

FIGURE 2: DEBLACKBOXING BASQUIAT BY COLORING HIS DECADE OF FAME

What I hope to make clear through the timeline below is that factors outside of the properties of the artwork itself -- scale, medium/materials, subject matter, composition, etc. -- are absolutely necessary to understanding, rationalizing, and predicting the value ascribed to Basquiat’s artwork -- both as an artist on the whole as well as specific artworks within his oeuvre. The information below is largely adopted from a timeline provided by the Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. I have condensed the Estate’s timeline, extracted relevant details, and incorporated a system of color-coding.

KEY

INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE (OTHER ARTISTS, GALLERISTS, GIRLFRIENDS, FRIENDS)

OTHER ARTISTS FEATURED IN GROUP SHOWS ALONGSIDE BASQUIAT

LOCATIONS, GALLERIES, CLUBS, SHOWS

ARTWORKS

MOTIFS, SYMBOLS, SIGNS, THEMES

MEDIA AND CRITICISM

1960:

- *Basquiat is born in Park Slope, Brooklyn of Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage. Father Gerard Basquiat was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Mother Matilde Andradas was born in Brooklyn of Puerto Rican parents.*

1978:

- Basquiat leaves home
- Basquiat and Al Diaz - close friend, fellow graffiti artist, and co-conspirator - form a street art collaboration and operate under the pseudonym SAMO.
- Basquiat begins spending time at the Mudd Club, a community of artists, musicians, and actors who come to define the alternative culture of the Lower East Side.

1979:

- SAMO IS DEAD: Basquiat and Diaz split up.

- Basquiat makes money by selling t-shirts and making postcards that have a highly expressionist, graffiti-esque aesthetic. Themes around popular culture, including baseball players, Kennedy assassination, and mass consumerism, characterize his early works.
- Basquiat meets Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf at Club 57; Haring and Basquiat immediately become good friends and remain close.

1980:

- Basquiat's art is shown for the first time: "Times Square Show" organized by Colab with other then-emerging artists, including: John Ahearn, Jane Dickson, Mike Glier, Mimi Gross, David Hammons, Jenny Holzer, Joe Lewis, Candace Hill-Montgomery, Tom Otterness, Lee Quinones, Kenny Scharf, Kiki Smith, and Robin Winters.
- The show is enthusiastically received by art world, and in the review of the show, *Art in America* specifically mentions Basquiat.
 - "A patch of wall by SAMO, the omnipresent graffiti sloganeer, was a knock-out combination of de Kooning and subway spray-paint scribbles" (Jeffrey Deitch).
- Glenn O'Brien asks Basquiat to play the lead role in "New York Beat"; O'Brien also introduces Basquiat to Andy Warhol per Basquiat's request - O'Brien helps Basquiat gain access to a lot of the 1980s New York culture scene.

1981:

- Basquiat is included in the show "New York/New Wave" organized by Diego Cortez with both emerging and well-established artists of the time. For this show, Basquiat was for the first time shown alongside recognized, valued artists and was given a lot of visibility, both in terms of space attributed to his work during the show and press reception from the show.
 - Artists featured in the show included Edie Baskin, Keith Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe, Kenny Scharf, Andy Warhol, as well as a number of lesser known graffiti artists.
- 1st one artist exhibition and 1st international exhibition in Italy
- Included in NYC Group Show "Public Address", organized and curated by dealer Annina Nosei. The subject matter explored is sociopolitical; there are numerous important and well established artists, including Bill Beckley, Mike Glier, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, and Peter Nadin.
 - Basquiat explores social justice themed subject matter, including imagery of policemen, rabbis, and Native Americans.
- Nosei becomes Basquiat's primary dealer, his first well known and reputable dealer; she helps him in a number of ways, including giving him a studio space and helping him to find apartments

- 1st major article published about Basquiat in *Artforum*, "The Radiant Child" by Rene Ricard. Other artists that Ricard discusses include John Ahearn, Fred Braithwaite, Francesco Clemente, Dondi, Futura 2000, Keith Haring, Lady Pink, and Judy Rifka.
 - "I'm always amazed by how people come up with things. Like Jean-Michel. How did he come up with those words he puts all over everything? Their aggressively handmade look fits his peculiarly political sensibility [...] Here the possession of almost anything of even marginal value becomes a token of corrupt materialism [...] The elegance of Twombly is there but from the same source (graffiti) and so is the brut of the young Dubuffet" (Rene Ricard).

