

Basquiat

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Paris Art Studies - Jean-Michel Basquiat, 22 December 1960 – 12 August 1988

1960 – Born
in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn
NY, first of three children to Matilde and Gerard Basquiat.

His younger sisters are
Lisane and Jeanine. His mother is Puerto
Rican and his father a Haitian
immigrant to the US. Basquiat learned French and Spanish as well as English as
a child and read widely. He was encouraged by his mother to paint and
participate in artistic activities.

1968 –
Parents divorce. His mother suffers from bipolar disorder and is deemed unfit
to care for her children. Basquiat and his sisters move with their father to
the Midwood district of Brooklyn. Basquiat will later accuse his father, who is
said to be a heavy drinker, of physical and emotional abuse.

1976 –
Basquiat runs away from home at 16.
He sleeps on park benches on Washington
Square Park and supports himself by panhandling, drug dealing, selling
T-shirts and homemade post cards, and working in the Unique Clothing Warehouse
in the West Broadway
district of Manhattan.
He is in the end adopted by a friend of his parents and returns to school, the Edward R.
Murrow High School in Brooklyn. With a friend, Al Diaz, he began spray-painting graffiti on buildings
in Lower
Manhattan, working under the pseudonym SAMO
(standing for “SAME Old shit”).

1978 – Drops

out of school. In December the Village Voice published an article on the graffiti. The SAMO project ends with the epitaph "SAMO IS DEAD," inscribed on the walls of SoHo buildings.

1979 – Basquiat

appears on the live public-access cable show TV Party hosted by Glenn O'Brien.

He also forms the punk rock band Gray with Vincent Gallo,

Shannon Dawson, Michael Holman, Nick Taylor and Wayne Clifford. Gray performed at nightclubs such as Max's Kansas

City, CBGB,

Hurrah,

and the Mudd Club.

He hangs out with actress Patti Astor, and downtown

figureheads David Byrne, Blondie, Madonna, John Lurie and Diego Cortez. Basquiat

starred in an underground film Downtown 81, which

featured some of Gray's recordings on its soundtrack. He also appeared in the Blondie music video "Rapture" as a nightclub disc jockey.

1980 – In June

Basquiat participates in The Times

Square Show, a multi-artist exhibition, sponsored by Collaborative Projects Incorporated (Colab) and Fashion Moda.

1981 –

Basquiat is shown in February in the influential exhibition (along with Keith

Haring and Robert Mapplethorpe) on the downtown art scene “New

York/New Wave” organized by Diego Cortez at the PS1 annex of MoMA. He presents 15 paintings mixing graffiti and

children’s’ drawing: cars, planes, heads and human silhouettes. In the painting

“Cadillac Moon” he crosses out the SAMO© signature and signs next to it Jean-Michel Basquiat 1981. His work is

noticed by three important art dealers, Emilio

Mazzoli, Annina Nosei and Bruno Bischofberger. In June Rene Ricard publishes "The Radiant Child" in Artforum magazine, an

article which brings Basquiat to the attention of the wider art world. First

solo show at the Emilio Mazzoli gallery in Modena, Italy. The SoHo dealer Annina

Nosei invites him to participate in a group show at her gallery and also rents

to him the basement of her gallery as a studio. He begins painting on canvas.

1982 –

Basquiat moves his studio to Crosby St in SoHo. In March first solo show in New York at the Annina Nosei

gallery in SoHo. He will from now on be associated to the Neo-Expressionist movement of the 1980’s alongside Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Francesco Clemente and Enzo Cucchi. He briefly

dates Madonna then at the beginning of her career. He is introduced to Andy Warhol by the art dealer Bruno

Bischofberger. In November he shows his latest work at the Fun gallery in the East Village (that exhibits notably Kenny Scharf). He leaves Annina Nosei for the Zurich-based Warhol dealer

Bischofberger who works with Mary Boone

in New York.

The words, signs and

concepts he paints are inspired by the New York streets but also books skimmed, television or songs and conversation with friends. The fragmentary esthetic of

the hip-hop musical scene in which

he was involved, sampling and scratching also have a great impact on his work

which becomes an elaborate form of assemblage or collage. He was also greatly

impressed and inspired by classic black American music and jazz, Billie Holliday, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Max Roach and Miles Davis. Black boxers, Mohammed Ali (Cassius Clay, 1982), Joe Lewis, Jersey Joe Walcott and Jack Johnson also appear frequently in his painting. Inspired by Rauchenberg & combine paintings” he also uses unorthodox supports like wood planks and doors.

1983 ‐ Shows twice in Los Angeles at the Larry Gagosian gallery meeting with great success. Is shown by Ernst Beyeler in Basel.

1984 ‐ He collaborates with Warhol and Francesco Clemente on 15 paintings shown by Bischofberger in his gallery in Zurich.

1985 ‐ Basquiat appears on the cover of The New York Times Magazine in a feature entitled "New Art, New Money: The Marketing of an American Artist". More Basquiat/Warhol collaborative works are shown by Tony Shafrazi in New York. The critical reception is very negative leading Basquiat to distance himself from Warhol.

1987 ‐ Warhol dies on 22 February. Basquiat feels increasingly isolated and depressed and increases his heroin consumption.

1988 ‐ Riding with Death is the iconic image that retrospectively is seen to symbolize the artist’s sudden end. Basquiat tries to stop heroin on a trip to Hawaii but dies of an overdose on his return to his studio in New York on 12 August. He was 27 years old.