

Basquiat: The Legacy of an American Icon

Joelle Grosso (March 30, 2017)



The ingenious work of Jean-Michel Basquiat will be showcased in the Eternal City from March 24th until July 2nd at the Chiostro del Bramante international cultural center.

Approximately 100 works have been selected to be displayed at an exhibition entitled “Jean-Michel Basquiat” which pays tribute to the iconic American artist. [Basquiat](#) [2] was a popular, and often controversial, figure who was famous in the New York City street art scene during the 1980’s before his career was tragically cut short in 1988 after a heroin overdose at the young age of 27. This exhibition serves as an analysis of the artist’s relationship with his native city as well as an exploration of the importance of street art and graffiti in his work.

Inside the Exhibition

The [Chiostro del Bramante](#) [3] has always been a space that is open to the public and dedicated to offering a comprehensive range of cultural services right in the heart of Rome. For this particular show, Basquiat’s masterpieces are on loan from the [Mugrabi Collection](#) [4], one of the world’s largest collections of contemporary art. “Jean-Michel Basquiat” takes a deeper look at the origins and importance of street art and graffiti, mostly through large-scale works that represent the artist’s relationship with New York and the streets that inspired him so much. The symbol for the exhibition is a crown, a motif that pops up frequently in his paintings as it signifies the pride he felt belonging



to Afro-American culture.

Curated by Gianni Mercurio, “the show provides insights into various aspects of Basquiat’s oeuvre, charting his meteoric rise to fame, from spray-painting epigrams on the streets of Lower Manhattan in the late 1970s to his recognition by New York’s top gallerists and art dealers less than a decade later.” The exhibition will provide a closer inspection on the social messages that lie behind the many layers and wildly contrasting colors of Basquiat’s striking work.

The Genius of Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat was born in Brooklyn in 1960 to a Haitian father and Puerto Rican mother. In the early part of his career, the walls of New York City itself were the “canvas” on which he recorded the distinctive and indelible features of his art that would soon become recognized all around the globe.

“The mixed-media pieces on display demonstrate the artist’s mixture of abstraction and figuration, his marriage of image and text, and how his contextual use of words – from verse to voodoo – are employed effectively to attack repressive power structures, social inequality and racism, evident in works such as Job Analysis and Procession.”

Basquiat’s dramatic pieces manage to be edgy and hard-hitting while maintaining a childlike freshness which is perhaps what draws so many people to them. Despite his death at such an early age, the “Jean-Michel Basquiat” exhibition at Chiostro del Bramante in Rome is a fine tribute to the troubled artist almost three decades after his death. For more information, please visit <http://www.chiostrodelbramante.it/> [3]

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Links

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- [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Michel_Basquiat
- [3] <http://www.chiostrodelbramante.it/>
- [4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jose_Mugrabi