

Pre-visit Project 1: Public Images

Objective:

To explore public images and their impact on students' lives

“People always ask me: ‘Where do you get all these ideas?’ I say, I’m not sure, I only know that I am living now in the 20th century and I absorb information at an increasingly rapid rate. We all do. Information is coming faster, perhaps, than we can keep up with. I digest information from these sources, channel it through my own imagination, and put it back out into the world. I am continually trying to find new ways to bring these things into the world and to expand the definition of what an ‘artist’ is”.

-Keith Haring, journal entry, 1984

Suggested Discussion with Students:

Artist Keith Haring said:

“I consider myself a perfect product of the space age not only because I was born in the year that the first man was launched into space, but also because I grew up with Walt Disney cartoons.”

-Elisabeth Sussman, *Keith Haring*, p. 10 (see bib.)

Keith Haring refers to the Space Age of the late 1950's and 1960's.
How would you describe the times we live in now?

What kinds of cartoons and images did you grow up with?
Where did you see them?
Which images were important to you?

What images do you choose to put on the walls in your room now?
What is special about them?

Where do you see images in your neighborhood? On streets? In parks? In other kinds of public places? On moving vehicles?

What are these images for? What do they tell us about our society?

Which images do you notice the most? Why?

Imagine your room with nothing on the walls. What would it look like?
What would your classroom or school look like with nothing on the walls?

What would the subway platforms and trains look like with no advertisements?
What would the buses, bus stops, and billboards look like?
What information would you miss?
If you could decide which images you see in your school, what would you choose?
Why?

What images would you choose to put in the subway? At bus stops?

Why would you choose these images?
What messages would they send to people?

Suggested Project:

Keith Haring's first street works included attaching pieces of paper to walls, painting sections of city walls, or altering the words of existing street ads. Haring's approach to found words developed from his interest in the cut-up technique, developed by Beat writer William Burroughs and the artist Brion Gysin. Cut-ups were made by cutting headlines, images, or random passages from newspapers and printed texts and pasting them together.

“The most notorious of my street pieces were the ones that looked like the front page of the New York Post. I'd cut out letters from the Post and rearrange them to make fake headlines, like REAGAN SLAIN BY HERO COP or POPE KILLED FOR FREED HOSTAGE or MOB FLEES AT POPE RALLY.”

-Keith Haring, John Gruen, *Keith Haring, The Authorized Biography*, p. 57 (see Bibliography)

News Headline Cut-ups

Make your own news headline cut-up.
Clip headlines from newspapers. Clip the images that go with the headlines.

Choose one headline about a topic or an issue that is important to you.

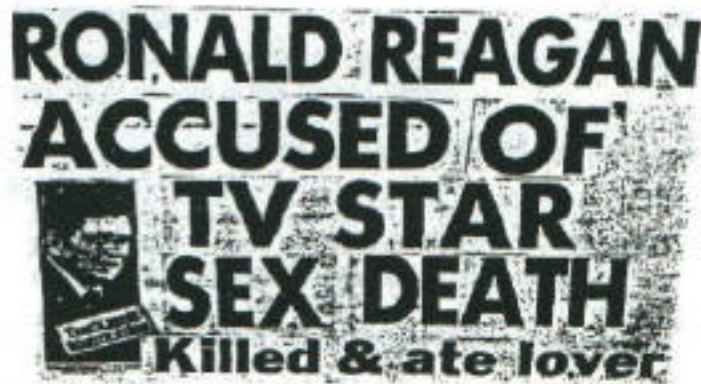
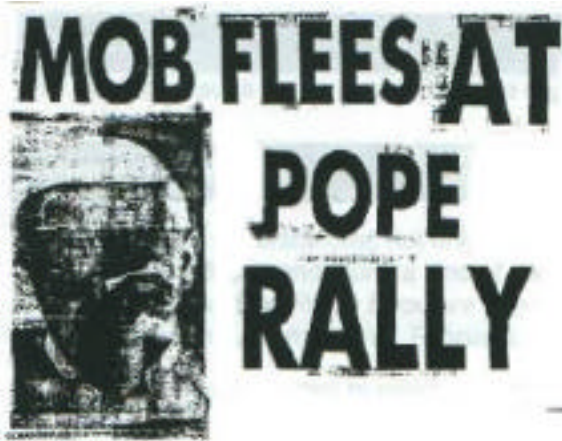
Change the meaning of the existing headline by rearranging the words or adding words from other headlines. Experiment with humor or satire to make a statement about your selected topic.

Add the image that went with the original headline.
How does it affect that meaning of your headline?

Ask students to discuss why they chose their topics, and how they altered the meaning of the original headline.

Ask students where they would display their cut-ups in the city, and why they would choose these locations.

Supplies: scissors, glue sticks, newspapers, paper



Cut-up and reassembled *New York Post* headlines which Haring posted on the walls around New York City, 1980.
