



Jean-Michel Basquiat, *A Panel of Experts*, 1982, acrylic and oil pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 152.5 x 152 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988), active in the New York City art scene in the 1980s, looked to his surroundings as a source of inspiration for his work. With the use of graffiti-like symbols and childlike imagery, *A Panel of Experts* (1982) combines language and gestural drawings on a large-scale canvas to examine his own life and significant social and political issues. In this painting the artist emphasizes the contrast between black and white to give special importance to the textual features, which are represented in a sketch-like manner along with random lines,

crossing outs, arrows and stars. Basquiat communicates a train of personal thoughts with the words “Dextrose,” “Milk,” “Sugar Coated Corn Puffs” and “Saturday Morning,” prompting the viewer to decipher hidden meanings, such as the artist's cocaine addiction. Simple sketches with a few bursts of primary colours—blood from a wounded man, lava spewing out of a volcano and a gun with a bullet released from its chamber—appear to complement the text. Some texts and images are used only once in Basquiat's paintings, while others are recurring symbols, such as the crown, which is probably a declaration of the artist's sense of power.

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