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Basquiat



Synopsis

Jean-Michel Basquiat was only twenty-seven when he died in 1988, his meteoric and often controversial career having lasted for just eight years. Despite his early death, Basquiat's powerful work has ensured his continuing reputation as one of modern art's most distinctive voices. Borrowing from graffiti and street imagery, cartoons, mythology and religious symbolism, Basquiat's drawings and paintings explore issues of race and identity, providing social commentary that is shrewdly observed and biting. This bestselling book, now available in a compact edition, celebrates Basquiat's achievements in the contexts of the key influences on his art. It not only re-evaluates the artist's principal works and their meaning, but also explains what keeps his painting relevant today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Each essay provides the reader with a different viewpoint on the man and his work, providing a critical insight for anyone who has an interest in Basquiat and the art world at the time he came to prominence in the 80's.
• Magik City

Fred Hoffman is Ahmanson Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Kellie Jones is Associate Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University, New

York. Marc Mayer is Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada. Franklin Sirmans is

Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Menil Collection, Houston.

I live in Spain and received the book very fast.I was very excited about see more pictures about this

young artist who died so soon. The book was in perfect conditions, and I enjoy it a lot. I bought another book of Basquiat from Taschen ed. but is not as good as this one. It has less pictures and less interesting paintings. I strongly recommend this book. In order to make a small complaint I'd love to have seen more pictures of the paintings made in collaboration with Andy Warhol. Thank you very much.

Book is fine but was advertised as being a hardcover. I received a paperback.

I invite all professional photographers to comment on the level of "expertise" of the repros issued in this book. Several of the photos are out of focus--as in JMB's "Undiscovered Genius.." There is never any excuse, no matter how wide or tall the painting (some are 10 or more feet), for any work to be out-of focus. Other paintings have their original color so distorted or leached that these repros are criminally inept. This book should be re-called and the photos re-done. It's that bad. The Marshall book, which another reviewer praises, is vastly superior to this book, with the exception of one painting "Notary," which is better repro'd in this book. A few essays and several new works make the book acceptable, barely, for a collector, but even the art-auction catalogues issued by Sotheby's, Christies, Phillips, etc. have superior reproductions of JMB's work. This edition is truly a mockery of a professional art book. I suggest getting the Marshall book, or nearly any of the other books on JMB, esp. those from Germany or France, some of which appear on Ebay as well.

I'm very happy I'd read this book and viewed the works in it before I saw a Basquiat exhibit in New York. It provided valuable context.

The images in this book almost mirror the images shown in the 1st Basquiat retrospective book from the Whitney Museum (edited by Richard Marshall). If you own the Whitney book, there's no need to pick up this one because you'll be looking at a lot of duplicate images. If you don't own a Basquiat book, you can't really go wrong with either edition and I would lean towards the newer book. But there's no need to own both of them. So why the low rating? It's a shame that the curators didn't take the opportunity to add something new for Basquiat fans. Many years have passed since the 1st Whitney retrospective and we're basically presented with a book that repeats what's already been printed. Unfortunately we'll have to wait for someone else to put out a book of new Basquiat material for us to see.

I love this book! Full of great colorful plates and information about Basquiat's life.

The African-American, Hispanic, and also Haitian sources of Basquiat's art can be seen in its color, imagery, and jazz-like energy. Most broadly, however, and formally, his art displays a "semiotic imagination." As Kellie John clarifies in the critical essay "Lost in Translation - Jean-Michel in the [Re]Mix," this is what differentiates Basquiat's art from graffiti; though he has been reflexively lumped into this field of edgy, exotic urban art as an especially inspired graffiti artist. The art critic Okwui Enwezor cited by Kellie also places Basquiat within a broader framework by seeing his art as "an attempt to construct exotic, non-Western aesthetic systems on the margins of modernism." The three other critical essays heavily illustrated with relevant paintings similarly seek to find motives, aesthetic strategies, and accomplishments accounting for Basquiat's influence and artistic success not only in contemporary art, but for the field and the history of art. Marc Mayer is explicit in this in his essay "Basquiat in History". The two other essays titled "In the Cipher: Basquiat and Hip-Hop Culture" and "The Defining Years: Notes on Five Key Works" respectively relate the artist to a predominant, heterogeneous urban cultural style and closely examine early works for techniques, practices, and interests giving the art an identity and playing out over the artistic career. Between the heavily-illustrated essays and sections between them with 30 or so paintings each, the number of Basquiat paintings is well over 100. While not definitive because the essays are each in their separate ways so penetrating and revealing and the paintings are not ordered or documented as in a catalog raisonné for example, this edition of this leading modern, urban artist brings Basquiat into focus while offering continually unexpected insights, connections, and biographical and cultural topics.

I own over 40 Basquiat catalogs and recently attended the current show at LA MOCA. This catalog is merely mediocre. For starters, many of the pictures of the works do not adequately render the colors with the appropriate intensity. As an example, the pink in "Arroz con Pollo" is shown with a darker, reddish tint to it whereas in the actual painting the pink is very vivid, almost neon bright. Most of the photos are ones that have been previously published in numerous other books and catalogs. The 4 essays from Marc Meyer, Franklin Sirmans, Fred Hoffman, and Kellie Jones are good but not great. Overall, it's a competent catalog. Not bad but certainly not great. If you can only afford (or have room for) just one Basquiat catalog you're MUCH better off getting the book produced by the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in 1999. It features more works, better reproductions and essays by Shafrazi, Glenn O'Brien, Peter Brant, Keith Haring, and Henry Geldzahler (to name a few). Yes, it costs more than

this catalog but it's well worth it.

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