1982:

- Basquiat meets Shenge Kapharoah
 - They explore a lot of the same interests and themes in their work - specifically African ideologies and the African diaspora - and Kapharoah has an influence on Basquiat -- "You can see our friendship in the work. The paintings speak for themselves ... Moses and the Egyptians, Charles the First, lines like 'most kings get their heads chopped off. ' This is what we were talking about" (Shenge Kapharoah).
- Basquiat has his first one-artist exhibition in the USA at Annina Nosei Gallery in New York, and the show is a huge success.
 - Paintings in this show include *Arroz con Pollo*, *Self-Portrait*, *Untitled (Per Capita)*, and *Untitled (Two Heads on Gold)*.
 - "Basquiat's great strength is his ability to merge his absorption of imagery from the streets, the newspapers, and TV with the spiritualism of his Haitian heritage, injecting both into a marvelously intuitive understanding of the language of modern painting" (Jeffrey Deitch).
- Basquiat is included in the group show "*Transavanguardia: Italia/ America*," organized by Achille Bonito Oliva at the Galleria Civica del Comune in Italy. The exhibition explores a new generation of cross-cultural, neo-expressionist artists, including Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, David Deutsch, David Salle, and Julian Schnabel.
- Basquiat has his solo show at the Larry Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles, arranged by Larry Gagosian with Annina Nosei.
 - Paintings exhibited include *Six Crimee*, *Untitled (LA Painting)*, and *Untitled (Yellow Tar and Feathers)*.
 - Basquiat stays in Los Angeles for a few months, establishes close relationships with numerous individuals there -- in both the club scene and the art-world collectors scene -- and returns frequently for the rest of his life.
- Basquiat is invited to participate in the international exhibition "Documenta 7" in Kassel, West Germany. At twenty-one, he is the youngest of the 176 artists included, which

include well-established artists such as Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, A. R. Penck, Gerhard Richter, Cy Twombly, and Andy Warhol, as well as younger artists such as Francesco Clemente, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Lee Quinones, and David Salle.

- Paintings shown include *Acque Pericolose (Poison Oasis)* and *Arroz con Pollo*.
- "Jean-Michel Basquiat ... has an inbred compositional sense that verges on good taste, as was particularly evident in his Documenta canvas *Acque Pericolose* [...] his strength comes not so much from the social-commentary aspect of his work [...] but from his Twomblyesque lyrical qualities" (Noel Frackman and Ruth Kaufmann).
- Basquiat creates his first portfolio of prints, *Anatomy*.
- Basquiat has his first one-artist exhibition at the Galerie Bruno Bischofberger in Zurich, Switzerland, and Bruno Bischofberger becomes his exclusive dealer in Europe.
 - This exhibition marks the first showing of Basquiat's exposed corner crossbar paintings.
- *Art in America* publishes an artist titled "Report from New York: The Graffiti Question" by Suzi Gablik which identifies numerous artists including Basquiat, Braithwaite, Futura 2000, Haring, and Quinones as apart of a an emerging "graffiti movement" in the Lower East Side.
 - Basquiat's artwork helps draw recognition of graffiti art in the artworld, and during this time the Lower East Side art scene accrues a stronger reputation. Exhibitions move from clubs to alternative gallery spaces, including the Fun Gallery, East Seventh Street Gallery, Kenkeleba House, Gracie Mansion, B-Side, Area-X, and Civilian Warfare.
- Basquiat's has personal differences with Annina Nosei and eventually finds a new dealer in New York. This period of turbulence is also an incredibly fruitful period of production for Basquiat.
 - "I had some money; I made the best paintings ever. I was completely reclusive, worked a lot, took a lot of drugs. I was awful to people."
- Basquiat has a one-artist exhibition at the Fun Gallery organized by Bill Stelling and Patti Astor. The paintings included in this exhibition are prices well beyond his market value at the time.
 - The show included approximately thirty paintings that were largely produced during his period of productivity in his Crosby Street loft. These paintings were some of Basquiat's personal favorites that he ultimately ended up keeping in his own collection, and they reflect the rawness, messiness, and authenticity of his approach to canvas. These paintings are seen as a response to criticism that his attention in the art-world took away from his originality.
 - Paintings include *Cabeza*, *Charles the First*, *Jawbone of an Ass*, *Three Quarters of Olympia Minus the Servant*, and *Untitled (Sugar Ray Robinson)*

