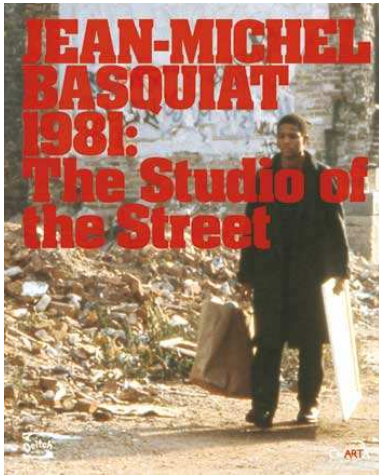


Jean-Michel Basquiat 1981: The Studio of the Street / Curated by Glenn O'Brien and Diego Cortez.— Milan, Italy: Edizioni Charta; New York, NY: Deitch Projects, 2007.—248 p.: ill.—ISBN-13: 978-88-8158-625-7: \$70.00.



Nineteen eighty-one was a year of great transformation in the world of contemporary art. Critical interest in the previous decade's major movements, including "pattern and decoration," was on a rapid decline, and neo-Expressionism dominated the galleries of SoHo and the East Village. Urban grittiness, graffiti, and music commingled in the "art club" scene, and Jean Michel Basquiat would quickly emerge as enfant terrible of the burgeoning art/youth culture.

The advent of punk and new wave music in the seventies ushered in a new, vibrant youth culture that flourished well into the eighties. The short-lived, but infamous Mudd Club in Tribeca represented the new generation's equivalent of the Abstract Expressionists' Cedar Tavern – a place to meet and talk, but also to dance and take drugs. It is against this background that the beautifully-produced exhibition catalog *Jean-Michael Basquiat 1981: The Studio of the Street* is set.

Curated by Glenn O'Brien and Diego Cortez, the exhibition *Jean-Michel Basquiat 1981: The Studio of the Street* (Deitch Projects, New York, May 4-27, 2006) details the artist's transition from the street to the studio provided him by his dealer, Annina Nosei. Co-curators O'Brien and Cortez (co-founder of the Mudd Club) reminisce in a barely-edited dialogue/transcript about the art and club scene of the late 70s and early 80s, tracing Basquiat's evolution from street graffiti artist to mainstream art star.

Undergraduate and graduate students alike are increasingly urged to incorporate primary source material into their research, and interviews certainly qualify as primary sources in most contexts. The bulk of this catalog's text is comprised of lengthy interviews with Annina Nosei, Suzanne Mallouk (Jean-Michel's lover), and Gerard Basquiat (the artist's father), among others.

This beautifully produced catalog features excellent quality reproductions of a wide range of works, from scrawls on yellow lined paper to highly finished paintings on canvas. The works' strong graphical quality, clean color, and overall design remain fresh nearly a quarter decade later. Reproductions of the crayon works on paper, though, are particularly "suitable for framing," and might warrant placement of this exhibition catalog in a reference, special, or other secured collection.

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