

PHILLIPS

PRESS RELEASE

Basquiat's World: Works Formerly from the Collection of Francesco Pellizzi to Headline Phillips' Spring Season Across the Globe

Three Paintings to Be Sold Across New York and Hong Kong

Monumental 1982 Masterwork Leads the Group,
Estimated at \$40-60 Million



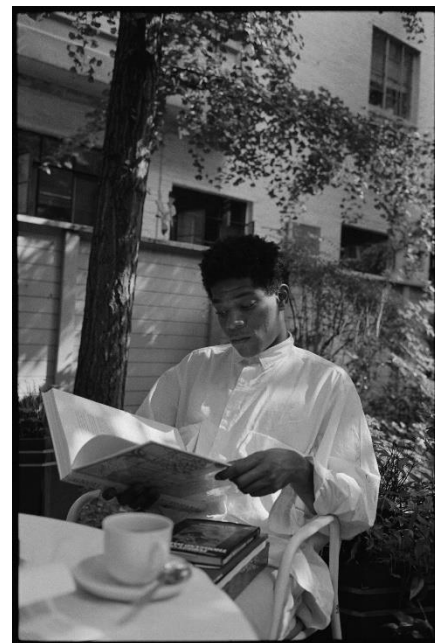
Jean-Michel Basquiat
Untitled (ELMAR), 1982
68 x 93 1/8 in. (172.7 x 236.5 cm)
Estimate: \$40-60 million
To be Offered on 14 May in New York

NEW YORK/HONG KONG – 2 APRIL 2024 – A testament to the auction house's unwavering commitment to the legacy of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Phillips will offer three magnificent paintings by the artist this Spring, all formerly from the original collection of Francesco Pellizzi and the Pellizzi Family. Professor Pellizzi was the co-founder and editor of the journal *Res, Anthropology and Aesthetics*, published by the Peabody at Harvard and Chicago University Press. Each of the works was acquired by Pellizzi from Annina Nosei in the early 1980s, a pivotal point in the artist's career, and remained in his collection for decades. Phillips' Evening Sales in New York and Hong Kong mark the first time that these important works will be offered publicly. *Untitled (ELMAR)*, 1982, and *Untitled*

(*Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer*), 1981, will be sold in New York on 14 May, with *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*, 1982, being offered two weeks later in Hong Kong on 31 May. Prior to the sales, the three works will be unveiled in New York for an exhibition open from 8-14 April, followed by a tour to Los Angeles from 23-25 April, marking the last time that they will be on view together.

Robert Manley, Deputy Chairman and Worldwide Co-Head of Department, said, “Phillips is proud to have become the house of Basquiat over the past decade. From the sale of *Flexible* for \$45 million from the artist’s estate, to the \$85 million sale of *Untitled*, 1982, from the Maezawa Collection, to our role as a lead sponsor of the Basquiat family’s *King Pleasure* exhibition, Phillips’ celebration of the artist’s genius extends beyond the saleroom. We are now honored to announce this incredible group of works, boasting some of Basquiat’s most iconic imagery with equally impressive provenance and exhibition history. An inspired collector, Francesco Pellizzi acquired timeless works that underscore Basquiat’s enduring significance and artistic vision, as they continue to inspire and provoke thought forty years later.”

A classicist and an anthropologist by training, who had studied with Claude Lévi-Strauss in Paris, Professor Pellizzi wrote in one of his many essays on art*, “A ‘good eye,’—I’ve always had trouble understanding what that expression meant—is, if anything, the capacity to connect with what is truly *unprecedented* (hence “disturbing” if only for a little while).”



Jean-Michel Basquiat at the Pellizzi residence in New York, NY, 1984
Photo by Francesco Pellizzi

Leading the group of works being offered is ***Untitled (ELMAR)***, created in 1982 and acquired by the Pellizzi Family just two years later [illustrated page one]. At nearly eight feet wide, the monumental work is a cornerstone of Basquiat’s golden year, during which he transitioned from street art to gallery success. Emblematic of Basquiat’s best works, *Untitled (ELMAR)* is rich in iconography and self-referential imagery. On the left, a “fallen angel” figure, birdlike and adorned with the recurring crown-of-thorns motif—which doubles as a halo—hovers above a luminous blue sea of scribbled waves and the text “ELMAR”, suggesting a modern-day Icarus on the verge of descent. To the right, a radiant archer, also crowned, releases two arrows in his direction. *Untitled (ELMAR)* ultimately reflects Basquiat’s exploration of duality within his own identity and encapsulates the essence of the artist at the peak of his creative powers.



Jean-Michel Basquiat
Untitled (Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer), 1981
50 1/8 x 43 1/2 in. (127.3 x 110.5 cm)
Estimate: \$6.5-8.5 Million
To be offered on 14 May in New York

Untitled (ELMAR) ultimately reflects Basquiat’s exploration of duality within his own identity and encapsulates the essence of the artist at the peak of his creative powers.