- "Gut emotions lie behind the phrases and images, not the desire to make neo-expressionist commodities Basquiat makes paintings, but eschews the medium's traditional rules" (Susan Hapgood).
- "Jean-Michel Basquiat's show at the Fun Gallery was his best show yet. He was at home; the hanging was perfect, the paintings more authentic than ever" (Nicolas A. Moufarrege).
- Basquiat poses for photographer James Van Der Zee, well known for documenting important black artists, singers, and writers of the 20th century. Diego Cortez arranges the photoshoot to accompany Henry Geldzahler's interview with Basquiat for *Interview*.
- Basquiat has a one-artist exhibition in the Galerie Delta in Rotterdam. Paintings shown include *LNAPRK* and *Kings of Egypt*, and again the crossbars of the stretcher corners are exposed.
- Basquiat spends time in Los Angeles with Rammellzee and graffiti artist Toxic; he develops a close relationship with Michael and Tina Chow, who allow him to dine and drink with friends at Mr. Chow's in Beverly Hills in exchange for paintings.
- In Los Angeles, Gagosian introduces Basquiat to Fred Hoffman, an art dealer who helps Basquiat produce prints, including three *Untitled* sets, *Back of the Neck*, and *Tuxedo*.
- In New York, Basquiat produces a rap record with Fred Braithwaite, Toxic, A-One, Al Diaz, and Rammellzee and dj's at various clubs.
 - Basquiat's admiration of and interest in jazz is seen in his artworks of the time, including: *Charles the First*, *CPRKR*, *Discography (One)*, *Discography (Two)*, *Horn Players*, and *Max Roach*

1983:

- Annina Nosei has a one-artist exhibition of Basquiat's work that includes print portfolios
- Basquiat returns to Los Angeles for his second show at Larry Gagosian Gallery -- works included feature texts and images related to famous boxers, musicians, and Hollywood films and the roles played by blacks in them.
- Basquiat is included in the 1983 Biennial Exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and becomes the youngest artist to have ever been included at age 22. The exhibition includes more than 40 established and upcoming artists, including Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, David Salle, and Cindy Sherman.
 - The two works exhibited are *Dutch Settlers* and *Untitled (Skull)*.
- Basquiat begins dating Paige Powell. Powell is an editor at *Interview* and helps facilitate Basquiat's relationship with Andy Warhol, a publisher of *Interview*.
- Without a primary dealer in New York, Basquiat has a small, private showing of paintings and drawings at Powell's apartment.
- Basquiat, Toxic, and Nick Taylor spend a week in Jamaica. Basquiat records his experience through drawings and cryptic notes.

- Basquiat moves into the building that Andy Warhol owns, and his relationship with Warhol takes off; Warhol and Basquiat exercise together, paint each other's portraits, attend art events together, and regularly discuss philosophies of life, art, personal experience, and family.
 - “Basquiat finds the time to go with Warhol to parties and openings. In return, Basquiat is Warhol's link to the current scene ... he finds Basquiat's youth invigorating" (Cathleen McGuigan).
 - "Jean-Michel called, he wanted some philosophy, he came over and we talked, and he's afraid he's just going to be a flash in the pan. And I told him not to worry, that he wouldn't be." (Andy Warhol).
- Basquiat is deeply affected by the death of Michael Stewart in September of 1983.
 - Stewart, a young black graffiti artist, was arrested and subsequently died from injuries sustained during the arrest by New York City police.
 - Despite his status as an artist and the value prescribed to him via the art-world, Basquiat felt haunted by the reality that incidents such as this were a constant part of his life; his “value” was not fungible in this way, his blackness entailed unfortunate realities.
 - "One thing that affected Jean-Michel greatly was the Michael Stewart story He was completely freaked out. It was like it could have been him. It showed him how vulnerable he was" (Keith Haring).
 - "It could have been me, it could have been me" (Jean-Michel Basquiat).
- Basquiat and Warhol travel to Milan, Zurich, and Madrid, as well as Tokyo where the Akira Ikeda Gallery has an exhibition of Basquiat's work through Bischofberger.
- In New York, Basquiat begins collaborating with Andy Warhol and Francesco Clemente, per Bischofberger's arrangement. Basquiat and Warhol also begin to execute their own collaborative paintings.
- Basquiat returns to Los Angeles and during this winter spends time with Madonna, whom he knows from the East Village scene and specifically the Mudd Club. Larry Gagosian and Fred Hoffman help Basquiat arrange for housing in Venice, California.
 - In his apartment/studio in Venice and assisted by Matt Dike, a friend and Los Angeles dj, Basquiat executes a series of paintings on wood panels.
 - These paintings, later shown at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York, include *Flexible*, *Water-Worshipper*, and *Gold Griot*.
- By the end of 1983, Basquiat's only primary dealer is Bischofberger in Europe. Basquiat notoriously had trouble with his relationships with women and art dealers.

