



Jean-Michel BASQUIAT  
b.1960- d.1988

Jean-Michel Basquiat was an American artist associated with Primitivism and the [Street Art](#) movement. He began drawing at a young age; inspired by cartoons, comic books and Alfred Hitchcock films. Basquiat's mother worked in fashion design, and she would take him to New York's surrounding museums over the weekends to expose him to as many great artists as possible. Basquiat grew up during the Hip-Hop culture of the 1980s, which began in New York. He was attracted to the visual component of the Hip-Hop culture, graffiti art, which was used by political activists to expose racial realities.

Basquiat began his work by spray-painting buildings at night under the tag SAMO, which stood for "same old shit," and even sold his work on postcards and t-shirts in an effort to attract attention. He often tied political meaning into his work, and his personal style quickly became widely-recognizable. After he befriended *TV Party* host Glenn O'Brien, Basquiat was featured on the show and later introduced to powerful collectors and dealers, which put him in the center of the art scene. Basquiat rose to fame at the "Times Square Show," and his name was spread through the article "The Radiant Child," which was published by *Artforum* magazine shortly afterwards. Basquiat was now nationally-known and decided to travel, taking Europe by storm with his one-man exhibitions. He also participated in combined shows with other famous contemporary artists as Keith Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe, Kenny Scharf, Cy Twombly and David Salle.

Basquiat was close with Andy Warhol and they were known to workout, paint and travel together internationally. Basquiat was one of the youngest prominent artists on the scene, and he was devastated when Warhol died in 1987. Basquiat had a drug problem, and it was said that Warhol was the only one that could bring him back when he started abusing certain drugs. From a young age, Basquiat was concerned with 'burning out,' as he had watched celebrities Jimi Hendricks and Janis Joplin both die of an overdose at the age of 27. Sharing the same fate, Basquiat died in New York City at the same age due to drugs. Basquiat's fame remains strong, and his most expensive sale at auction was in 2013, when his painting titled *Dustheads* (1982) sold for \$48.8 million.

Basquiat's work is featured in the permanent collections of the LACMA, the MoMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain, the Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan, the Daros Collection in Zurich, the Hoffman Collection in Berlin and the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

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