

ARTSTALK

International

Number 6

Summer 2025



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For this edition we are in Germany, Italy Greece, Belgium, Spain and the UK. We take a look inside the Residenz in Munich and visit a Dutchman's installation in Puglia. From England we have an interview with award-winning theatre director Emma Rice and visit a new gallery in London's Belgravia. Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibits in Greece and we visit the *Prix de l'Art Féministe* in Eupen, plus we take a look at a Versace exhibition in Malaga. All this and more in the new edition of ArtsTalk *International* . . .

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Cover

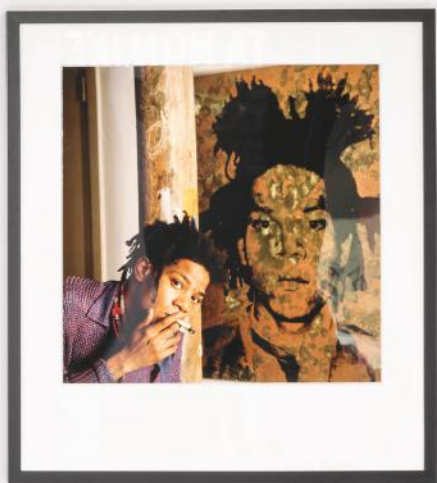
Leo Vroegindeweij at Dep Art Out inside a
trullo in Ceglie Messapica, Puglia.
Photo by Fabio Mantegna, Milan courtesy of
Dep Art Out, Ceglie Messapica



JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT

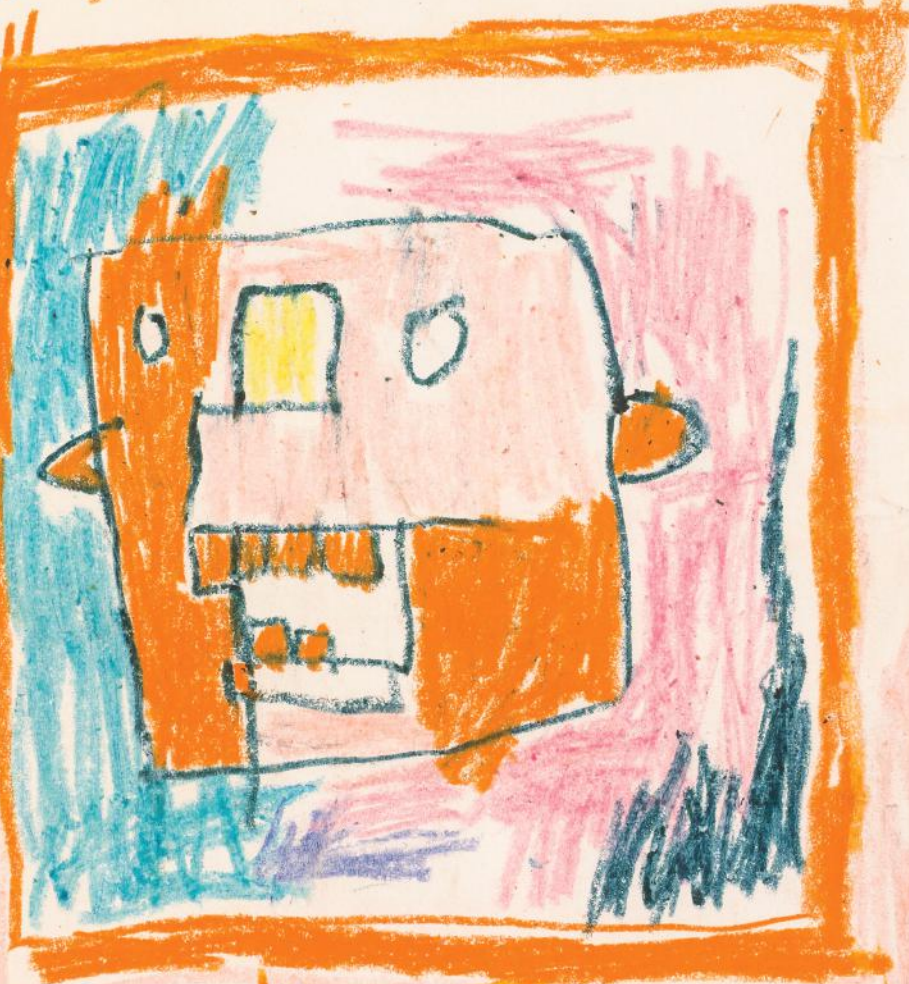
Untitled as Unbowed on Athenian Stage
at Intermission x Galerie Enrico Navarra
in Piraeus, Greece

Text by Nektarianna SALIVEROU



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Royalty, heroism and the streets, this is how Jean-Michel Basquiat, the enigmatic artistic figure of the most controversial decade of the 1980s in New York, described his art. Never before has post-war art expressed the necessity for activism, change, revolution. Real liberation of expression becomes the focus of a creativity of ideas and tendencies that establish new forms of art and pursuits that were destined to leave their mark on the character and identity of contemporary art.

