

Global Contemporary

*Horn Players.* Jean-Michel Basquiat. 1983 C.E. Acrylic and oil paintstick on three

canvas panels.

To see this image< click on the link. http://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-michel-basquiat/horn-players

“I don’t think about art while I work,” he once said. “I think about life.”

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Jean-Michel Basquiat was a poet, musician, and graffiti prodigy in late-1970s. He is known for his signature painting style of obsessive scribbling, elusive symbols and diagrams, and mask-and-skull imagery by the time he was 20. Associated with Neo-expressionism, Basquiat’s art was influenced by imagery and symbolism from African, Aztec, Greek, and Roman cultures, as well as that of his own Puerto Rican and Haitian heritage and Black and Hispanic cultures. The crown was Basquiat’s signature symbol. More often, he crowned his personal heroes including jazz musicians, such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie like in this piece.

The work is divided into three panels, provides the viewer with the hint of a triptych, yet one fairly uninterrupted because of the consistent use of a flat, dark background color. There is a figure in the exterior wings—jazz musicians Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie—in either wing of the painting, each created with flat patches of color and thick, dense lines. Basquiat painted these figures’ as heads and torsos, with rest of their bodies blending into the dark blue background. He uses yellows, greens, pink, and white to offset this background color, providing his viewer with a variety of bright tones to create energy and movement. The center panel depicts an abstracted head seems to float in space. There is a complete rejection of three-dimensional space.

The rest of the composition is composed of words Basquiat attributed to these musicians and the outlines of geometric shapes. “Ornithology, the study of birds, is a reference to a 1946 Parker composition and the musician’s nickname, “Bird.” Basquiat also underscores the physical experience of music by listing body parts he associates with listening, dancing and singing: ear, feet, larynx and teeth.. With the word “SOAP” (slang for “clean”), Basquiat may be suggesting that Parker’s and Gillespie’s songs — as well as his painting — are impeccable. The work also references a historic horn joust between Parker and Gillespie in the tune “Salt Peanuts,” recorded live at Massey Hall in Toronto. (Basquiat Now).”

Citation:

"Jean-Michel Basquiat's Horn Players." *Suite*. Web. 1 May 2015. <https://suite.io/megan-summers/50dr2az>.

"TICKETS ON SALE NOW." *Basquiat: Now's the Time*. Web. 1 May 2015. <http://www.basquiatnow.com/>.