

WIDEWALLS

Basquiat's Xerox Works Come Together in a Show



Featured image: Jean-Michel Basquiat – Peter and the Wolf, 1985. Acrylic, oilstick, and Xerox collage on canvas, 100 x 113.78 inches (254 x 289 cm).
Collection of The Robert Lehman Revocable Trust, Courtesy of Aimee and Robert Lehman. © Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar, New York

March 7, 2019

Balasz Takac AKA Vladimir Bjelicic who is actively engaged in art criticism, curatorial and artistic practice.

Although he was a misfit belonging to the New York underground in the 1980s, **Jean-Michel Basquiat** quickly came to prominence after his extraordinary talent was discovered. Namely, this prolific figure set off his career as **part of a graffiti duo SAMO**, was involved with the up-and-coming **No wave scene** and was featured in an iconic documentary *Downtown 81* by Glenn O'Brien. In 1980, he also became friends with Andy Warhol which largely reflected on his artistic production.

Unfortunately, at the peak of critical acclaim and commercial success, Jean-Michel Basquiat died of heroin overdose. Nevertheless, during his lifetime **the artist released an impressive body of work**. Interestingly so, a notable amount of paintings were made with **Xerox copies**, which he used as the compositional base. This aspect of his production was rarely analyzed, so the upcoming exhibition titled simply *Jean-Michel Basquiat: Xerox* at **Nahmad Contemporary** will shed new light on this particular medium.



Jean-Michel Basquiat – Natchez, 1985. Acrylic, oil, Xerox collage and wood collage on panel, 85 x 60.6 x 4 inches (216 x 154 x 10 cm). Private Collection. © Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar, New York

Fascinated With The Machine

The leading proponent of the Neo-expressionist art movement, Jean-Michel Basquiat is **best known for a complex and quite poetic aesthetic**. A high level of innovation is reflected through his continued **experimentation with the traditional media**, and although his works operate within the two-dimensionality, they are often hard to describe due to a specific conceptual and stylistic formatting.

For this particular occasion, **more than fifteen paintings** were selected in order to present how Basquiat was dazzled with the Xerox technology, since it introduced him to an array of opportunities. On display will also be **a selection of his earliest Xeroxed postcards and Xerox-enveloped sculptures**.



Jean-Michel Basquiat – Galileo Galilei, 1983. Acrylic, oilstick, and Xerox collage on canvas, 78.75 x 51 inches (200 x 129.5 cm). Private Collection. © Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar, New York

About The Works

In 1979 together with Jennifer Stein, Basquiat produced a **series of small, colorful collages made of paint splatters, scrawled text and found clippings and product labels** which they photocopied and sold as art postcards on the streets of New York.

However, a few years later the collaging process became central in Basquiat's practice, and **it was around 1983 that the artist started using increasingly the photocopier as a tool to produce paintings**; at one point he purchased his own Xerox machine. It is important to mention that his inspiration can be traced in **the cut-up technique** popularized by the Beat Generation writer William S. Burroughs.



Jean-Michel Basquiat – King of the Zulus, 1984-85. Acrylic, oilstick, and Xerox collage on paper mounted on canvas, 86 x 68 x 1.5 inches (218.5 x 173 x 4 cm). MAC, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille. © Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artstar, New York

Jean-Michel Basquiat Xerox Works at Nahmad Contemporary

Aside from just underlining Basquiat's extraordinary sense for visual language, the upcoming exhibition will show that he was also a **genuine pioneer of the pre-digital age**, as well as his great ability to **embrace self-appropriative technique** which definitely makes him more than just a vibrant and talented painter.

The exhibition could not be possible without the loans from numerous important collections, primarily the Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat, museums and institutions such as the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille and the Louis Vuitton Foundation. It will be accompanied by **an extensive catalog** including texts written by Dieter Buchhart, Christopher D. Stackhouse and Eric Robertson.

Jean-Michel Basquiat: Xerox will be on display at Nahmad Contemporary in New York from **12 March** until **31 May 2019**.