



November 2004

**Basquiat on view at the Brooklyn Museum March 11 through June 5, 2005
with Over 90 Works By Celebrated Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat**

Over 90 works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose meteoric career coincided with the emergence of the hip-hop movement and who contributed to the revival of painting in the United States before his untimely death, will be on view in the major exhibition **Basquiat, March 11–June 5, 2005** at the Brooklyn Museum, sponsored by JP Morgan Chase. A number of works in the exhibition have never been seen in the United States.

The most comprehensive re-evaluation of the prolific artist's career since a 1992 retrospective at New York's Whitney Museum, the exhibition will include approximately seventy paintings and twenty works on paper presented on two floors. This exhibition will celebrate the extraordinary achievement embodied in Basquiat's work - his skillful use of color, his aptitude at drawing, his unique and complex iconography, his integration of text into his canvases, and his development of themes from the African Diaspora.

Born to a middle class Brooklyn family of Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage, Jean-Michel Basquiat was active for just one decade, yet he is considered one of the best-known artists of his generation and enjoyed unprecedented international recognition. Basquiat died of a drug overdose in 1988 at the age of 27. His works continue to break auction records for art made during the 1980s.

When still in his teens, Basquiat first gained recognition among New Yorkers for the cryptic graffiti poetry he sprayed on the walls of Lower Manhattan under the pseudonym SAMO. In 1981, however, when he was twenty years old, Basquiat burst upon the art scene under his own name with an original body of work that quickly developed toward a complex and highly diverse, mature style, marked by innovation, sophistication, skill, and a stirring emotional depth. By the age of 21, he had already enjoyed five important one-person exhibitions and been included in the prestigious Documenta 7 in Kassel, Germany.

A talented, self-taught artist, Basquiat's skill set him apart from many of the artists of his generation. He drew constantly, producing hundreds of works, which he sometimes photocopied to incorporate into his paintings as collage elements. He admired other draftsmen, including Leonardo da Vinci, whose anatomical studies he quotes, and Cy Twombly, whose influence is seen in many of Basquiat's earliest works. Among the finest examples of this aspect of Basquiat's work is a series of 32 drawings currently referred to as the Daros Suite, and once belonging to the legendary collector and dealer Thomas Ammann. The portfolio will be seen in its entirety for the first time in the United States.

Brooklyn Museum

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Basquiat's paintings are frequently inhabited by primitive-looking figures with large, mask-like heads and consequently have been considered Neo-Expressionist in style. Nevertheless, although he exhibited many of the qualities of such modernists as Picasso, Matisse, Kirchner, Dubuffet, Rauschenberg, and his friend Andy Warhol, he had a unique style, one that synthesized many of the main tendencies of 20th century art.

Basquiat's art was also part of the cultural movement that began sweeping the country at the time: hip-hop. As a musician and performer, he was friendly with many figures on the downtown New York music scene and even performed in a feature film loosely based on his life entitled *Downtown 81*, directed by Edo Bertoglio. Indeed, a second film on his life, the posthumous *Basquiat*, directed by artist Julian Schnabel, achieved some critical success.

The four co-curators for Basquiat include Marc Mayer, *Basquiat* Project Director, former Deputy Director for Art, at the Brooklyn Museum, and now Director of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Fred Hoffman, Ahmanson Curatorial Fellow at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Kellie Jones, Assistant Professor of the History of Art and African American Studies, Yale University; and Franklin Sirmans, an independent writer, editor, and curator based in New York.

The Brooklyn Museum's presentation of Basquiat is coordinated by Charlotta Kotik, Curator and Chair of the Department of Contemporary Art.

The national tour of *Basquiat* is sponsored by JPMorgan Chase.

A full-color catalogue, published by Merrell, with essays by the four co-curators will be available. Following the Brooklyn Museum presentation, the exhibition will travel to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles from July 15 to October 9, 2005, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, from November 18, 2005 to February 12, 2006.

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BROOKLYN MUSEUM GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$8; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$4. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.