York helped him become more comfortable with being gay. However, Haring grew up in the small town of Kutztown Pennsylvania in a time of deep homophobia in America. The disco nightclub culture in New York, linked to gay rights and the emergence of young artistic creativity, certainly could not have harmed Haring's sense of self, especially in comparison to a small town like Kutztown Pennsylvania.

Haring came to New York City just as disco hit America like a storm. Movies like *Saturday Night Fever* with John Travolta and the Bee Gees were a turning point for the mass popularity of disco with middle class America. Al Coury, the president of RSO Record label, noted that *Saturday Night Fever* "kind of took disco out of the closet."[56] In 1979 disco music made up 40% of all chart activity.[57] However, as disco began to reach its fever pitch, suburban parents and heterosexual Americans began to worry about the effects that a genre with such homosexual undertones would have on the youth of America. Additionally, the Rock industry began to worry about the effect disco was having on their sales and began to run slur campaigns against disco, negatively associating it with homosexuality.[58] They began to drive home the message that heterosexuality and masculinity were threatened by disco music.[59] This anti-disco/gay backlash culminated in the disco Demolition at the White Sox stadium in 1979, where massive crowds of young white males violently destroyed disco records.[60] This event marked the end of the disco era as it was known.

The combination of this disco backlash with the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980's led to the downturn of many of the clubs that had thrived in the '70s. Club 57 closed in 1983, as did the Mud Club.[61] The increasing gentrification of areas like the East Village brought on by the success of the artists from the area also contributed to stricter restrictions on nightlife.[62] However, neither disco nor the club nightlife was completely eradicated in the 80's. Nightclubs at this point were too important as places of artistic exchange and had accrued too great a sense of community to completely die out. One such place was Paradise Garage, which continued to live on until 1987.[63] While the Garage incorporated new wave and punk into its musical repertoire, Larry Levan mixed it with techno to make it danceable. While disco music and disco culture may have died out from the mainstream, the ideas behind disco, the community, and the sacredness of the space, lived on.

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[51] Paradise Garage, the Oral History of NYC's greatest club, TimeoutIn, August 21, 2018, accessed May 18, 2019, https://www.timeout.com/newyork/nightlife/paradise-garage-the-oral-history-of-nycs-greatest-club.
[52] Pareles, n.p.
[53] Haden-Guest, loc. 4148.
[54] Gruen, 31-2.
[55] Notebooks, Keith Haring Archives, Keith Haring Foundation.
[56] Frank, 288.
[57] Midgely, 107.
[58] Frank, 286, 289.
[59] Frank, 294.
[60] Frank, 276.
[61] "Club 57, Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978-1983" Museum of Modern Art, Oct. 31 2017-Apr. 8, 2018.
[62] Hae, 3455.
[63] Pareles, n.p.

3. Paradise Garage and the Dithyramb

Paradise Garage is singled out in this paper because it is generally acknowledged as Haring's favorite and most frequented nightclub. He went there almost every Saturday night for five years and would plan his business trips around weekends at the Garage.[64] He also metboth of his long-term partners there, Juan Dubose and Juan Rivera.[65] The importance that this club and the others he frequented held for him cannot be understated. Through dance, Haring got started with his career, met many of his contemporaries, and found a community However, the question remains as to how this has any impact on how or why Haring seems to be drawn to Greek depictions of dance. In answer to this, there are certain parallels between aspects of the myths and dances surrounding Dithyrambic processions of ancient Greece that are worth comparing to Haring's own world of dance.

The first aspect to look at is the idea of control versus revelry within the Dithyramb. This dynamic was most often played out between the mythical Dionysian revelers, the silens, and the historical Greek choral performers. Athenian vases often contained a realistic depiction of choral dance on one side and the myth associated with the performance on the other side.[66] This was due to the fact that while Athenians loved the dance and ritual, they were wary of the unbridled passion that was associated with the silens and mythical Dionysian revelry.[67] A parallel can be drawn between the Athenian view of the mythical aspects of the Dithyramb and the way white homophobic America viewed places like Paradise Garage. There were aspects of this world they coveted, but only when and how they wanted; disco music had been all the roar until explicitly connected to homosexual culture. In a similar vein, the fine art world wanted Haring's art and to profit from it, but were loath to elevate it or him to museum status.[68] Haring's own art seems to recognize this and plays with these ideas, utilizing graphically sexual content combined with reveling figures to his own ends. One specific Haring work, *The Ten Commandments 8*, shows two faces giving oral sex to the ends of a cross, which can be read as playing on the idea of homosexuality as a sin, but at the same time really criticizing those who blindly obey the church.[69]

Another idea from the Dithyramb that feeds into Haring's world is the actual power of the revelry and the idea of acceptance into community. Both Dionysus' return to Athens and Hephaestus' return to Olympia are celebrated through Dithyrambic performances with drunken revelry. Art historian Guy Hedreen notes that "Like Dionysiac processions at Athens, the journey of Hephaistos and his entourage to Olympus is marked by drunkenness, ostentatious display of the phallus... as well as song and dance."[70] This imagery itself would not be out of place in one of Haring's works of art. However, more than that the idea of acceptance into a community through song and dance is very much in line with the acceptance through dance that Haring and others experienced at the Paradise Garage.[71] This idea is also echoed by Art Historian John Wilkinson, who notes that the Dithyrambic choruses in the city of Dionysia were used to transform young boys into men, separating them from their domestic childhood life.[72] While the specifics of this tradition hold no bearing on Paradise Garage, the core ideas of acceptance into a tribe through dance still hold. While the specifics of this tradition hold no bearing on Paradise Garage, the core ideas of

[64] Gruen, 89; Keith Haring Journals, 230.