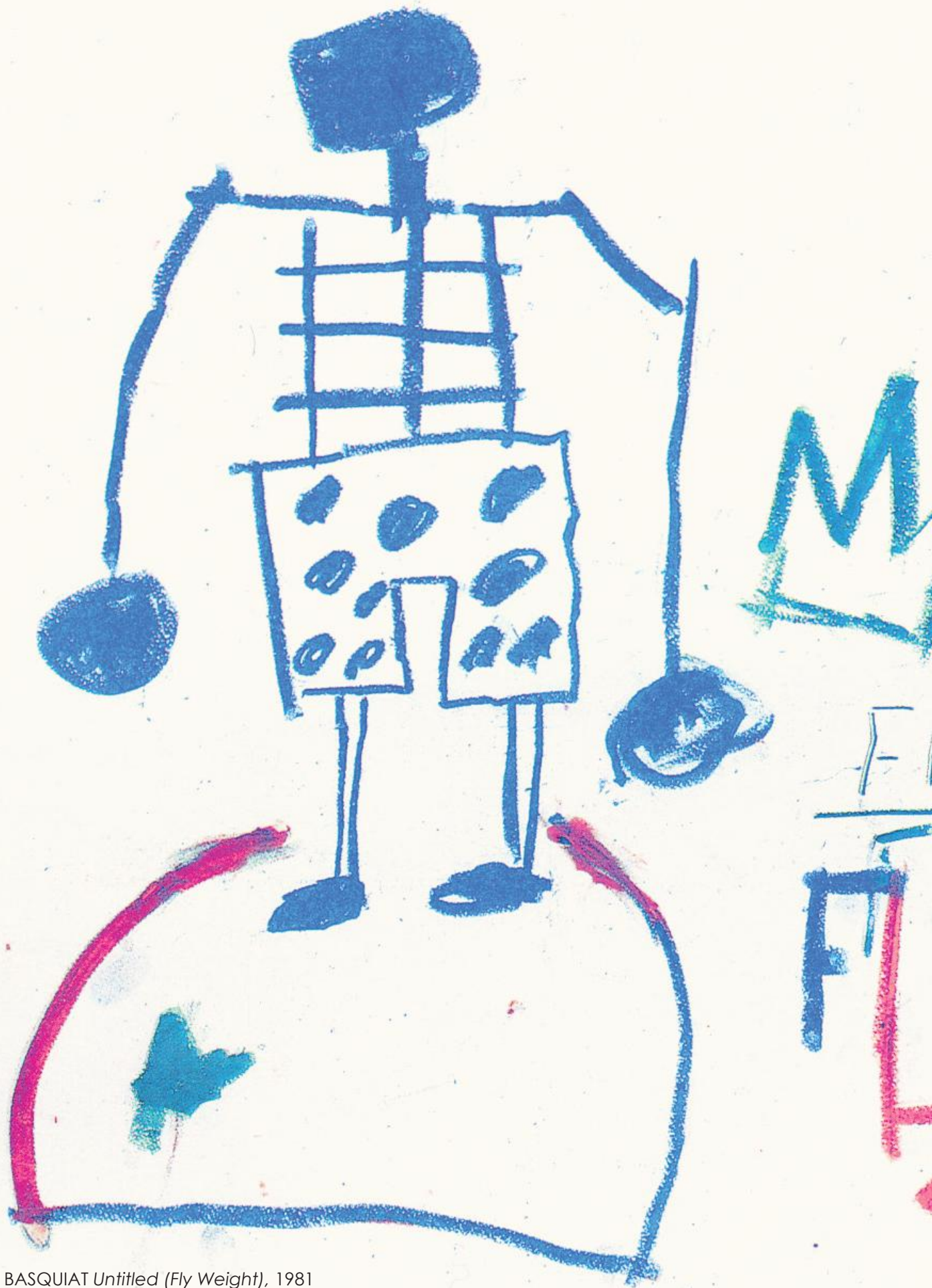
The bustling urban landscape of the metropolis of the world becomes for J-M Basquiat, a canvas of experiences that captivates with the genuine self-expression of graffiti, the enthusiasm and audacity of a self-taught artist, who becomes the youngest artist ever invited by the iconic and prestigious Documenta in Kassel, Germany. Basquiat's enigmatic epigrams in the late 1970s, which were initially the product of a collaboration with Al Diaz, as the graffiti tag SAMO, became a reference point in Manhattan and especially in the cultural center of the Lower East Side where hip-hop culture emerges, merging the artistic form of rap, punk subculture and Street Art.

