

Julian Schnabel (b. 1951)



Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Julian Schnabel moved with his family to west Texas when still very young and it was there that he spent most of his formative years. He received his B.F.A. from the University of Houston in 1973 and consequently sent an application to the independent study program at the Whitney Museum in NYC, which included slides of his work sandwiched between two pieces of bread. (He was accepted.) Struggling in the art world, Schnabel worked as a short-order cook and hung out at Max's Kansas City, the restaurant-nightclub in Greenwich Village, while he worked on his art. In 1975, Schnabel had his first solo show at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Over the next few years he traveled frequently to Europe, where he was enormously impressed by the work of Antoni Gaudi, Cy Twombly and Joseph Beuys.

It was with his first solo show, at the Mary Boone Gallery in 1979, however, that Schnabel would truly come to be regarded as a major new force in the art world. He participated at the Venice Biennale in 1980 and by the mid-1980s had become a major figure in the Neo-expressionism movement. By the time he exhibited his work in a show jointly organized by Boone and Leo Castelli in 1981, he had become firmly established. His now famous "plate paintings" -- large-scale paintings set on broken ceramic plates brought on a boisterous and critical response from the art world. But what was beyond doubt was the vibrancy that Schnabel brought to the art scene. Using Kabuki theatrical sets, velvet and animal hides, his bold, somewhat confrontational style recalled the energy and daring of Picasso and Pollock.

Schnabel's signature works, filled with raw emotion contain an underlying edge of brutality while still being suffused with energy. Schnabel claims that he's "aiming at an emotional state, a state that people can literally walk into and be engulfed." Considered heroic, Schnabel is known for having a charismatic personality.

Schnabel published his autobiography *CVJ: Nicknames of Maitre D's & Other Excerpts From Life*, in 1987, and has written and directed two films: *Basquiat* a biopic on the controversial painter Jean-Michel Basquiat (1996) and *Before Night Falls*, an adaptation of Reinaldo Arenas' autobiographical novel (2000), which he also produced. *Before Night Falls* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor (Javier Bardem).

Julian Schnabel lives in New York, maintaining studios in New York City and in Montauk on the eastern end of Long Island. His works are in the collections of various museums throughout the world including the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA); Reina Sofia and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, etc.