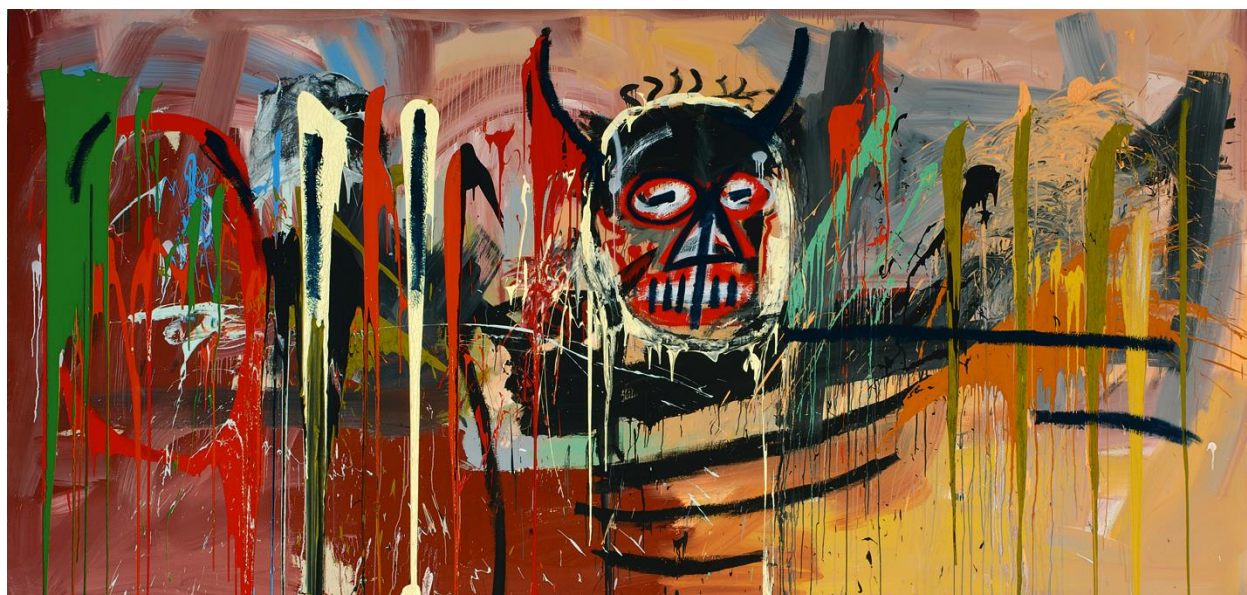


# CHRISTIE'S

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## CHRISTIE'S LEADS ITS EVENING SALE OF POST-WAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART WITH A MOMENTOUS 1982 CANVAS BY JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT

*CONSIDERED ONE OF THE TOP WORKS BY BASQUIAT AND THE COVER OF THE ARTIST'S CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ*



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988), *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas, Painted in 1982.

**New York** – Christie's is honored to lead its May 10 Evening Sale of Post-War and Contemporary Art with Jean-Michel Basquiat's explosive tour de force, *Untitled*, 1982, which is estimated to realize in excess of \$40 million. Executed in Modena, Italy in the prime year of Basquiat's meteoric career, Basquiat's *Untitled* is an epic painting, with its monumental size and visceral energy marking it as one of the artist's most seminal works. As well as having been chosen for the cover of the artist's *Catalogue Raisonné*, *Untitled* has been included in every major Basquiat retrospective and contains Basquiat's heroic portrait of himself as a fiery black devil rising amidst an explosion of paint that has been thrown onto the canvas in the manner of Jackson Pollock. It is the dynamism and spontaneity with which Basquiat constructs his painterly surface that distinguishes this work as a masterpiece, especially considering this ambitious work was painted when the artist was only 22 years old.

