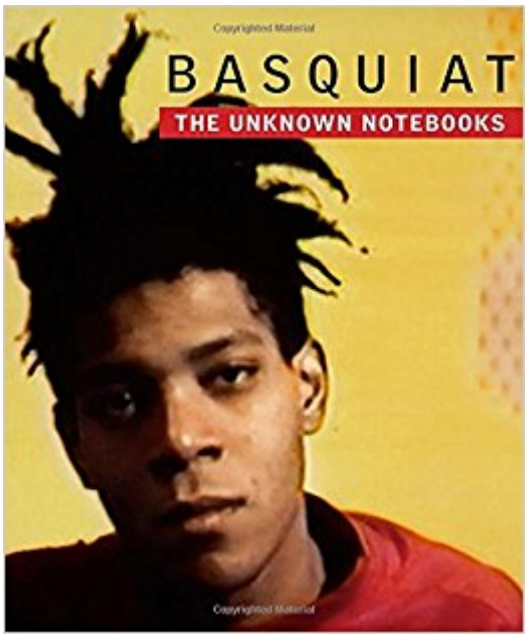
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Basquiat: The Unknown Notebooks



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Synopsis

Accompanying a major traveling exhibition, this first-ever survey of the rarely seen notebooks of Basquiat features the artistÃ¢ ¬â„¢s handwritten notes, poems, and drawings, along with related works on paper and large-scale paintings. With no formal training, Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960Ã¢ ¬â œ1988) succeeded in developing a new and expressive style to become one of the most influential artists in the postmodern revival of figurative during the 1980s. In a series of notebooks from the early to mid-1980s, never before exhibited, Basquiat combined text and images reflecting his engagement with the countercultures of graffiti and hip-hop in New York City, as well as pop culture and world events. Filled with handwritten texts, poems, pictograms, and drawings, many of them iconic images that recur throughout his artworkÃ¢ ¬â •teepees, crowns, skeleton-like silhouettes, and grimacing masksÃ¢ ¬â •and these notebooks reveal much about the artistÃ¢ ¬â„¢s creative process and the importance of the written word in his aesthetic. With over 150 notebook pages and numerous drawings and paintings, this important book sheds new light on BasquiatÃ¢ ¬â„¢s career and his critical place in contemporary art history.

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Customer Reviews

"With illustrations of 160 notebook pages and numerous related works, the book provides exceptional insights into the life and works of Basquiat."-CRAVEONLINE.COM"With vibrant visuals and Basquiat’s imaginative text, this book reinvigorates the interest for one of the truly great American artists."Ã Â -PUBLISHERS WEEKLY"With over 150 notebook pages and numerous

drawings and paintings, this important book sheds new light on Basquiat’s career and his critical place in contemporary art history."-THE NEW AMERICAN

Dieter Buchhart is a critic, art historian, and curator based in Vienna. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, where he directs the W. E. B. Du Bois Research Institute and the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research. Tricia Laughlin Bloom is associate curator of exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, New York. Franklin Sirmans is department head and curator of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Christopher Stackhouse is a writer and visual artist based in Brooklyn.

The Unknown Notebooks is a fascinating look into the sketchbooks of Jean-Michel Basquiat. He used notebooks that had blue lined paper with the black and white marbled covers. The book reproduces many of these pages which show him making lists or writing poems, with a few sketches and related paintings and works on paper. If you are a Basquiat fan this is an essential must-have book. As the four introductory essays illustrate, language was one of the key components of Basquiat’s practice. These notebook pages show his relentless list making and phrasing working itself out. The plates reproduce the notebook pages as if they were objects so you see the edges of the sheets. Some are reproduced one to a page and there are often two, three, and up to four on a single page. If this is your first Basquiat book this is not the place to start. I would begin with one of his painting surveys first, followed by the "Drawing: Work from the Schorr Family" book. This one is narrowly focused on the writing in Basquiat’s notebooks. But for those who can’t get enough Basquiat, The Unknown Notebooks is recommended.