-1984:

- Basquiat travels to Hawaii for the first time (and returns frequently thereafter). In Hawaii he rents a ranch and executes a number of drawings and paintings.

- Upon returning to New York, Basquiat establishes **Mary Boone** as his primary dealer. **The Mary Boone Gallery** also represented artists such as **Eric Fischl**, **David Salle**, and **Julian Schnabel**. Basquiat's European dealer **Bischofberger** also represents **Andy Warhol**, **Sandro Chia**, **Francesco Clemente**, and **Gerhard Richter**.
 - "He was very unsure of this prospect, though he considered it a good career move, he was not interested in the idea of becoming an artist for another dealer" (Paige Powell).
- Basquiat's first one-artist exhibition at the Mary Boone Gallery, which includes paintings such as *Bird as Buddha*, *Brown Spots*, *Eye*, *Untitled (Africa)*, and *Wine of Babylon*, receives **mixed reviews**:
 - "The early work is of an **original primitivism**, with a **graffiti heritage**. The originality has quickly become stylized and somewhat self-conscious in this current show" (Donald Kuspit).
 - "The young artist uses color well But more remarkable is the educated quality of his line and the stateliness of his compositions, both of which bespeak a formal training that, in fact, he never had" (Vivien Raynor)."
 - "And throughout floated a **disembodied eye**, which seemed to allude both to the self-the 'I'-and to the witness or seer. But one sensed little of what Basquiat is witness to, or of why it bears accounting" (Kate Linker).
- Basquiat is included in an **International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York**.
- In the Spring of 1984, Basquiat's 1982 painting *Untitled (Skull)* is sold at **Christie's auction of contemporary paintings**. The painting had originally been purchased in 1983 (the year prior) for \$4,000 from a small group exhibition called **Fast at Alexander Milliken Gallery in New York** and fetched \$19,000 at auction. This price (and this price increase over such a short period of time) was notable for any artist, nonetheless a twenty-three year old artist of color.
- Basquiat has his first museum exhibition, which is organized by **Mark Francis** at **The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh**. The exhibition surveys paintings from 1981 to 1984, and travels to the **Institute for Contemporary Arts in London**, and the **Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam**.
- The **collaborative paintings** of Basquiat, Warhol, and Clemente are shown at the **Galerie Bruno Bischofberger** in Zurich. The paintings, about fifteen in total, are significant because they confirm Basquiat's status and art-world success.
- Basquiat is featured in the exhibition **"Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 Years of Afro-American Art,"** organized by the Center Gallery of Bucknell University and including: **Blade**, **Dondi**, **Futura 2000**, **William Hawkins**, **Bill Traylor**, **Robert Colescott**, **Bob Thompson**, **Romare Bearden**, **Elizabeth Catlett**, **Ed Clark**, **Sam Gilliam**, **David Hammons**, **Palmer Hayden**, **William H. Johnson**, **Jacob Lawrence**, **Norman Lewis**, **Joe Overstreet**, **Howardena Pindell**, **Betye Saar**, and **Alison Saar**.

- Basquiat was generally speaking not very well received among the community of artists of color.
- The paintings shown were *Danny Rosen and Untitled*.
- Basquiat's friends become increasingly concerned about his excessive drug use. Because of drugs and also because of his concern that people would steal work from his apartment, Basquiat becomes increasingly paranoid.

