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INTRIGUED BY THE DRUMS: HIP HOP JUNKIES



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Intrigued by the Drums : Hip Hop Junkies

Synopsis:

This paper discusses the influence and representation of Hip Hop culture on visual art artists. Special attention is given to artists that deal with the malleability of language and appropriation of culture.

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With the explosion of Jean-Michel Basquiat onto the arts scene in the early 1980's, Hip Hop culture made its presence felt in Fine Art. It is safe to say that because of Mr. Basquiat, the investigation and celebration of what is considered popular urban culture provided an entrée for artists of African and Latin descent into the world of Fine Art exhibition, and academic studies.

From ruminations on the commodification of popular urban culture, to critiques of misogyny, New Millennial minstrelsy and hyper-masculinity, many visual artists are using Hip Hop as a touchstone. These theoretical and aesthetic concerns reflect expressions born of Breakdancing, DJ'ing, Emceeing, and Graffiti. Hip Hop (and its visual artistic complement), rooted in a compositional technique known as "sampling" (musical appropriation), becomes a new iteration of collage and eagerly reflects globalization and diverse cultural influences. Within short order, this movement reverberated on the global stage where the "urban" aesthetic is celebrated as an authentic youth aesthetic. And the youth became inner city griots, while communicating through electronic drums and polyrhythmic imagery.