GOOD STUFF...

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a controversial and complex character, and as an artist, his work will no doubt be studied for years to come. His paintings all have an atmosphere of roughness, like wallpaper scratched by a cat. His biography, as stated in this book, places him in a comfortable middle class home in Brooklyn, from which he ran away as a teenager, living rough in the East Village. As discussed in the book Art After Midnight (Steven Hager, 1986), he was right at home among the starving artists and musicians of Alphabet City, where there was no money, but lots of life going on. It wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t a place to raise kids, but for a single man with no dependents, you were free to do as you liked.Dr. Henry Louis Gates, a great scholar of US history,

provides a written preface in this book. He says that Basquiat was born to a Haitian father and a Puerto Rican mother, which so far I know from al the other writings about him. He states that the artist grew up bilingual, which IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d assume, and that he frequented the Brooklyn Museum, which adds a bit of intrigue. His mother was often hospitalized for mental illness, and his Haitian father, an accountant, was a bit of a snappy dresser, yet as a boy he ran away from all this. Was he looking for ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“rougherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• life? His art definitely shows a liking for frenetic things. Gates also says that the art was a fusion of influences. Was Basquiat torn between being a Haitian, a Black American, and a Puerto Rican?The first piece of BasquiatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s is a drawing of Joe Lewis, with ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“St. Joe Surrounded by Snakes.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• He definitely had education in classical art, he couldnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t have drawn something like this without it. We see his affinity for African American characters, only he draws this with a little more attention to modeling than in his other works. The next artwork, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Famous Negro Athletes,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• has absolutely no attention to modeling or faces. The heads are merely black shapes with eyes and teeth gouged in, like primitive African masks. From the looks of it, he must have been full of energy at the time. There is, unlike both, a funny drawing of (what I assume is) a man named Leslie, lying in bed with a cigarette. It reeks of Bohemian life, almost reminding me of Oscar Wilde. In fact, it is completely unlike anything else he drew.The artistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“lost notebooksÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• reveal a lot about this man. He was a true ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“starving artist,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• working with whatever art materials he had, on whatever paper he had, in this case a speckled notebook. The only thing missing from this book is the artistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s own words. He died in 1988, so thereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s no way to ask him to talk about his work. The book doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t go into his relationship with Andy Warhol, which was another unusual aspect of his life, particularly since the two artists had absolutely nothing in common with each other. Then again, the sensitive and eccentric Warhol did have a liking for rough things. In the book Love Goes to Buildings on Fire (Will Hermes, 2009) the 1970ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s New York gay scene fell in love with the shaggy-haired and scruffily dressed Bruce Springsteen, in his debut at MaxÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Kansas City (another defunct and lost New York spot.)Perhaps BasquiatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“starving artistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• lifestyle was what Warhol dreamed of? WeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll never know.

I was fortunate to actually visit this exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum just after it’s opening a few weeks ago.....which was a very unique and stimulating experience. I collect art catalogues (Basquiat

catalogues are of particular interest), so I had to have this one as well. Let me begin with a word of caution regarding this fascinating volume....if you are unfamiliar with Basquiat, this is NOT a good introduction to his work by any stretch of the imagination. (The Shafrazi gallery has an excellent catalogue of Basquiat pieces if this is your purpose). Both the exhibition and this catalogue have VERY few finished pieces as the focus is nearly entirely on an unbound set of composition books filled with the poetry, musings, rants, notes and doodles/sketches of Jean - Michel's everyday life. For people familiar with the work and legacy of this prolific artist, these pages are a rare treat to behold. You can see his creative process through these pages: razor sharp wit, stream - of - consciousness type word associations, and incredible insight. I felt (as did some of the other people visiting the exhibit that day) that these pages took my appreciation of Basquiat to a new level. This catalogue represents the exhibit well and adds an additional layer of depth via essay and commentary. The layout is good and the book flows well. It is a great and unique addition to my collection and I highly recommend it.

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