ALMINE RECH

Basquiat X Warhol, À Quatre Mains

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Between 1984 and 1985, Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) and Andy Warhol (1928-1987) created around 160 paintings together in tandem, “à quatre mains”, including some of the largest works produced during their respective careers. Keith Haring (1958-1990), who witnessed their friendship and collaboration production, would go on to speak of a “conversation occurring through painting, instead of words,” and of two minds merging to create a “third distinctive and unique mind.”

In the spring of 2023 at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, “Basquiat x Warhol. Painting 4 Hands” will be the most important exhibition ever dedicated to this extraordinary body of work. Curated by Dieter Buchhart and Anna Karina Hofbauer, in partnership with Olivier Michelon, curator at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, the exhibition will bring together more than 100 paintings jointly signed by the two artists. Also featured will be individual works by each as well as a set of works by other major artists (Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Kenny Scharf…) in order to evoke the energy of the New York downtown art scene of the 1980s. The exhibition will be further enriched and interspersed with photos, including the famous “Boxing Gloves” series of photographs by Michael Halsband produced for the poster of the Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol exhibition in 1985.

The exhibition will open with a series of portraits of Basquiat by Warhol and of Warhol by Basquiat. It will continue with the early collaborations. These works, initiated by the two artists’dealer, Bruno Bischofberger, benefited from a collaboration with the Italian artist, Francesco Clemente (born in 1952). After completing these 15 paintings together with Clemente, Basquiat and Warhol pursued their collaboration on an almost daily basis, with enthusiasm and complicity. The energy and force of their incessant exchanges will be the driving force of the exhibition, running through all of the galleries in the Foundation.
Basquiat admired Warhol as an elder, a key art world personality, and the pioneer of a new language and of a groundbreaking relationship to pop culture. Warhol, in turn, found in Basquiat a renewed interest in painting. Thanks to him, he went back to painting manually on a very large scale. Warhol’s subjects (newspapers, logos of General Electric, Paramount and the Olympic Games) serve as the basis for whole series of artworks that will punctuate the exhibition.

“Andy would start one (painting) and put something very recognizable on it, or a product logo, and I would sort of deface it. Then I would try to get him to work some more on it, I would try to get him to do at least two things” explained Basquiat. ”I drew it first and then I painted it like Jean-Michel. I think those paintings we’re doing together are better when you can’t tell who did which parts »” noted Warhol.
The exhibition will show these back and forths – a dialogue of styles and forms that also tackles crucial subjects such as the integration of the African-American community into the narrative of North-America - a continent in which Warhol was a leading manufacturer of icons.