-1985:

- Basquiat has a one-artist exhibition at the Galerie Bruno Bischofberger in Zurich.
 - Paintings include *Max Roach, Tabac, and Zydeco*.
- Basquiat appears on the cover of *The New York Times* magazine; Cathleen McGuigan's article "New Art, New Money: The Marketing of American Artist" is met with a lot of resistance.
 - To be a race-identified race-refugee is to tap-dance on a tightrope, making your precarious existence a question of balance and to whom you concede a mortgage on your mind and body and lien on your soul" (Greg Tate).
 - "The extent of Basquiat's success would no doubt be impossible for an artist of lesser gifts. Not only does he possess a bold sense of color and composition, but, in his best paintings, unlike many of his contemporaries, he maintains a fine balance between seemingly contradictory forces: control and spontaneity, menace and wit Still, the nature and rapidity of his climb is unimaginable in another era" (Cathleen McGuigan).
- Basquiat has his second one-artist show at the Mary Boone Gallery.
 - Paintings include *Gold Griot, Grillo, Flexible, Wicker, His Glue-Sniffing Valet, and BigJoy*.
 - "Because he is black and because he is young some critics will not be able to resist the temptation to link Basquiat to the more obvious forms of New York black and Puerto Rican street art In his hands black vision becomes at once private, public, didactic, playful, serious, sardonic, responsible, and, above all, deliberate Basquiat's blues typography, at once interruptive and complete, makes visual black song, with equivalents to pause, shout, spacing, and breath Yet even here we must be wary of the claim that Basquiat signals a synthesis of the Afro-Atlantic and European artistic traditions, when his actual biography seems to speak of a graffitist sensibility of the naif that has been sophisticated by a SoHo savvy audacity" (Robert Farris Thompson).
- Basquiat, Haring, Clemente, and Scharf are commissioned to execute collaborative art installations for the Palladium, a new NYC club that was opening by impresarios and Studio 54 founders, Ian Schrager and Steve Rubell.
 - Basquiat executes two large mural-sized paintings for the Palladium's Michael Todd Room.

- Basquiat and Warhol have a show at the **Tony Shafrazi Gallery**, where sixteen of their collaborative paintings are shown. For a poster to advertise the show, **Warhol and Basquiat pose together in boxing trunks and gloves**. The show is met with criticism, and this poor reception strains Basquiat and Warhol's friendship.
 - "Last year, I wrote of Jean-Michel Basquiat that he had a chance of becoming a very good painter providing he didn't succumb to the forces that would make him an art world mascot. This year, it appears that those forces have prevailed. . . "(Vivien Raynor).
 - "Having resided over our era for considerably more than his requisite fifteen minutes, Andy Warhol keeps his star in ascendancy by tacking it to the rising comets of the moment" (Eleanor Heartney).
- Basquiat goes to Tokyo for the opening of his one-artist show at the **Akira Ikeda Gallery**.
- **Annina Nosei** holds an exhibition of Basquiat's 1982 paintings.
- Basquiat's **deteriorating health, due to excessive drug overuse and alcohol dependence**, becomes more noticeable, particularly the **dark discolorations on his face** caused by the removal of his spleen, making it more difficult for his body to flush out toxins.
 - "Jean-Michel was really upset about the spots and asked me and lots of other people for advice about dermatologists and treatments. I told him that if his blood was pure they'd go away. He thought it was sadly funny that Andy's oxidation portrait of him had given him spots like those on his face You can see lots of self-fulfilling prophecies in his work, or in the work of anybody whose work runs deep" (Glenn O'Brien).

-1986:

- Basquiat travels to **Los Angeles** for his last show at the **Larry Gagosian Gallery**.
 - Paintings include *Peruvian Maid*, *J's Milagro*, and *Link Parabole*.
- Basquiat travels to Atlanta for an exhibition of his drawings at the **Fay Gold Gallery**.
 - "He was very paranoid ... being in the South. After much discussion, Jean-Michel did a news interview that he very much did not want to do " (Fay Gold).
- Basquiat travels to Africa and is joined by Bischofberger, who at Basquiat's urging, arranged for a show for Basquiat in **Abidjan, Ivory Coast**.
- Basquiat loses his representation with the **Mary Boone Gallery** due to tensions in their relationship. Bischofberger continues to represent Basquiat in Europe, and helps to try to arrange another New York dealer for Basquiat.
- The **Kestner-Gesellschaft Museum in Hannover** has a large survey exhibition of Basquiat's work that includes over sixty paintings and drawings. Basquiat is the youngest artist ever given an exhibition there.
- Basquiat travels to **Hamburg** and contributes to **Luna Luna**, a traveling amusement park created by Andre Heller. Other contributors include: **Joseph Beuys, Salvador Dali, Sonia Delaunay, Keith Haring, David Hockney, and Roy Lichtenstein**.

