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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Firm Lays Groundwork for Auction of Keith Haring Mural

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One Battery Park Plaza • New York, New York 10004-1482 • +1 (212) 837-6000

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**October 25, 2019** — The firm is representing the Ascension Church in its planned sale of a Keith Haring mural described as the legendary street artist's "best kept secret."

In the early 1980s, Haring painted a whimsical mural that snakes through the lobby and the stairwell of a former convent on Manhattan's Upper West Side, then the home of a Catholic youth center known as Grace House. Haring completed the mural -- featuring 13 dancing figures shimmying up two flights of steps -- in one evening without any preparatory sketch or underpainting.

The figures represent several of Haring's most iconic characters, including a barking dog, a person with a corkscrew torso and a "radiant baby." The Ascension Church next door took over the five-story building in 2009 after Grace House closed, and rented the property as apartments. Patrice Jean is a longtime member and trustee of the parish.

The three-story mural was preserved in separate sections, with the 13 figures carefully removed by the Church. The mural is estimated to sell for as much as \$5 million when it goes up for auction as one work at Bonham's New York salesroom on Nov. 13. The Church intends to use the proceeds of the sale to fund outreach programs and capital projects at the parish.

"The Grace House Mural not only reveals Keith Haring's innate humanity, but also the strong charitable commitment in his art and his dedication to young people," the Rev. Daniel S. Kearney, pastor of the Ascension Church, told JustCollecting News, a news site dedicated to the world of auctions and collecting.

During his career, Haring, who died in 1990, painted approximately 50 public murals around the world, with many created for charities, daycare centers and orphanages. Fewer than 20 still exist today, with most having been painted over or destroyed during urban redevelopment. The Grace House mural will be Haring's first public mural ever offered at auction.

According to Bonhams, although the mural is one of Haring's least-known works, "it is arguably his most significant hidden treasure."

"Over the years the mural has remained untouched, perfectly preserved, with the exception of a child having drawn a (now faded) face on one of the figures -- an addition Haring himself would surely have welcomed," Bonhams said. "The artist saw his murals as having lives of their own, with each potential addition only adding to the ongoing development of the work."

The mural will be on view at Bonhams starting Nov. 2. The auction was covered by The New York Times in an Arts section front-page article on Oct. 19.

Dan Weiner advises the Ascension Church in this matter.

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**Daniel H. Weiner**



**Patrice Jean**

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