Basquiat's, multiculturally raised, necessity for self-expression and freedom is combined with the old industrial space of the —, which was transformed at the initiative of Artemis Baltogianni into a semi white cube, aiming to highlight diversity. Particularly significant, however, is the fact that the manifold cultural identity of Piraeus, one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean, becomes the occasion for a dialectic between yesterday and today, history and art, and ultimately the geographical point that welcomes the explosive universe of the multifacetedly incompatible Basquiat.





The exhibition *Untitled*, as the first presentation of J-M Basquiat's works in Greece, essentializes the subjective basis of his work, which is transformed into a ubiquitous one, as well as the dynamics of his individual mythology that dialogues with universality.



Jean-Michel BASQUIAT *Untitled (Fly Weight)*, 1981
Oilstick and graphite on paper 56 x 76 cm
© Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artstar, New York.



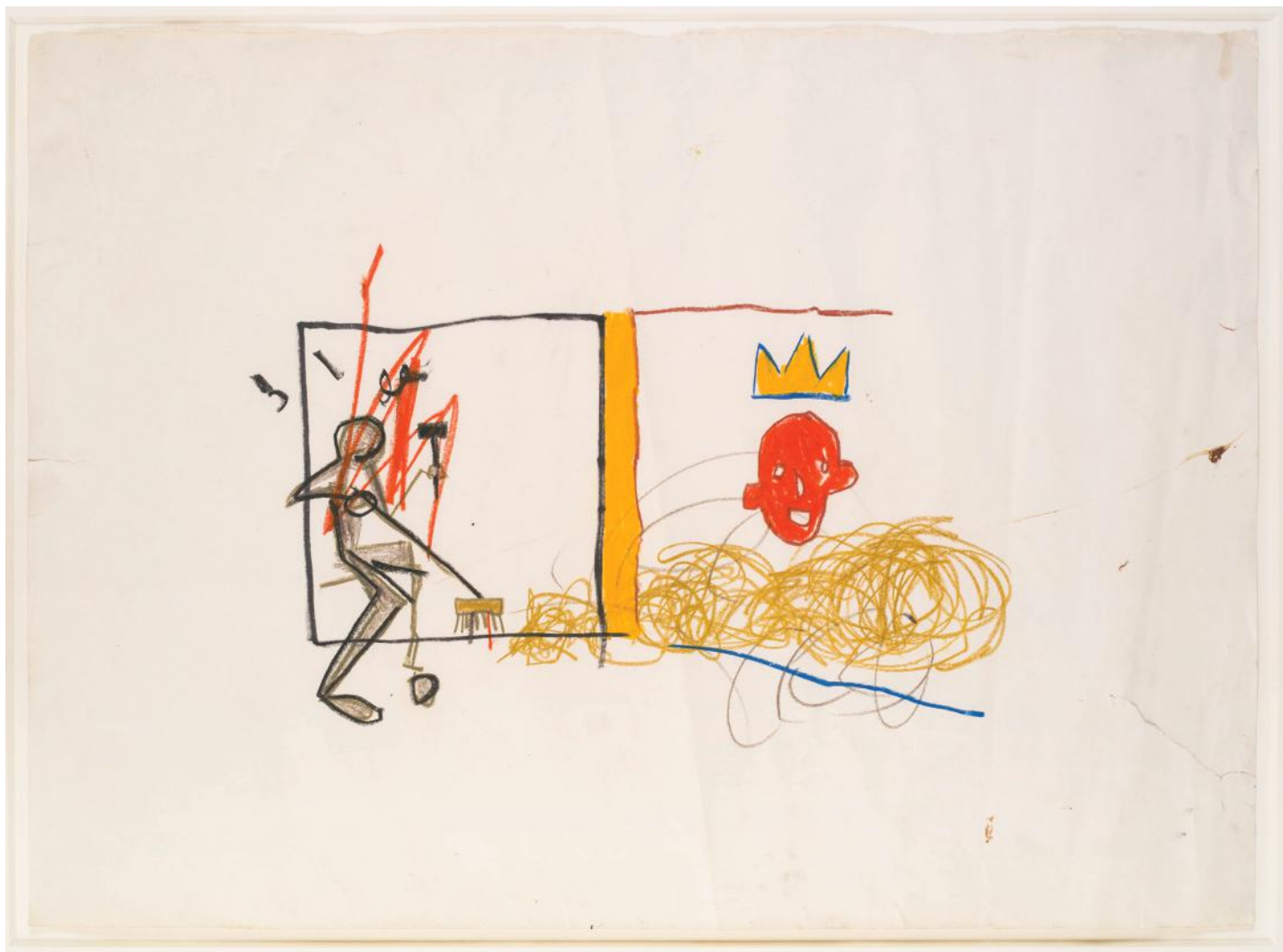
The exhibition *Untitled*, as the first presentation of J-M Basquiat's works in Greece, essentializes the subjective basis of his work, which is transformed into a ubiquitous one, as well as the dynamics of his individual mythology that dialogues with universality. Writing, speech, image, poetry, complexity, color, idea, authenticity and incisiveness are reflected in Basquiat's linguistic idiom through 19 works created between 1979 and 1987, with particular emphasis on 1980-1981, the year that defined his artistic career on a global scale.

