

WORDS ARE ALL WE HAVE: PAINTINGS BY JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT
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Inside Art

By ROBIN POGREBIN

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The Words of Basquiat



Jean-Michel Basquiat's "Moses and the Egyptians" (1982). Credit: The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat/Artestar, New York

In Jean-Michel Basquiat's 1982 work "Moses and the Egyptians" he wove in phrases like "staff into serpent trick" and "water into blood."

The piece, on loan from the Guggenheim Bilbao, will be among the 25 works highlighting Basquiat's frequent use of language in painting at Nahmad Contemporary from May 2 to June 11.

Curated by Dieter Buchhart, who organized the Brooklyn Museum's recent show on Basquiat's notebooks, the exhibition focuses on the artist's combination of the "cutup" style of the Beat writer William S. Burroughs with the sampling techniques of early rappers.

"What does the word mean in the painting?" Mr. Buchhart said. "Language was like a weapon for Basquiat."

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/15/arts/design/christies-auction-a-rock-a-basketball-hitler-on-his-knees.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBasquiat%2C%20Jean-Michel%20&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pg_type=collection&r=0

A Rock, a Basketball, Hitler on His Knees

Maybe you were looking forward to seeing David Hammons's 2006 rock head in the Mnuchin Gallery's acclaimed exhibition of the artist and figured you had plenty of time to get there, because the show doesn't close until May 27. Or maybe the head, with its tight helmet of dark hair, was something you had already admired and were planning to revisit.

Either way, you're out of luck: The head is gone.

Christie's took the sculpture out of the show this week so it could sell the piece, for an estimated \$800,000 to \$1.2 million, at its special themed auction on May 8.

The move is unorthodox (auction houses generally sell things after a show has closed), and it could seem crassly opportunistic, as if Christie's were capitalizing on the show's strong reviews.

It would also seem to be especially disruptive for an exhibition in which Mr. Hammons carefully selected each piece as well as its placement. Indeed, the artist at the last minute substituted a 2006 head for a 1997 head — which was featured in the show's catalog — because he felt it fit better.

But business is business, and the rock head's owner, J. Michael Evans, president of the Chinese e-commerce firm Alibaba, was apparently ready to sell. Mr. Hammons hasn't complained (he doesn't give interviews), the Mnuchin Gallery declined to comment (it has replaced the rock head with another from 2004), and Loic Gouzer, Christie's deputy chairman, postwar and contemporary art, who secured the head, said this was "nothing very unusual, the Mnuchin show is a commercial show."

Mr. Gouzer was also busy landing bigger fish for the themed auction — based on Bruce Nauman's sculpture, "Henry Moore Bound to Fail" — namely two pieces that his boss, Brett Gorvy, had called "iconic" in an interview: Jeff Koons's floating basketball (expected to sell for about \$12 million) and Maurizio Cattelan's kneeling statue of Hitler (estimated at \$10 million to \$15 million).

The basketball, consigned by Peter Brant, is "perhaps one of the most important art objects since the Duchamp urinal," Mr.

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DAVID HAMMONS

David Hammons's "Stone Head" (2006) was removed from a Mnuchin Gallery show to be part of a Christie's auction.



THE ESTATE OF JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT/ARTESTAR, NEW YORK

Jean-Michel Basquiat's "Moses and the Egyptians."

Gouzer said. "It became viral because it was taken from everyday life and put on a pedestal."

The Cattelan, which came from David Ganek, is controversial. Who, after all, wants to keep a life-size Hitler in the house? (The sculpture prompted outrage when it was placed at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto in 2012.) In fact, the collector Stefan Edlis, a Holocaust survivor, owned an edition of the sculpture called "Him."

Mr. Gorvy likened it to Francis Bacon's 1953 "Study After Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X," commonly known as

the "Screaming Pope" in that it captured "a man of power at his most humble."

"Is he praying for redemption or is this showing the man behind the evil?" Mr. Gorvy said.

"He's creating layers of meaning," he added referring to Mr. Cattelan. "You bring to it your own interpretation."

Speaking of Mr. Cattelan, for Frieze New York 2016 (which starts May 5) he will be restaging his 1994 installation "Enter at Your Own Risk — Do Not Touch, Do Not Feed, No Smoking, No Photographs, No Dogs, Thank You," which features a live donkey, illuminated by a crystal chandelier.

Sensuous Magdalene

Those who did not study 17th-century Italian art may not be familiar with Guido Cagnacci, who was only rediscovered in the 1950s.

But if you do know him, you'll know that his early 1660s canvas "The Repentant Magdalene" — depicting a prostrate, largely bare Mary Magdalene — is widely considered a masterpiece.

"It's one of the absolute top 17th-century Italian paintings in America," said Xavier F. Salomon, the chief curator at the Frick Collection, where it will be on view from Oct. 25 through

Jan. 22.

Mr. Salomon chose the painting as part of the Frick's exchange program with the Norton Simon Art Foundation in Pasadena, Calif. "The Cagnacci, the Guercino at the Met and the Gentileschi that the Getty bought the 'Danae,'" Mr. Salomon said. "They are the three top Baroque pictures in America."

Cagnacci took some time to catch on, in part because he was an eccentric artist, whose work — while religious in content — had an eroticism that alienated his contemporaries.

"His paintings have this incredibly sensuous aspect, almost a 19th-century quality to them, so strange and unsettling," Mr. Salomon said. "Because of that, people did not really appreciate the artist until fairly modern times, when Fellini was strong."

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Theaster Gates Solo

The Los Angeles gallery Regen Projects is now representing Theaster Gates, the multidisciplinary artist who turned a closed housing project in a Chicago neighborhood into an art center. He will have a solo show, of all new work, at the gallery in January.

"The community outreach he's done almost becomes like a medium," said Shaun Caley Regen, the gallery's president, "a radical creativity that engages social practice as much as it does art."