

# Bold Like Basquiat

## ART TECHNIQUE

Painting

## AGE GROUP

Appropriate for students 10–14 years old

## CONCEPT

Inspired by work of Jean-Michel Basquiat, students will make a painting in a Neo-Expressionist style.

## SESSIONS

3 x 60 minute sessions

## MATERIALS

- 1 x 11" x 14" canvas or heavy paper per student
- 2 x 8.5" x 11" pieces of paper for notes and sketch
- Chromacryl Acrylic Essentials Acrylic or Chromacryl Students' Acrylic in the following bright colors: Warm and Cool Yellow, Warm and Cool Blue, Warm and Cool Red, Green, Magenta, Orange, Black, Purple, White, etc. Choose from tubes, pints, 1/2 gallons or sets as needed for the class.
- 1 pint Chromacryl Paint Medium/Varnish, per class
- 1 round paint brush per student
- 1 flat paint brush per student
- 1 painting knife or small, flat cardboard strip to spread paint, per student
- tools for texture such as combs, Q-tips, bottle caps, bubble wrap, etc., to share
- 1 pencil per student
- Colored pencils in bright colors, to share
- Oil pastels in bright colors, to share
- Soft plastic table cloths to cover the tables
- 1 bucket to wash brushes in, per table

Other Chroma paints, such as A2 Lightfast Heavy Body Acrylic, Chromatemp Artists' Tempera and Chroma 2 Washable Tempera, can be substituted in this lesson.



*When asked if he had a specific style of working, Jean-Michel Basquiat famously responded, "I'm usually in front of the television."*

*The Neo-Expressionist period of the 1980s is known for paintings with bright, intense colors, highly textured surfaces, and non-idealized imagery inspired by pop culture, graffiti, myths, and personal symbols. Neo-Expressionism is considered a reaction to prior art movements such as Minimalism and Abstract Expressionism. Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) is one of the best-known artists of this movement. His paintings are characterized by large areas of background color, stylized figurative elements and words. In 2017, one of his paintings, Untitled, sold for 110 million dollars - which was until recently, the highest auction amount for an American artist.*

*In this lesson students will create a mixed media artwork incorporating painting and drawing, inspired by techniques of Basquiat, that is filled with a rich visual vocabulary, personal symbols and words. Students will also be given an opportunity to reflect and respond to other students' artwork.*

## NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARDS

*Creating Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.*

*Responding Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.*





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## OBJECTIVE

This project gives students experience with developing a personal artistic vocabulary expressed through drawing and painting.

## VISUAL REFERENCES

Your school library may have books such as *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*, by Javaka Steptoe, as part of their collection. Visit [www.basquiat.com](http://www.basquiat.com) to curate more works for inspiration.

## FIRST SESSION

Start with a review of Basquiat's life and his artworks, considering some of his most famous artworks, such as *Untitled*, which sold for 110 million dollars in 2017. What do the students see? Key elements to note are:

- Use of a few colors in the background
- Bright colors
- Figurative elements
- Personal symbols and marks
- Words – visible and obscured
- Asymmetrical composition

Further the discussion with the question "Are Basquiat's works pretty?" – because art does not need to be "pretty" to be powerful. With older students, discuss how Neo-Expressionism, as an art movement, was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism – how artists of this time were consciously making art about themselves and their times, as opposed to exploring the materiality of paint, sculpture, etc., in a non-representative fashion. Neo-Expressionist painters made art that was raw and rough, textured and brightly colored, and referenced the culture of the times such as graffiti, television shows and pop icons.

As a group, have the students make a list of symbols of their time (emojis, memes, video game characters, tv shows, etc.). Individually, have students make a list of words that they associate with themselves, as well as a personal figurative symbol. Encourage the students to develop their visual vocabulary. Have them think about Basquiat's words, "I don't think about art when I'm working. I try to think about life."

