

# CHRISTIE'S

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

### *DUSTHEADS*

ONE OF BASQUIAT'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED PAINTINGS



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988)  
*Dustheads*  
acrylic, oilstick, spray enamel and metallic paint on canvas  
72 x 84 in. (182.8 x 213.3 cm.)  
Painted in 1982.  
Estimate: \$25-35 million

#### POST-WAR & CONTEMPORARY ART EVENING SALE

15 May 2013

**New York** – On May 15, Christie's Evening Auction of Post-War & Contemporary Art will present a major painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat. Executed in 1982 at the height of his creative development and fame, this ambitious work can be seen in both its scale and ambition as its epitome of his signature style. Painted with a combusive palette, *Dustheads* becomes an intuitive, gestural whirlwind made during the pinnacle of the artist's practice. With an estimate of \$25-35 million, *Dustheads* will likely break Basquiat's record of \$26.4 million, which was just achieved last November in New York.

Set against a backdrop of intense, inky blackness, the brightly colored figures in Jean-Michel Basquiat's *Dustheads* represent the ultimate tour-de-force of expressive line, color and form that has come to embody Basquiat's iconic painterly oeuvre. An acknowledged masterpiece from a pivotal year in the artist's career, this 1982 painting demonstrates Basquiat's unique ability to combine raw, unabashed expressive emotion whilst

displaying a draughtmanship that was unrivalled in modern painting. Housed in the same private collection for almost 20 years, *Dustheads* was included in the seminal exhibition of the artist's work organized by the Fondation Beyeler, Basel in 2010 (and which later travelled to the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris) and is widely referenced in the artist's monographs, including the cover of the catalogue to the 2006 Basquiat retrospective organized by the Fondazione La Triennale di Milano. This painting displays the full force of Basquiat's emotive power as an artist and provides ample evidence of his unique painterly language —a language that came to define a generation and one that is still heard loudly today.

*"Basquiat had always been considered an outsider by the art world establishment, yet the everlasting power, relevance and integrity of his work have gradually identified him as the creative leader of his generation. Only since Pollock has a painter come to personify such artistic freedom and irreverence. Dustheads, a portrait of two figures doped up on 'angel dust,' exemplifies Basquiat's artistic creation with 'no strings attached.'" The work is undoubtedly one of his best paintings and perhaps the last great masterpiece to come to auction"* **declared Loic Gouzer, International Specialist of Post-War and Contemporary Art.**

Monumental, yet intensely personal, *Dustheads* succinctly captures the vitality and vivacity of Basquiat's artistic practice during this key period of the artist's career. The pair of ghost-like figures portrayed in *Dustheads* is composed of a rich symphony of brushstrokes and marks that Basquiat draws together into an opus of line, color and form. Composed of broad brushstrokes of acrylic paint, entwined with expressive scrawls of oilstick plus accents of spray enamel and metallic paint, the resulting marks vary greatly in their variety, depth and rhythmic clarity. Expressionist in its exuberance, the frenetic brushwork acts as the framework for the rest of the composition, built up methodically through layers of drips, scrawls and passages of pigment massaged with the artists own fingers.

The robust figure on the right, fully rendered in a pigment of blood red and silhouetted with a crisp white outline, aggressively dominates the composition, with its arms raised in dramatic fashion. The restrained execution of the body is contrasted with the amazing richness of the figure's mask-like face. This sumptuous figure is the latest in a lineage that Basquiat began with the loosely drawn simplistic stickmen of his early days as the graffiti artist SAMO, and by 1982 had morphed into more fully developed and executed figures yet with his use of spray paint and rapid execution, still bearing all the hallmarks from his days as a street artist tagging his work all over New York. In contrast, the second—more rudimental—figure becomes almost a mirror image or alter-ego of the first. The head, bathed in golden hues of yellow, pink and orange is much simpler and dominated by a pair of hypnotic eyes that draw the viewer in by staring out with its myriad of multi-colored concentric circles. The complex layers that are visible in the first figure are transformed into much more lyrical aspects in the second, soft tones gently merging into one another giving the appearance of radiant skin. The features are defined by Basquiat's simple movement of the hand, outlining the contours of the face, chin, teeth and cheeks in oilstick and the fragments of a body, such as it is, consists merely of a few select lines of white paint drawn across the blackness of the background, delineating the merest notion of a figure. The sheer power and expressive quality of these energetic gestures marks out *Dustheads* as an outstanding example of the art being produced during the early 1980s, one of the most exciting and innovative periods of New York's art historical supremacy.

#### **\*CHRISTIE'S HOLDS THE WORLD RECORD PRICES FOR THE ARTIST AT AUCTION**



##### **Christie's New York – 14 November 2012**

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988)

*Untitled*, 1981

oilstick, acrylic and spray enamel on canvas

78 x 68 in. (198.1 x 172.7 cm.)

**Sold : \$26,402,500**



##### **Christie's London – 27 June 2012**

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988), *Untitled*, 1981

acrylic, oilstick and spray paint on canvas

78 1/8 x 72 in. (199.5 x 182.9 cm.)

**Sold : \$20,170,071 (£12,921,250)**

**Viewing**

London - King Street

10- 16 April 2013

**Sale Preview**

New York – 20 Rockefeller Plaza

11 – 15 May 2013

**Auction**

Post-War and Contemporary Art, Evening Sale

15 May 2013

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Christie's, the world's leading art business, had global auction and private sales in 2012 that totaled £3.92 billion/\$6.27 billion. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's has since conducted the greatest and most celebrated auctions through the centuries providing a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 450 auctions annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$100 million. Christie's also has a long and successful history conducting private sales for its clients in all categories, with emphasis on Post-War and Contemporary, Impressionist and Modern, Old Masters and Jewellery. Private sales totaled £631.3 million/\$1 billion in 2012, an increase of 26% on the same period last year.

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and do not reflect costs, financing fees or application of buyer's or seller's credits.*

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