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RARE JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT WORKS COMING TO HIGH MUSEUM OF ART THIS SPRING

"Basquiat, the Blue Ribbon Paintings, and the Art of Reproduction"
Feb. 19-May 16, 2027



Jean-Michel Basquiat (American, born Brooklyn, New York, 1960–1988), "Blue Ribbon II," 1984, acrylic, oil stick, and screenprint on canvas, private collection. Artwork © Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Licensed by Artestar, New York.

ATLANTA, Oct. 28, 2026 — This spring, the High Museum of Art will present a rare opportunity to experience a lesser-known side of American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat's groundbreaking artistic practice. Conventional narratives tend to emphasize his meteoric rise as a self-taught prodigy, minimizing his relationship to his contemporaries and generations of artists who came before him. **"Basquiat, the Blue Ribbon Paintings, and the Art of Reproduction" (Feb. 19-May 16, 2027)** will reframe his legacy and bring new attention to his deep engagement with ideas around appropriation, identity and reproduction.

Organized by Princeton University Art Museum, the exhibition will explore Basquiat's rarely studied engagement with reproductive media, which was both central to his practice and an outlet of innovation and collaboration. It will also place his work in dialogue with a range of artists who informed his approach, including Robert Rauschenberg and pioneering Black printmakers such as Robert Blackburn.

"Basquiat is an artist who many are familiar with, but whose work is sometimes narrowly categorized," said the High's Director Rand Suffolk. "This exhibition brings his extraordinary paintings and prints together in ways that deepen our understanding of Basquiat's creative practice and underscore why his work continues to resonate so powerfully today."

With more than 50 works, the exhibition centers on Basquiat's 1984 "Blue Ribbon" paintings, a series of 11 works that have not been publicly exhibited together in more than three decades. So called because they feature reproductions of the Pabst Blue Ribbon beer logo and bottlecap, these mixed-media compositions combine acrylic paint, oil stick and silkscreen, blurring the boundaries between painting and printmaking. Across the large-scale canvases, the paintings

repeat the same symbols, including a crowned head, anatomical drawings and the Pabst logo. Basquiat remixed the imagery, creating new meanings with each iteration. The exhibition presents this rarely seen series as the culmination of the technical and conceptual strategies that he developed through his explorations with printmaking and reproductions.

In addition to the “Blue Ribbon” paintings, the exhibition assembles nearly all of Basquiat’s known print projects. Together, the objects highlight his experimentation with reproductive media, from early Xerox-based works of the late 1970s to lithographs, serigraphs and silkscreen paintings produced in Los Angeles. Beginning with Xerox copies of hand-made postcards, Basquiat developed an evolving approach that moved fluidly between drawing, printmaking and painting. His practice expanded with silkscreening and rented color copiers, culminating in his purchase of a color Xerox machine in 1983, making him one of the first artists in New York to have one in their studio. Across Basquiat’s processes, printmaking was a generative tool, allowing him to experiment with collage, in which he often reworked his own imagery across multiple formats.

Works by Rauschenberg and Blackburn on view in the exhibition will underscore how their engagement with reproduction, anatomy and collage shaped some of Basquiat’s work. As the first master printer at Universal Limited Art Editions, Blackburn collaborated with artists including Robert Rauschenberg, whom Basquiat admired and whose layered, appropriative printmaking he absorbed. By tracing a line from Blackburn's press through Rauschenberg to Basquiat, the exhibition will deepen visitors’ understanding of Basquiat’s artistic influences.

“This exhibition invites us to deepen an appreciation of one of the most venerated artists of the last 50 years,” said Michael Rooks, the High’s Wieland Family senior curator of modern and contemporary art. “The ‘Blue Ribbon’ paintings seem more solemn than the dynamic colorful paintings we know best from Basquiat’s work, perhaps because of their limited color palette. Each painting is presided over by a printed image of his crowned avatar of marginalized Black heroes, who guides us through the complex structure of the artworks. This exhibition will change the way you think about Basquiat and his trailblazing role in the contemporary art scene of the 1980s.”

“Basquiat, the Blue Ribbon Paintings, and the Art of Reproduction” is curated by Jordana Moore Saggese, professor of modern and contemporary art and director of the David C. Driskell Center for the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora, University of Maryland.

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated hardcover volume published by the Princeton University Art Museum and distributed by Princeton University Press. The book is authored by exhibition curator Jordana Moore Saggese, professor of modern and contemporary American art and director of the David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, with contributions from AnnMarie Perl, research scholar and lecturer at Princeton University, and Rebecca VanDiver, associate professor of African American art at Vanderbilt University.

The exhibition will be presented on the Second Level of the High’s Anne Cox Chambers Wing.

Exhibition Catalogue

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Exhibition Organization and Support

"Basquiat, the Blue Ribbon Paintings, and the Art of Reproduction" is organized by the Princeton University Art Museum and curated by Jordana Moore Saggese, professor of modern and contemporary art and director of the David C. Driskell Center for the Visual Arts and Culture of African Americans and the African Diaspora, University of Maryland. The exhibition at Princeton was made possible by leadership support from The Richard C. von Hess Foundation and other generous donors.

This exhibition at the High is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters Sarah and Jim Kennedy; Major Exhibition Series Supporter The Fay S. and W. Barrett Howell Family Foundation; Major Exhibition Series Sponsor Harry Norman Realtors; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Loomis Foundation, Sara and Paul Steinfeld, and Mrs. Harriet H. Warren; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Mary and Neil Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Megan and Garrett Langley, Margot and Danny McCaul, Wade A. Rakes II and Nicholas Miller, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, and Lisa Cannon Taylor and Chuck Taylor. Generous support is also provided by Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margaretta Taylor Exhibition Fund, and RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund.

About the High Museum of Art

The High is Atlanta's art museum. For over a century we've been a source of inspiration for the city and a model for how museums can connect with people. Home to a world-class collection, engaging exhibitions, and events for every age, background and interest, we champion the arts as an essential part of our community. Today, we're internationally recognized yet firmly rooted in Atlanta. We're located on Peachtree Street, where Harriet "Hattie" High donated the land that would become the High's home. Our award-winning architecture by Richard Meier and Renzo Piano houses a collection of over 20,000 works spanning centuries, continents and media. Throughout the year we curate exhibitions that recover overlooked histories, challenge conventions and expand the boundaries of art. Our events and ongoing series set us apart, offering our community new ways to connect with art. From lively events on Friday nights to programs specially designed for families, we ensure that art enthusiasts and newcomers alike have something to enjoy. Our aim is simple: bringing art and people together. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

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