

WIDEWALLS

Woodward Gallery Brings Together Portraits of Iconic Individuals Who Influenced American Culture

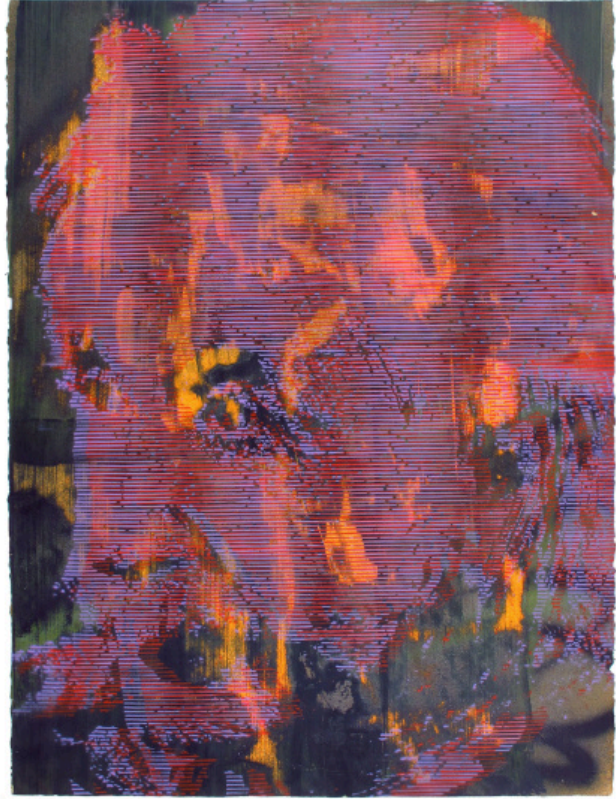
Exhibition Reviews

Hesper Cane, September 28, 2023



With a longstanding tradition in art history, portraiture is among the most intensively present genres in the art world, owing its continuity across different media and techniques in significant part to its adaptability and flexibility. Initially employed as a document and a statement, portraits evolved into a suitable genre for artists' explorations of the essence of humanity, permeating the worlds of photography and printmaking. Art in the 20th century witnessed not only a change in style or technique but also a change in meanings generated, which expanded the framework of the genre.

This Fall, Woodward Gallery focuses on the portraits of the most iconic figures of the American culture in the current exhibition *Famous Faces*. Contemplating the link between portraiture and celebrity status, the show presents a condensed endeavor to map out the faces of influence across all fields in life.



Left: Andy Warhol – *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1979 / **Right:** Kenji Nakayama – *Einstein*, 2007

Facing Fame

Within a delicate display, the show *Famous Faces* examines some of the most significant figures of 20th-century American culture, whether as creators of the artworks displayed or as the subjects depicted in them. Highlighting the consequences of today's digital age, the show reasserts the importance of eye contact, transforming itself into an invitation to face the luminaries who shaped the world before the instant luxury of social media and global connectedness. The concentrated display highlights and recalls the greatness of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Marilyn Monroe, Richard Hambleton, Albert Einstein, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Pablo Picasso.

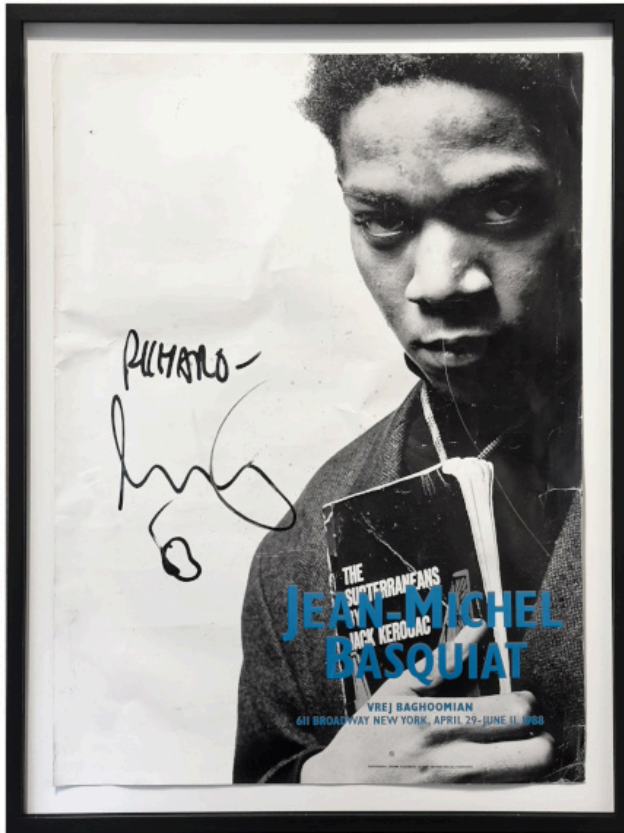


Left: Sunday B. Morning – *Marilyn 23*, 1990s / **Right:** Crash – *Dick Tracy II*, 1988

Exhibition Highlights

Shaped by the street culture in the 1960s and 1970s in New York, Crash, who started as a graffiti artist, demonstrates the vital blend of urban and popular culture in *Dick Tracy II*. Featuring the detective from a popular American comic book, the artwork underlines the significance of comic strips whose impact shaped American Pop Art. Deepening the discussion about the relationship between an original and a copy, two Sunday B. Morning prints – *Marilyn 23* and *Marilyn 31*, both part of the 1990s editions – resulted from a collaboration between Andy Warhol and the printmaking studio. Attaining the quality of the Factory Editions with precious input from the artist, the 1990s editions were mass-produced and stamped with "Fill In Your Own Signature," playing with the notion of authorship.

Warhol's diamond dust-enhanced screenprint of Georgia O'Keeffe marks one of the show's highlights, memorializing their momentous encounter, creating an exciting contrast with the Pop Artist's homage to Picasso in a series of unique canvases. A rare offset lithograph print documents the brilliance of Jean-Michel Basquiat, who became one of the most legendary figures of postwar American art during his brief but visionary life. The poster was created for the artist's last show at Vrej Baghoomian Gallery in 1988. Basquiat signed it for his friend Richard Hambleton, who is also featured in the show with a limited edition artist-made poster. Finally, Kenji Nakayama demonstrates his intricate mastery in *Einstein*, a portrait that reminds us of one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century.



Left: Jean Michel Basquiat – *Exhibition Announcement at Vrej Baghoomian Gallery, 1988* / **Right:** Richard Hambleton – *R. Hambleton. Investigation Department June 27 – July 12, Flavio Belli Gallery, Announcement, 1981*

Famous Faces at Woodward Gallery

The exhibition Famous Faces will be on view at Woodward Gallery in New York and online on Woodward Gallery's virtual exhibition room on Artsy and the gallery's website **during September and November 2023.**

Featured image: Installation view of *Famous Faces*, Woodward Gallery, 2023. All images are courtesy of Woodward Gallery.