**Brett Gorvy, Christie's International Head of Post-War and Contemporary Art, remarked:** "We are very proud to lead our evening sale with this truly exceptional work by Basquiat. *Untitled* is a remarkably powerful canvas, which instantly engulfs any viewer standing in its monumental presence. *Untitled* is among the top three paintings from the tremendously important body of work that the artist executed in

1982 while in Modena, Italy, which would go on to shape the rest of his career. It is also the cover image of the artist's Catalogue Raisonné. Due to its striking visual impact, its demonic central figure and its significance within the cannon of Basquiat's career, we are confident that its supreme quality and rarity will command tremendous interest from the world's leading international collectors and it is set to realize one of the highest prices for the artist at auction."

The full force of the artist's energy can be witnessed across every inch of this vast canvas. From the lavishly fashioned demonic figure in the center of the canvas, to his brazen use of painterly drips, splashes and impulsive brushwork, the surface of *Untitled* acts as a totem to Basquiat's unencumbered talent. Painted during his trip to Modena in Italy, *Untitled* belongs to a significant group of paintings that helped to forge his reputation as one of the most exciting and radical artists of his generation.

Basquiat's dramatic figure dominates the canvas, with a face that displays the full force of his painterly prowess. This central subject has often been identified as a self-portrait of the artist. In contrast to the precise definition of the devil figure, Basquiat orchestrates a flurry of loose drips and splashes of paint set amidst of expressionistic brushstrokes that shows him to be a phenomenal colorist.

*Untitled* is the largest in a series of paintings which Basquiat undertook during two periods he spent in Modena, Italy in the spring of 1981 and 1982. He was initially invited to Europe by Emilio Mazzoli to participate in his first ever one-man show after the dealer saw the artist's work in January 1981 at the legendary *New York/New Wave* show at New York's P.S. 1. After the initial trip he returned again in March 1982 and it was during this stay that he painted *Untitled*, as well as *Profit 1* and *Boy and Dog in a Johnnypump*, which are widely considered to be the artist's three most important paintings of this prime period.

1982 was a marquee year for Basquiat as it saw him continue his meteoric rise within the New York art world as he was rewarded with his first solo show at Annina Nosei's gallery. He also made an important trip to Los Angeles where he was introduced to—and proved to be a major hit with—influential collectors such as Eli and Edythe Broad, Douglas S. Cramer and Stephane Janssen. He was also the youngest of 176 artists to be invited to take part in *Documenta 7* in Germany.

Basquiat's work found favor with many influential critics who had been yearned for the return of 'the expressive', ever since the triumph of Minimalism in the late 1960s and 1970s. In Basquiat they found a new champion who clearly reveled in the joy of the artist's hand. As Italian curator Luca Marenzi, once observed: "*Basquiat is art's answer to Jimi Hendrix...*" (L. Marenzi, 'Pay for Soup/Build a Fort/Set that on Fire,' in Basquiat, exh. cat., Museo Revoltella, Milano, 1999).

**Note to Editors – Top Five Prices for Basquiat at auction include:**

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1. *Dustheads*, acrylic, oilstick, spray enamel and metallic paint on canvas, 1982  
Estimate: \$25-35million | Price Realized: \$48,843,752  
Sale of: Christie's New York: Wednesday, May 15, 2013

2. *The Field Next to the Other Road*, acrylic, enamel spray paint, oilstick, metallic paint and ink on canvas, 1981.  
Estimate: \$25-35million | Price Realized: \$37,125,000  
Sale of Christie's New York: Wednesday, May 13, 2015

3. *Untitled*, acrylic, oilstick and metallic spray enamel on canvas, 1981

Sale of: Christie's New York: Tuesday, May 13, 2014  
Estimate: \$20-30m | Price Realized: \$34,885,000

4. *Untitled*, acrylic and oilstick on wood panel, 1982  
Sale of: Christie's New York: Tuesday, November 12, 2013  
Estimate: \$25-35m | Price Realized: \$29,285,000

5. *Untitled* (diptych), diptych-acrylic and oilstick on panel, 1982  
Sale of Christie's London: Tuesday, June 25, 2013  
Estimate on Request | Price Realized: £18,765,876 (\$28,928,434)

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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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*Images available on request*

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