

CHRISTIE'S

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BASQUIAT'S *SUGAR RAY ROBINSON* TOP LOT OF CHRISTIE'S 21ST CENTURY EVENING SALE

17 NOVEMBER 2022 | NEW YORK



JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT (1960-1988)
Sugar Ray Robinson
acrylic and oilstick on canvas
59.7/8 x 48.1/4 in. (152.1 x 122.6 cm.)
Painted in 1982.
Estimate on Request

NEW YORK - Christie's is pleased to announce the top lot of the 21st Century Evening sale will be ***Sugar Ray Robinson*** by Jean-Michel Basquiat (Estimate on Request; in the region of \$35,000,000). The painting, featuring one of the greatest athletes of a generation, stands as one of Basquiat's most accomplished works. The work, which has not been seen at auction since 2007, will be on view at

Christie's New York Rockefeller Center galleries beginning Saturday, October 29 ahead of the sale on Thursday, November 17, 2022.

Isabella Lauria, Christie's Head of the 21st Century Evening Sale, remarks, *"Over the past few seasons Christie's has witnessed an explosion of energy and interest in works by Black artists. Jean Michel Basquiat is the most important Black artist of the last forty years and critics, curators and collectors have all recognized his genius and influence on the current generation of contemporary artists. Sugar Ray Robinson was an accomplished sportsman and a high-profile Black public figure who fought his way to unprecedented levels of success and carried himself with elegance and swagger. In a similar way, 1982 marked the apex of Basquiat's meteoric rise as the wunderkind of the New York art world-- recognized to be the year he secured his position as an undeniable master within the art historical canon. This painting stands as both an homage to one of Basquiat's greatest heroes as well as a deeply introspective and personal example within his oeuvre. We are thrilled to showcase it as the top lot of our 21st Century Evening Sale this November."*

In the painting, Sugar Ray Robinson stares out from the surface of the canvas with grimaced teeth, ready for a fight. His muscular frame is defined by his broad shoulders which nearly fill the entire width of the canvas. Arms tensed tightly by his side, gloved hands at the ready, he appears to be bracing himself to meet his opponent. Basquiat captures this sense of dynamism with his characteristic use of oilstick and acrylic paint. The image of a boxer captures the difficult position in which Basquiat found himself even at the zenith of his career, and stands as a crucial portrait from this important period of his life.

Sugar Ray Robinson is regarded by many to be one of the greatest boxers of all time, holding a 91 fight winning streak between 1946 and 195, becoming the only boxer to win a divisional world championship five times. At the age of 15, he first began entering boxing tournaments, and at the age of just 20, he defeated his first world championship opponent, beginning what would become a record breaking career.

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About Christie's

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