A JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ARTS AND LETTERS

Bonafide Rojas

BASQUIAT

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So tell me

Jean Michel?

How did it feel to be pedestalized then pick-a-nannied, 1982 a Haitian Puerto Rican in a pop art world on a raft by yourself, displayed in galleries in Munich, L.A. and Tokyo but what about The Lower East Side the same old song of SAMO slogans tell your life on brick walls of Loisada

Lithographs, wood, canvas cutouts sketched with black marker Pilots house painted your devotion for Dali and Picasso Showing your true colors for your heroes Charlie Parker, Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali and Roberto Clemente

How did it feel

Basquiat?

Being the only black man
Graffiti writer
Turn talk of the art world in less than a year
From chalk floors to oils
jessoed in basement studio spaces
with hills of cocaine next
to buckets of white paint
you tried to stay sane
inherited the love for the moment
in these days of excess
addicted to painting your torture
breaking your bones slowly
breaking your spirit slowly
but all you wanted to do is paint

your soul on the street and be a little famous to paint your acid tripped LSD on anything

then you were tapped by
art gallery dealers who represented you
wheeled and dealed for you
but did they have your voice, your interest
they knew they could make a lot of money
off of you and they slaved you
Your output was phenomenal
dozens of paintings
flying out of your hands at the hands
of these dealers who dealt pieces of
your soul to people who just wanted
a piece of the hype

then it's your relationship
with Warhol Jean Michel
Your collaboration with the
Intergenerational pop icon
who was inspired by your energy
I know you idolized Andy
The one man who embodies contemporary
You desperately wanted his approval
You two were inseparable
working and partying together

Warhol never joined you in your escapades of drugs but he watched you in your youthful abrasiveness Was he sincere in telling you he like your paintings? Or did he snicker the way he did? Was he man enough to say you had more raw untapped energy than he ever would?

Did he Jean Michel?

Warhol built you up then broke you down A white pimp with a black painting whore in a downtown art scene made of leeches and snakes painting their lives away Who's using who
In this power dynamic
struggle of race and culture
Who's using who
27 years of your life
fresh and vibrant
you had dozens and dozens of years
to paint your heart out to show people
What it meant to be a painter
a black painter

Tell me

Basquiat?

How does it feel
to be a tainted immortal in a art world
that whispers under their breath
and says all you did was scribble
But you inspired me
to paint slogans of poverty
and anti-capitalist lines
over America's dream of art imitates life
showed me to paint with a marker
draw on doors
sketch on the subway
showed me that graffiti is ART

It's the same old song It's the SAMO song

Tell me

Jean Michel?

How does it feel?