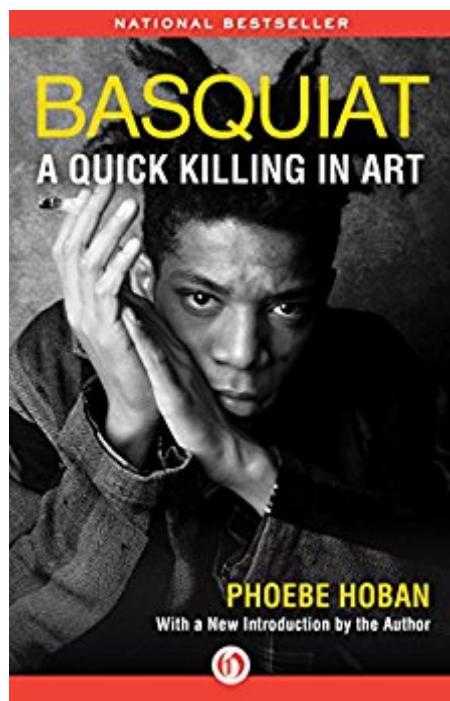


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# Basquiat: A Quick Killing In Art



## Synopsis

A New York Times Notable Book: This national bestseller is a vivid biography of the meteoric rise and tragic death of art star Jean-Michel Basquiat Painter Jean-Michel Basquiat was the Jimi Hendrix of the art world. In less than a decade, he went from being a teenage graffiti artist to an international art star; he was dead of a drug overdose at age twenty-seven. Basquiat's brief career spanned the giddy 1980s art boom and epitomized its outrageous excess. A legend in his own lifetime, Basquiat was a fixture of the downtown scene, a wild nexus of music, fashion, art, and drugs. Along the way, the artist got involved with many of the period's most celebrated personalities, from his friendships with Keith Haring and Andy Warhol to his brief romantic fling with Madonna. Nearly thirty years after his death, Basquiat's story and his art continue to resonate and inspire. Posthumously, Basquiat is more successful than ever, with international retrospectives, critical acclaim, and multimillion dollar sales. Widely considered to be a major twentieth-century artist, Basquiat's work has permeated the culture, from hip-hop shout-outs to a plethora of products. A definitive biography of this charismatic figure, *Basquiat: A Quick Killing in Art* is as much a portrait of the era as a portrait of the artist; an incisive exposé of the eighties art market that paints a vivid picture of the rise and fall of the graffiti movement, the East Village art scene, and the art galleries and auction houses that fueled his meteoric career. Basquiat resurrects both the painter and his time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It took me three years to finally had the courage to read this book. I was afraid it was another hype about Basquiat. I was there during the 70s when he was known as Samo. When he sold his painted sweat shirts in Patricia Fields, I was selling my silkscreen ankle socks in Capezio, @ just a minute down the block. I recall his half shaven head dancing in Reggae parties back in the days and I also remember talking to him one day in 1983, not having an idea of how famous he had gotten. Reading Ms Hoban's book I finally had a realistic glance at this dude we had the impression to know. It was an eye opener. I understood not only the man, ( being a Puerto Rican artist myself) but the color artist in the midst of that up-coming yuppie world of "radical chic" ( as Samo used to write on walls) This book is a social revelation about the 80s. What we learn about Basquiat should be enough for us to draw conclusions about the Artist. A typical "minority" freak stepping out of the 70s, influenced by Bill Burrough's evil and deceptive aura and encouraged by irresponsible upper middle class people without ethics or love for human kind. The book is clear and truly authentic. Filled with good faith for future generations to know the truth.

I know that's a contradiction however one gets the feeling that the author was not a fan of Jean-Michele Basquiat. His art or his work. She seems to take an almost perverse pleasure in sharing the more "scandalous" aspects of his behavior. There is much more time devoted to his alleged "drug abuse, whoremongering and venereal disease sharing" than his art work. Overall, I learned some interesting information about his relationship with art dealers. The author seems particularly infatuated/intimidated with the recording artist/actress Madonna (who Basquiat has a brief relationship with) and the art dealer Mary Boone. But there is precious little about his family life, what motivated him or his connection to the Black community of which he was most assuredly. In fact, there seems to be a lack of respect for the African-American culture and the community as a whole. I wanted to like this book, and it was very detailed, however much of it came from interviews, innuendos and third-persons accounts. Fufilling at some points, it often reads like tabloid journalism too. Some objectivity would have been nice, but maybe that's another book. Surprisingly, I would recommend it to the Basquiat fan, (for informational purposes) just check it out from the library or

used stack.

For those expecting a true biography, this one may disappoint. Basquiat's childhood is dispensed with in a scant 10 or so pages, and before the obvious questions are addressed, the author begins dropping names of all the people Basquiat either did drugs, had sex or lived with. The author is a journalist, and the book reads like journalism - a little sensationalist (with just the right amount of mock apology to keep it legit) and fast and loose with the historical record. There is precious little attention given to the cultural background of the late seventies and eighties that led to the appearance of artists like Basquiat and Haring and Scharf. Ms. Hoban does lay bare, almost unwittingly, the pathos of Basquiat's mind, but I kept wanting to know more of where that pathos came from. She did not dig deep enough, something a good historian would have surely done.

This book is great fiction...I knew Jean Michel Basquiat in the early 80s'. He was not a simple person and this book envelopes him into a character that is easy fiction. I would suggest "Widow Basquiat" by Jennifer Clement, for a closer study of the artist.

The best thing about this book was the last chapter when someone must have realized, "Wow, I guess we should talk a little about his art and creative process." A lot of the rest of the book is about girlfriends, drug experiences, etc. I think a lot of this could have been edited out. There was also a lot about the 80's art business and dealers and I thought that was pretty interesting. But I was looking for more of what it's really all about for me - the art and the process. One thing I took from it is that Basquiat worked hard before his last couple years; he was constantly drawing and painting and processing. Regardless as to whether he was on drugs or not, he did the work. And no one can take that away from him. And I think his work kicks ass.

Last month I went with a friend to the Basquiat exhibition at the Gagosian gallery in Chelsea. Basquiat had certainly entered our consciousness via the media during the eighties but we were into other things then so our knowledge of his brief shooting-star career wasn't very specific. We vaguely knew he had died before the decade was over; we identified him with Keith Haring, another art-world casualty of the era. The wit and energy of Basquiat's paintings in this large, comprehensive show were captivating but the rushed quality of so much of his work was disturbing. What had propelled him to work so fast and furiously? How and why had he died? So I came home, did a web search, and made a smart decision: Phoebe Hoban's biography was the book to

buy. Phoebe Hoban's biography IS the book to buy. I don't know how she did it, immersing herself so completely in the downtown art scene, interviewing everyone (loyal girlfriends, slippery boyfriends, high school teachers, art dealers, drug dealers). Hoban's writing is wonderfully alive and descriptive. She seems to leave no stone unturned, nailing down, for instance, the ambiguous role played in Basquiat's short and tumultuous career by one Larry "Go-Go" Gagosian. Basquiat's work sells for millions now. Hoban's biography will explain it all to you.

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