The Intermission visual event inaugurates the meaningful moment that illuminates Basquiat's multiplicity as an artist: the absolute expressive liberty, experimentation, and alternations between painting and drawing through a theatricality that ultimately characterizes him. "I'm not a real person. I am a legend", Basquiat notes and it is precisely this myth that the visitor to the *Untitled* exhibition encounters, the living legend that forever changed the character of the entirety of artistic expression and the role of the representation of the human form as an autobiographical but also universal context.

The immediacy and peculiar spirituality of Basquiat's works disarm the visitor who is transmuted into a participant in an art that combines fragments of human anatomy, iconographic points that condense personal and collective truths, as well as symbolic elements. A typical example is the crown motif, for which, Francesco Clemente wrote, "Jean Michel's crown has three peaks, for his three royal lineages: the poet, the musician, the great boxing champion."

From the *Series of Four Poems* (1979-1980) as a unique encounter with reality, the depiction of the legendary boxer Joe Louis in 1982, but also the figures with crowns, skulls, spiral motifs, drawings from children's toys, the reference to Ancient Greece through Loans, "J. M. Basquiat rewrites History", as his personal friend, Lysa Cooper, denotes.

Words have a specific meaning for Basquiat. He uses them in a variety of ways, either for their indirect meaning or to mark the surfaces of the paper or canvas. Basquiat preferred to erase words or phrases in order to activate



Jean-Michel BASQUIAT Untitled, 1981 Oil stick on paper 42,5 x 58 cm
© Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar, New York.

their content both semantically and associatively, as he once confided to a friend "I cross out words so you will see them more. The fact that they are obscured makes you want to read them." In this way, J-M Basquiat personifies his creations, attaches the viewer to the artistic act and highlights the gestural character of his art.

The seal of the starting point of Basquiat's creative path, *Untitled* of 1983, as an existential composition which captivate the viewer with the substantial absoluteness of the artist's signature, is nothing other than the connection of the real and experiential truth to artistic creation. Its aesthetic value, moreover, unequivocally declares the autonomy of the artistic act, the interiority of expression that is transformed into the intention of an alternative poetry. The expression and personification of controversial elements, the subjective space-time, the objective reality, the narration, the description and the unimpeded truth become the protagonists of a visual event that invites the viewer to redefine the mysterious powers of art and their role in the perception of aspects of the world that surrounds us. Basquiat's language, both real and magical, deeply human and associative, representational and at the same time symbolic, poetic and more broadly societal, proposes the reading, interpretation, advocacy and vindication of personal freedom through questions and answers to the eternal issues of life and death, seeming and essence, the known and the alluringly unknown. Basquiat's almost fragmented visual writing not only inaugurates new dimensions of expression but is also characterized as deeply political, exploring themes of racism, inequality and identity. However, the combination of Abstraction and representation, wording and image, identifies the internal with the external experience, consenting to a Neo-Expressionist idiom with elements of Primitivism and Art Brut. The raw expression of emotions and concerns without limitations and conventions becomes for J-M Basquiat not only the field of integration of the signs of our world but also a field of resounding criticism against all kinds of contradictions. Basquiat's desire "to paint like a child", questioning and decrying, encompasses his personal experiences but also the depiction of collective feelings towards a world that is changing irrevocably, transforming everything into a fungible and expendable object.

The totality of human and his era as a historical dimension, as well as art, initiates new morphological values that, through the versatile Jean-Michel Basquiat, modify and determine the depiction of a multifaceted and multidimensional world, intensely and flagrantly actual, sensitised but also dramatically crude, which always tends to confront new aesthetic and diverse challenges of the present and for ever more □

Jean Michel Basquiat *Untitled* continues at The Intermission x
Galerie Enrico Navarra in Piraeus, Greece until 2nd August