

K A N T O R   G A L L E R Y

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# A Hit-and-Miss Look at Basquiat's Passion

## ART REVIEWS

By SUSAN KANDEL  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

**J**ust in time to cash in on the notoriety generated by "Basquiat," Julian Schnabel's recent bio-pic, Kantor Gallery has mounted a show of **Jean-Michel Basquiat's** work of the 1980s. Though "Basquiat" had some operatic moments in which Schnabel indulged his runaway megalomania, in general it took great care with its subject. This show, by contrast, is small, spotty and careless.

Certainly the case can be made that Basquiat's made-to-order primitivism and fulminating street smarts are more interesting in terms of social and economic history than aesthetics, which is to say that the overheated market of the 1980s valued "raw" Expressionism as a commodity. Basquiat, as its token wild child, fulfilled its multiple fantasies.

Still, even a lack of passion for Basquiat's art as art is no excuse for the haphazardly selected items on view here. Without any real framework (conceptual, chronological or otherwise), what we get is scarcely disguised marginalia—a random group of silk-screens and drawings, plus a couple of very mediocre paintings.

There are, nonetheless, moments here. Basquiat's sarcastic wit goes for broke in a 1982 drawing featuring a vehement alley cat garbed in Ku Klux Klan regalia, and in another 1984 drawing that manages to situate back-of-the-magazine advertisements for magic worms and onion gum in the context of the Audience Hall at Persepolis.

Also noteworthy is an eight-panel comic book from 1979, crammed full of New Jersey-bound balls of heat and sex-crazed

alien stalkers, which is unexpected and revealing. It suggests just how far Basquiat traveled from the most generic of starting points, even with too little time.

■ *Kantor Gallery, 8642 Melrose Ave., (310) 659-5388, through Nov. 9. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*

## HIGHLIGHTS

**DROWNED:** The Who's "Quadrophenia" is a tale of youthful anxiety and desire, but the rambling production the reunited band staged at the Forum suffered from its own identity crisis—its powerful music frequently neutralized by excessive embroidery. Reviewed by Robert Hilburn. **F1**

**THE GRAND LA TOUR:** "Georges de La Tour and His World" at the National Gallery of Art provides appropriate, illuminating context to the shadowy artist's often haunting work. Reviewed by Christopher Knight. **F1**

**EDGY PUPPETRY:** Mexico City's Teatro Tinglado creates edgy, provocative puppet shows for an adult audience. It's bringing "The Repugnant Story of Clotario Demon-iax" to UCLA. **F1**

**MORNING REPORT:** Stores order 21 million copies of "Toy Story" . . . Counting Crows' "Recovering the Satellites" in top spot. **F2**

**SEXUALITY EDUCATION:** Debra Chasnoff's "It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School" documents teachers leading discussions about homosexuality in a responsible, enlightening matter. Reviewed by Kevin Thomas. **F2**

**GALLERY ROUNDUP:** The Kantor Gallery has mounted a haphazard show of Jean-Michel Basquiat's work of the 1980s. Reviewed by Susan Kandel. **F4**

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