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Designer Research Paper – Jean-Michel Basquiat



Jean-Michel Basquiat was a successful revolutionary who is also known to be one of the most recognized artists during the Neo-Expressionist movement, which emerged in the 1970s and 80s. His vision was to take abstractionism and surrealism to a higher level, and he made it happen. Basquiat's mediums included acrylic, oil paint stick and spray paint on canvas, linen, metal and paper; and markers, paper collage, crayon and color transfer on printed paper and on canvas mounted on tied wooden supports, on wood, or on an old door or window.¹ With all the work he created, from his postcards to *Riding with Death* (1988), one notion remains clear. The impact that Basquiat left was nothing short of powerful. His influence made him an icon whose works of art is sampled and stamped in the art culture for generations to come.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Jean-Michel Basquiat entered the world to a Haitian American father and a Puerto Rican mother. Although his father was an accountant, but his mother motivated him to maintain his creativity. The diversity of his household provided him with multiple perspectives to different cultures. He struggled to focus in school because he was dedicated to the art he wanted to create. Being a self-taught artist helped him sell sweatshirts and postcards under the name SAMO, pronounced 'Same-Oh', his original trademark. He failed to complete high school but dedicated his life to graffiti art. Basquiat once said, "I never went to art school. I failed the art courses that I did take in school. I just looked at a lot of things. And that's how I learnt about art, by looking at it".³ His journey to the top of the world of art took off when fellow New York artist Keith Haring took notice and staged a mock wake for SAMO at a club in East Village. "Due in part to his immersion in this downtown scene, Basquiat began to gain more opportunities to show his art, and became a key figure in the new downtown artistic movement. For example, he appeared as a nightclub DJ in Blondie's music video *Rapture*, cementing his cache as a figure within the "new wave" of cool music, art, and film emerging from the Lower East Side."³ Over time, Basquiat used his popularity and influence to immerse himself into areas like Bed-Stuy, Harlem, and the Bronx to spread more awareness to up and coming black artists. He became a global figure in the 1980s, taking on painting and

traveling across the world to have his art featured in the Documenta art show. He showcased his collection of infamous work at that exhibit, which also features that ever-so popular crowned oracle figure you've probably seen on paintings, clothes, and accessories. His collaborations include the previously stated Keith Haring, Madonna, Commes des Garçon, Andy Warhol, and Francesco Clemente. He skyrocketed to fame but, unfortunately, succumbed to a drug overdose in 1988.

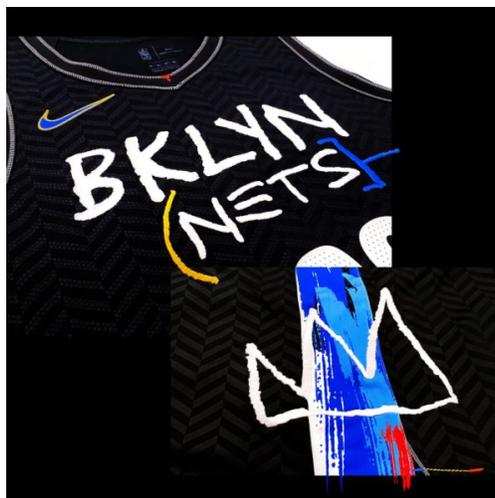


Basquiat's artwork is still greatly recognized today. For example, the most expensive work by Jean-Michel Basquiat is *Untitled* (1982). This piece sold for over one hundred and ten million dollars in New York back in 2017. "Made as Basquiat's fame was on the rise, the work features a giant skull-like form against a partially blue background. There was reason for the excitement surrounding the work: it hadn't been seen publicly since 1984, when it was bought at Christie's by Jerry and Emily Spiegel bought it for \$19,000. The landmark sale established the artist among the top

echelon of auction blockbuster names when it sold for \$110.5 million. The painting went to Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa, who had also bought the second-most expensive Basquiat work.. just one year prior. Upon its sale, the painting became one of the 10 most expensive works of all time.”²



Also, his work is featured in the City Edition jerseys of his hometown team, the Brooklyn Nets.



From his first stint to his last hit, Jean-Michel Basquiat was celebrated as one of the most influential artists of all time. His influence in the fashion, music, and art makes him multi-cultural Neo-expressionist and one of the leaders in that revolutionary era. His work, collaborations, sampled work, and style of art proved to be very inspiring to many. Although he is not here today, his SAMO aura permeates all of Brooklyn, New York, the United States, and across the world.

Citations:

"Basquiat, Brooklyn Museum, New York." *Studio International: Visual Arts, Design and Architecture*, www.studiointernational.com/index.php/basquiat. ¹

Villa, Angelica. "The Most Expensive Jean-Michel Basquiat Works Ever Sold at Auction." *ARTnews.com*, 24 May 2021, www.artnews.com/list/art-news/artists/jean-michel-basquiat-most-expensive-works-1234585981/jean-michel-basquiat-untitled-1982/. ²

"Basquiat Biography, Life & Quotes." *The Art Story*, www.theartstory.org/artist/basquiat-jean-michel/life-and-legacy/. ³

"Jean-Michel Basquiat's Impact On Society As an Iconic African Artist And Social Figure - Free Essay Example." *EDUZAURUS*, 9 Dec. 2020, eduzaurus.com/free-essay-samples/jean-michel-basquiats-impact-on-society-as-an-iconic-african-artist-and-social-figure/.

"Jean-Michel Basquiat - Google Arts & Culture." *Google*, Google, artsandculture.google.com/entity/jean-michel-basquiat/m041st?hl=en.