- Basquiat and his long-term girlfriend Jennifer Goode break-up; her decision to breakup was driven in part by Basquiat's unrelenting dependence on drugs.
- Basquiat's perception by the artworld deteriorates and he increasingly receives negative criticism about his work from members of the art community. Basquiat understood this criticism as evidence of racism.
 - "He had to live up to being a young prodigy, which is a kind of false sainthood" (Keith Haring).
 - "Being black, he was always an outsider. Even after he was flying on the Concorde, he wouldn't be able to get a cab" (Fred Braithwaite).

-1987:

- Basquiat has a one-artist exhibition at the Galerie Daniel Templon in Paris.
 - Paintings include *Gin Soaked Critic*, *Gri Gri*, *Mono*, and *Sacred Monkey*.
- In February of 1987, Andy Warhol dies. Although their friendship had deteriorated in the last year, Basquiat is deeply impacted and devastated by Warhol's death. Basquiat paints *Gravestone* as a memorial to Warhol.
 - "It put him into a total crisis He couldn't even talk" (Fred Braithwaite).
 - "The death of Warhol made the death of Basquiat inevitable, somehow Warhol was the one person that always seemed to be able to bring Jean-Michel back from the edge. Always when Jean-Michel was in the most trouble it seemed that Andy Warhol was the person who he would approach After Andy was gone there was no one that Jean-Michel was in such awe of that he would respond to" (Donald Rubell).
- Basquiat has a show at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery of three large works on paper. Through Shafrazi, Basquiat meets Vrej Baghoomian, who purchases paintings and acts as a dealer for Basquiat's work moving forward.
- Basquiat's friend Rick Prol becomes his studio assistant.

-1988:

- Not having had an exhibition of paintings in New York for more than a year and a half, Basquiat exhibits the new paintings that will be shown in Paris and Dusseldorf at Baghoomian's gallery at the Cable Building in SoHo.
 - Paintings include *Light Blue Movers*, *Riddle Me This Batman*, *She Installs Confidence and Picks His Brain Like a Salad*, and *To Be Titled*.
- Basquiat travels to France for his one-artist show at the Galerie Yvon Lambert in Paris. While there, Basquiat meets Ouattara, a painter from the Ivory Coast who invites him to visit him in Africa.
- Basquiat travels to Dusseldorf for his one-artist exhibition at the Galerie Hans Mayer.
- Basquiat has a one-artist exhibition at the Vrej Baghoomian Gallery in New York.

- Paintings include *Eroica I*, *Eroica II*, *The Dingoes That Park Their Brains with Their Gum*, *The Mechanics That Always Have a Gear Left Over*, and *Riding with Death*.
- This show is well-received by art world critics and overall met with praise, redeeming Basquiat in the art-world mind.
- "Basquiat's use of line is the way he commits to record what has been seen. Whatever your point of focus, in any given moment the work is crystal clear [...] His line is the product of his mental process, the active proof of the passage from inner thought to articulation" (Demosthenes Davvetas).
- Basquiat travels to his ranch in Hawaii, stopping in Dallas and Los Angeles. This was in an attempt to get sober as Basquiat was resistant to drug addiction facilities.
- In August of 1988, Basquiat dies in his Great Jones Street loft in New York at age twenty-seven. The autopsy report from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Manhattan Mortuary, lists cause of death as "acute mixed drug intoxication (opiates-cocaine)."
- A private funeral is held at the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Chapel. The funeral is attended by Basquiat's family and close friends, including Keith Haring, Francesco Clemente, Paige Powell, and others. Jeffrey Deitch delivers the eulogy. Basquiat is buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.
- "Jean-Michel lived like a flame. He burned really bright. Then the fire went out. But the embers are still hot" (Fred Braithwaite).