On paper, have the students create a black and white or colored pencil sketch of their composition that includes their personal figurative element, some symbols of their times and words. Remind students that Basquiat said, "I cross out words so you will see them more; the fact that they are obscured makes you want to read them."

## SECOND SESSION

Arrange the room in small groups, with paint (**Chromacryl Acrylic Essentials or Chromacryl Students' Acrylic**) accessible in the center. Students will choose personal meaningful colors.

On a 11" x 14" canvas or similarly sized surface, apply a background of 2-3 colors using a painting knife or a piece of cardboard to spread the paint. Use the back of a paint brush to write or draw symbols into the wet paint. Use other tools such as combs, bubble wrap, etc. to add textural interest. Let dry.



*Untitled*, by Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1982



*Classroom set up*



*Painted background and detail of scratched words*



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Next, following their sketch, paint the figurative element(s) using colors that will stand out against their background. Basquiat's paintings are filled with lots of energy, so encourage the students to pay attention to what they are doing, but not to treat the work as precious. If they make a "mistake" just paint over it – or use that mark as part of their composition. Paintings develop and have a mind of their own! Let dry.

## THIRD SESSION

Now it is time to add their words and symbols. Have the students mix the paint with a medium such as **Chromacryl Painting Medium/Varnish** to make it more fluid (or use a fluid paint such as **Chromacryl Fluid Acrylic**). You may want to demonstrate how to get the right consistency and how to use a round brush with a nice tip for "writing" on the canvas. Have the students paint some words and symbols. Repeat some symbols/words; hide others. Make some big, some small. Let dry.

When dry, go over some parts of the painting with oil pastels. Some students may be more comfortable using pastel to draw and make marks on their paintings. That's ok, because Basquiat frequently combined media to create his artworks.

## REFLECTION

Hang or display the students' work around the room. Have your students reflect and answer these questions about their own and another student's painting:

*In 2-3 sentences, describe what your artwork is about. What do you think the other student's work is about?*

*What 3 symbols have the most meaning to you? What symbols are repeated in the other student's work? What do you think they mean?*

*Did you deliberately hide some words or symbols? Did you want to look more closely at words that were hidden in the other student's work? Why?*

*Are the paintings pretty? Does art need to be pretty to be meaningful and powerful?*

**For more inspiration, visit  
[www.chromaonline.com](http://www.chromaonline.com)**



After the second session



Finished painting



CHROMA

# CHROMA PAINTS AT A GLANCE

The below chart can help you determine which paints will suit the classroom purposes best. While most of Chroma's Educational lines could be used at any grade level for a variety of projects, particular Chroma brands will meet students' growing skills and provide richer, more sophisticated painting experiences.

Product	Color Range	Acrylic	Tempera	Heavy Body Consistency	Medium Body Consistency	Lightfast	Washable	Indoor/Outdoor	Best for Elementary	Best for Middle School	Best for High School	Canvas	Paper	Canvas Board	Wood	Murals/Sets	General Crafts	Paper Mâché	Printmaking
A>2 Lightfast Heavy Body Acrylic	40	x		x		x					x	x	x	x	x				
Chromacryl Students' Acrylics	31	x			x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Chromacryl Acrylic Essentials	20	x			x				x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Molten Metals Metallic Acrylics	10	x			x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Chroma Mural Paint	19	x			x	x		x			x					x			x
Chroma Mural Paint Markers	25	x			x	x		x			x					x			x
Fusion I.A Series Mediums	n/a							x			x					x			
Chroma 2 Intense & Opaque Heavy Bodied Washable Tempera	14		x	x			x		x	x	x		x				x	x	x
Chromatemp Artists' Tempera	32		x	x					x	x			x				x	x	
Chroma Glitter Paint	12		x		x		x		x				x				x	x	
Chromacryl Fluid Acrylic	16	x							x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Liquid Watercolor For Kids	15								x	x			x						
Chroma Drawing Ink	12								x	x	x		x						

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