

DOCUMENT 3B

Margaret Keyne and Her « Big Eyes » Paintings – posted by Sarah K. Elliott, 4.20.2025

"I'm not very fond of it. My husband loves it." The now iconic "Big Eyes" paintings have gotten love-it-or-hate-it reactions from critics and collectors since they first emerged on the market in the 1950s. However, at that time, Keane's then-husband, Walter Keane, claimed the art as his own. Walter has been characterized as a manipulative charlatan, but also as an incredible marketer of the paintings his wife created.



Margaret and Walter Keane painting together side by side, 1965

Margaret Keane, seen seated here among several of her artworks, is known for her iconic "Big Eyes" paintings. "I don't know why I paint what I paint. I think it comes out — it's kind of my subconscious or something," she said in an interview with KQED. Credit: Robert Brown, Keane Eyes Gallery, San Francisco, CA.

Keane admits she was complicit in the charade, but has said she struggled greatly with allowing Walter to claim her art as his own. "I was too weak and I didn't know what to do and all the time the paintings were — the popularity was snowballing and I was getting into this deeper and deeper," she told **KQED Arts**. "And then he really put the pressure on me and it was a total nightmare, and I finally just gave in and said, 'You take the paintings and I'll develop another style.'" The couple divorced in 1965, Margaret moved to Hawaii where she continued to paint, and in 1970, she publicly declared that it was she — not Walter — who had painted the large-eyed children all along.

(...) In 1986, when Margaret was suing Walter for **slander**. The judge demanded that Margaret and Walter each produce a painting, right there, in the courtroom. Walter, who acted as his own counsel, claimed he could not perform due to an ailing shoulder. Margaret created the required proof in under an hour. Although Margaret won the case, she never saw the \$4 million awarded to her by the court.

KQED Arts : a Californian public radio and television
slander : making a false spoken statement