[65] Gruen, 89, 139.

[66] Guy Hedreen, ""Mythos of Ritual in Athenian Vase-Paintings of Silens," in The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond: From Ritual To Drama, ed. Eric Csapo and Margaret C. Miller (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 163.

[67] Guy Hedreen, "Ambivalence, Athenian Dionysiac Vase-Imagery and the discourse on Human Social Evolution," Hermeneutik der Bilder: Beitraege zur Ikonographie und Interpretation griechischer Vasenmalere (2009): 125.

[68] Keith Haring Journals, 276-77.

[69] Sylvie Couderc, "The Ten Commandments: an Interview," Keith Haring Foundation, accessed May 19, 2020, https://www.haring.com/!/selected_writing/ten-commandments-an-interview.

[70] Guy Hedreen, "Bild, Mythos, and Ritual: Choral Dance in Theseus's Cretan Adventure on the François Vase," Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens 80 (2011): 502.

[71] Pareles, n.p.

[72] John Wilkinson, "The Ephebe's Song: Tragôoidia and Polis," Representations 1 (1985): 62.

acceptance into a tribe through dance still hold. The Garage holds many of the same connotations of spirituality that these Dionysian rituals did in forming the bonds of community.

Core to the idea of the Dithyramb was the idea of the epiphany through invoking Dionysus. Dionysian dance was meant to transform the dancer, and through this transformation epiphanies were sought from Dionysus. This idea of transformation and epiphany goes hand-in-hand with the idea of the pirates Dionysus transformed into dolphins as punishment for not believing in him and his power.[73] This also connected to the seeing eye cups which were used to facilitate the adoption of the identity of a silen.[74] Both of these images are mentioned earlier as possible influences for Haring's art and now can be interpreted as ideas of divine inspiration through dance. As mentioned earlier, Haring painted the way he danced, and was sometimes struck with ideas for painting while dancing at the Garage.[75] The idea of Paradise Garage as a sacred place, perpetuated by Larry Levan's disc jockeying that was built out of the disco movement of the 70s, helped give Haring the divine inspiration he needed to paint. In this same vein, this means that Haring's recurring motif of the man-into-dolphin transformation could be a subtle jibe at his critics, those who did not consider Haring a "serious" artist, those who did not believe in the power of his inspiration.

3.1 Kinetic Art

Art Historian Sarah Olsen creates a compelling argument for the idea of Kinesthetic empathy as a mode of communication through choral dance. The idea is that the movement and music of the choral dance allowed for social continuity and cohesion.[76] More importantly, however, it also was able to elicit a sense of participation and identification in people of all ages, genders, and races.[77] The same could very much be said for the disco movement that swept the nation in the 1970's and the spirit from it that survived into the 1980s. Until it was bogged down by homophobia, disco music was spreading across almost every community in America and seemed to elicit the same feelings of kinesthetic empathy.

In a similar way, Haring's art is seemingly universally understood: even people who have no idea who Haring is wear sweaters with his images. Olsen argues that a Simonides vase fragment suggests dolphins jumping out of the water in reaction to the music.[78] Just as Dolphins are influenced by choral music, Haring's dolphins or any of his dancing figures elicit an energy that is universally accessible regardless of the level of art history education. This then could also give a less cynical meaning to Haring's dolphins – rather than turning men into dolphins as punishment, it could mean that Haring realized everyone has the inherent ability to understand his art: they just need to find that ability within themselves.

It seems certain that at least some of Haring's style came out of the unique period of artistic exchange and dance that swept New York nightclubs. While it is difficult to untangle whether or not Haring drew direct influence from Greek images of the Dithyramb, there are many interesting parallels between the world of Ancient Greece and the world in which Haring was embroiled when he started his career. Some of the similarities in imagery are too blatant to ignore entirely, but the ideas of community, sacredness, and transformation through dance give us a lens through which we can view Haring's art and world. For there is indeed something sacred about Haring's work. Despite, and perhaps because of the simplicity, the graphic sexuality, and the balance he creates between chaos and harmony within his works, the viewer is drawn into the worlds Haring creates. There is indeed something powerful in his revelry.

[73] Guy Hedreen, "The Semantics of Processional Dithyramb Pindars Second Dithyramb and Archaic Athenian Vase-Painting," Dithyramb and society: Texts and Contexts in a Changing Choral World, ed. Barbara Kowalzig and Peter Wilson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 188.

[74] Hedreen, "Ambivalence," 129.

[75] Keith Haring 1978-1982, 84; Gruen, 135.

[76] Sarah Olsen, "Kinesthetic Choreia: Empathy, Memory, and Dance in Ancient Greece" Classical Philology 112, (2017): 154.

[77] Olsen, 160.

[78] Olsen, 155.