

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Presents *Basquiat's "Defacement": The Untold Story*

Exhibition Centered on Painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat Commemorating Death of Artist Michael Stewart Examines Identity, Cultural Activism, and Racial Tension in 1980s New York

Exhibition: *Basquiat's "Defacement": The Untold Story*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Tower Level 7
Dates: June 21–November 6, 2019

(NEW YORK, NY— May 7, 2019)—From June 21 to November 6, 2019, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum will present *Basquiat's "Defacement": The Untold Story*. This focused, thematic exhibition of work by Jean-Michel Basquiat (American, 1960–1988), supplemented with work by others of his generation, will explore a formative chapter in the artist's career through the lens of his identity and the role of cultural activism in New York City during the early 1980s.

Basquiat's "Defacement": The Untold Story is organized by guest curator Chaédria LaBouvier.

The exhibition takes as its starting point the painting *Defacement (The Death of Michael Stewart)*, created by Basquiat in 1983 to commemorate the fate of the young, black artist Michael Stewart at the hands of New York City transit police after allegedly tagging a wall in an East Village subway station. Originally painted on the wall of Keith Haring's studio, *Defacement* was not meant to be seen widely and has rarely been exhibited in a public context. With approximately twenty paintings and works on paper by Basquiat and his contemporaries, this presentation around *Defacement* will examine Basquiat's exploration of black identity, his protest against police brutality, and his attempts to craft a singular aesthetic language of empowerment. The works on view by Basquiat will further illustrate his engagement with state authority as well as demonstrate his adaptation of crowns as symbols for the canonization of historical black figures. Also featured will be archival material related to Stewart's death, including Keith Haring's diary and protest posters, along with samples of artwork from Stewart's estate. Paintings and prints made by other artists in response to Stewart's death and the subsequent criminal

trial of the police officers charged in his death to be presented include Haring's *Michael Stewart—U.S.A. for Africa* (1985); Andy Warhol's screenprinted "headline" painting from 1983 incorporating a *New York Daily News* article on Stewart's death; David Hammons's stenciled print titled *The Man Nobody Killed* (1986), George Condo's *Portrait of Michael Stewart* (1983) and Lyle Ashton Harris's photographic portrait *Saint Michael Stewart* (1994), all of which are testaments to the solidarity among artists at the time and the years following. An illustrated publication with essays by Chaédria LaBouvier; cultural historian J. Faith Almiron; Nancy Spector, Guggenheim Artistic Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator; and critic Greg Tate will present new scholarship on Basquiat and the burgeoning East Village art scene during the early 1980s, an era marked by the rise of the art market, the AIDS crisis and the activism it engendered, and persistent racial tensions in the city. The essays will be supplemented by a section of Recollections by key activists, critics, artists, lawyers, and journalists who were directly involved in the aftermath of Stewart's death.

Exhibition Support

This exhibition is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and The Keith Haring Foundation.

About the Artist

Jean-Michel Basquiat was born in 1960 in New York City and died there in 1988. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including *Jean-Michel Basquiat: Paintings, 1981–1984*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (1984, traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam); *Jean-Michel Basquiat*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1992, traveled to the Menil Collection, Houston; the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa; and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Art, Alabama); *Basquiat*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2005, traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston); *Jean-Michel Basquiat*, Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2010, traveled to Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris); *Basquiat: The Unknown Notebooks*, Brooklyn Museum (2015); *Jean-Michel Basquiat: Now's the Time*, Art Gallery of Ontario (2015, traveled to Guggenheim Museum Bilbao); *Basquiat: Boom for Real*, Barbican Art Gallery, London (2017–18); and *Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988)*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2018–19).

About Chaédria LaBouvier

Chaédria LaBouvier is a writer and Basquiat scholar. She holds an MFA in Screenwriting from UCLA's Film School. In fall 2016, she organized a one-work exhibition of Basquiat's painting *Defacement (The Death of Michael Stewart)* with accompanying programs for the Reading Room at Williams College Museum of Art.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was established in 1937 and is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The international constellation of museums includes the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; and the future Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. In 2019, the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum celebrates 60 years as an architectural icon and

"temple of spirit" where radical art and architecture meet. To learn more about the museum and the Guggenheim's activities around the world, visit guggenheim.org.

For publicity images, visit guggenheim.org/pressimages
Password: presspass

#1548

May 7, 2019 (Updated from December 10, 2018)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lauren Van Natten

Associate Director, Media and Public Relations

212 423 3840

pressoffice@guggenheim.org