Untitled (ELMAR) has a significant history; it was included in an exhibition dedicated to the Collection of Francesco Pellizzi at the Hofstra Museum in New York in 1989, and later presented at Gagosian Los Angeles as part of a memorial exhibition in 1998, marking the 10-year anniversary of Basquiat’s death. It was notably featured on the cover of the accompanying catalogue. More recently, the work was prominently exhibited in the artist’s historical 2018 retrospective at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.

Basquiat’s groundbreaking transition from street art to canvas reached a pivotal moment in 1981 as seen in ***Untitled (Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer)***. This seminal piece, executed during a transformative period in Basquiat’s career, stands as a testament to his exploration of race, identity, and American culture, which would endure throughout the rest of his career. It

was exhibited at historic shows such as Nosei's Jean-Michel Basquiat Memorial Exhibition, which opened in December 1988, just a few months after his passing and coinciding with what would have been the artist's 28th birthday.

In *Untitled (Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer)*, Basquiat juxtaposes symbols of the "all-American" sport with his depiction of a Black central figure donning a baseball uniform, as well as his signature text and crown motifs. Basquiat challenges societal norms and confronts stereotypes, inviting viewers into a complex dialogue on inclusion and exclusion within American culture. Basquiat's use of the phrase "FAMOUS NEGRO ATHLETES" (with "NEGRO ATHLETES" notably crossed out) serves as a potent commentary on race, identity, and representation. It also reflects Basquiat's own experiences as a Black artist living and working in a predominantly white art world.

Since Phillips became a key operator in Asia in 2015, the company has been dedicated to presenting the best Western artworks to collectors and enthusiasts in the region. The company's significant growth in Asia underscores the activity of Asian collectors acquiring works by the most important international artists. Jean-Michel Basquiat is a perfect example of this, with collectors in Asia being drawn to the artist's oeuvre, which resonates deeply with the region's rich artistic traditions. In 2022, Phillips sold *Untitled, 1982*, from the collection of Japanese entrepreneur Yusaku Maezawa, with the buyer also being a private collector in Asia. Given Basquiat's enduring appeal and resonance in Asia, Phillips is pleased to offer ***Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari, 1982***, at Phillips Hong Kong on 31 May.



Jean-Michel Basquiat
Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari, 1982
 72 1/8 x 71 3/4 in. (183.2 x 182.2 cm)
 Estimate: \$12-18 Million / HK\$90-120 Million
 To be offered on 31 May in Hong Kong



Francesco Clemente, Andy Warhol, and Jean-Michel Basquiat at the Pellizzi residence in New York, NY, 1984
 Photo by Francesco Pellizzi

In this work, a Black figure dominates the canvas with its arms raised, confronting a colonial poacher. The artwork merges intricate draftsmanship with street art gestures and takes on such significant subjects such as slavery and empire. Through a direct portrayal and the incorporation of text, Basquiat critiques colonial commerce, encapsulating his broader themes of colonization, commercialization, and African American history. Reduced to caricatures, the figures symbolize "native" and "colonizer", evoking explicit critiques of white imperialism. *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* reflects Basquiat's acute awareness of societal issues and stands as an emblematic representation of his oeuvre, capturing the intensity of his artistic vision.

AUCTION DATES:

New York | 14 May | *Untitled (ELMAR)*, 1982, and *Untitled (Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer)*, 1981
Hong Kong | 31 May | *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*, 1982

EXHIBITION DATES:

New York | 8-14 April | All Three Works
Los Angeles | 23-25 April | All Three Works
Taipei | 4-5 May | *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari, 1982*
New York | 4-14 May | *Untitled (ELMAR)*, 1982, and *Untitled (Portrait of a Famous Ballplayer)*, 1981
Hong Kong | 22 May – 31 May | *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari, 1982*

* Francesco Pellizzi, in 1979-1989 AMERICAN, ITALIAN, MEXICAN ART, from the Collection of Francesco Pellizzi

PHOTO CREDIT FOR IMAGES BY FRANCESCO PELLIZZI: © Francesco Pellizzi

ABOUT PHILLIPS

Phillips: where the world's curious and bold connect with the art, design and luxury that inspires them. As a leading global platform for buying and selling 20th and 21st century works, Phillips offers dedicated expertise in the areas of Modern and Contemporary Art, Design, Photographs, Editions, Watches, and Jewels. Auctions and exhibitions are primarily held in New York, London, Geneva, and Hong Kong, with representative offices based throughout Europe, the United States and Asia. Phillips offers a regular selection of live and online auctions, along with items available for immediate purchase. Phillips also offers a range of services and advice on all aspects of collecting, including private sales and assistance with appraisals, valuations, and financial planning. Visit phillips.com for further information.

**Estimates do not include buyer's premium; prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium.*

PRESS CONTACTS:

NEW YORK – Jaime Israni, Head of PR and Corporate Communications, Americas jisrani@phillips.com
HONG KONG – Ingrid Hsu, Public Relations & Communications Director, Asia ingridhsu@phillips.com

PHILLIPS NEW YORK – 432 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022
PHILLIPS LONDON – 30 Berkeley Square, London, W1J 6EX
PHILLIPS HONG KONG – G/F, WKCDA Tower, West Kowloon Cultural District, No. 8 Austin Road, West Kowloon

FOLLOW US ON:



WeChat



RED