Basquiat was interviewed in 1982 at age 21 on the cusp of his rising international fame. He explains his interest in books and history, the relationship between words and images, and how he gathers inspiration. Basquiat’s sisters, Lisane and Jeanine, reflected as adults about their brother’s genius and legacy, and the sensitive man behind the provocative myth that grew after his death.

The Brooklyn Museum brought together over 100 works in their 2005 retrospective, showcasing many pieces never seen on U.S. soil and tracing the artist’s development, legacy, and lasting relevance.

Basquiat: The Unknown Notebooks, organized by the Brooklyn Museum in 2015, gave audiences a glimpse into the mind and reflective process that fueled the artist. Alongside archival material and finished paintings, 160 pages of the deeply personal, rarely seen journals explored the importance of writing, sketching, and reflection in Basquiat’s work.

PBS documentary series American Masters celebrated the 30th anniversary of Basquiat’s death in 2018 with Basquiat: Rage to Riches, an intimate profile compiled from archival footage and interviews with surviving family and friends.

In 2017, gallerist and curator Fred Hoffman, who worked closely with Basquiat for years in California, published the first comprehensive art historical study of the artists career, with in-depth analysis of over 150 paintings and works on paper.

The Barbican Gallery, London, hosted the UK’s first large-scale survey of Basquiat’s career in 2018 with over 100 works supplemented by archival materials, film excerpts, and photographs. In conjunction with the show, The Guardian spoke with those closest to Basquiat during his days as a struggling artist and subsequent rise to fame in 1980s New York.

In 2019, The Brant Foundation Art Study Center opened their new East Village space – comprising 7,000 square feet across four floors – with an immersive and comprehensive homage to Basquiat’s relationship with neighborhood and its artistic past. The foundation’s exhibition website includes a virtual tour and extensive installation views of the 70 works on view.

The Guggenheim’s 2019 exhibition, Defacement, honored Basquiat’s engagement with contemporary issues such as the neglect of and hostility towards black artists in dominantly white art market, and the fragility of black bodies under the force of police and local authorities. The exhibition itself became embroiled in conversations about equity and discrimination.

Writing the Future runs through spring 2021 at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, exploring Basquiat’s relationships and collaborations with hip-hop community and how his career embodies the artistic and material transition of street art from haphazard graffiti adorning subways and sidewalks, to canvas and paper mounted in galleries. Digital resources explore the artists and major themes in the show.

50 cent Piece from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32
Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

Born in Brooklyn to Haitian and Puerto Rican parents, Jean-Michel Basquiat burst into the New York art scene in the late 1970s. Basquiat was first known for graffiti works co-produced with Al Diaz (b. 1959), tagged SAMO, in the midst of the growing hip-hop culture in Lower East Side Manhattan. When Basquiat’s work was pulled into the 1980s art market boom, he was quickly invited to exhibit in prestigious New York galleries and museums. In response, Basquiat was critical of the institutional racism prevalent in the 1980s contemporary art world he inhabited, and in the United States as a whole. His prolific body of work often addressed the hypocrisy of both excluding and tokenizing artists of color in galleries, museums, auction houses, and scholarship. The Daros Suite addresses these themes throughout the history of art and highlights powerful Black historical figures including François Duvalier, Marcus Garvey, Sugar Ray Robinson, and Malcolm X. At the same time, the thirty-two drawings offer Basquiat’s commentaries on life, art, politics, and economics in the 1980s United States.

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Ascent from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**Bishop** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**Dog Leg Study** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

Boxer Rebellion from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Dwellers in the Marshes from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

*Formless* from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

**False from The Daros Suite**, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021.83.6.1-32

**King Alphonso** from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32*

**Large Body of Water** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**King Brand** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**Leeches** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

Mace from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Liberty from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

**Monticello** from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32
**Napolean Stereotype as Portrayed** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983  
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32  

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Olympic from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Pelptic Ulcer from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Skin Head Wig from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Replicas from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**Roast** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

Titian from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

Snakeman from The Daros Suite, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

**Techu-Anpu** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021.83.6.1-32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

**Wolf Sausage** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

**Unbleached Titanium** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Undiscovered Genius from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

PPCD (aka Brooklyn) from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

**Tree Version** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982–1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1–32

Eye of Troof from The Daros Suite, 1982-1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

**Savonarola** from *The Daros Suite*, 1982-1983

Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32

On view July 7 – December 12, 2021

**Steel from The Daros Suite**, 1982–1983
Acrylic, oil crayon, pastel, color crayon, charcoal, and pencil on paper; Suite of 32

*On view July 7 – December 12, 2021*

Private Collection; L2021:83.6.1-32
Jean-Michel Basquiat (American, 1960-88)

**Untitled.** 1988
Acrylic and oilstick on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:20.4

*On view April 14 – July 18, 2021*
Jean-Michel Basquiat’s interest in the human figure was sparked by a car accident. At the age of seven, the young artist was hit by a car while playing in his neighborhood of Flatbush, Brooklyn. A broken arm and serious internal injuries kept him in the hospital for weeks, where he was kept company by a copy of *Gray’s Anatomy*—a gift from his mother, to help her son understand his injuries and recovery. Basquiat counted the medical textbook’s detailed anatomical illustrations as one of his greatest influences, the foundation upon which he elaborated with his groundbreaking visual aesthetic. *Untitled (The Black Athlete)* belongs to a series Basquiat completed during his skyrocketing rise to artistic celebrity in the early 1980s. Exploring his own Haitian and Puerto Rican identity, and the segregation he witnessed growing up, Basquiat painted the heroic forms of Black athletes such as baseball player Hank Aaron and boxers Muhammad Ali, Jack Johnson, and Joe Lewis—each adorned with a crown to denote their eternal success, power, and victory.

*On view February 3 – May 9, 2021*
Jean-Michel Basquiat (American, 1960-88)

Vincent van Gogh in a Wax Museum in Amsterdam, 1985
Oilstick on paper
Private Collection; L2020:103.5

The brief career of Jean-Michel Basquiat was fostered through a creatively diverse childhood and the influence of music and street art. Basquiat found professional and popular success in the 1980s alongside Neo-Expressionism—characterized by raw brushwork, intense color, and an embrace of an untrained aesthetic—and was the youngest artist included in the 1983 Whitney Biennial. Grounded in complex racial and political themes and dedicated to highlighting the lack of diversity in the art world, his practice was fueled by asking difficult questions, exposing the divides created by wealth and power, and honoring the value of different experiences. Basquiat’s favored medium of oil sticks drawn on paper or unprimed canvas emulates the impulsive expression of graffiti artists, creating images that often challenge viewers with an uneasy ambiguity and deceptive simplicity. Expression, gesture, and sensory impact initially appear to take precedence over compositional structure in his work, producing a raw energy and apparent spontaneity intent on provoking a visceral response. Yet Basquiat adroitly choreographs the space in his works, too, using “empty” areas to stage the drama of his staccato mark-making.

On view December 16, 2020 – March 21, 2021
Jean-Michel Basquiat (American, 1960-88)

**Untitled (Buck), 1982**

Oilstick on paper

Private Collection; L2020:103.4

*On view December 16, 2020 – March 21, 2021*