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## The Masters of Pop Art Take on the Status Quo at Art Basel in Hong Kong

ARTSY EDITORIAL  
17 HOURS AGO

Generations of pop art giants, from Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in the late 1950s and '60s to Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring in the '70s and '80s, come together in Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art LLC's inaugural presentation at Art Basel in Hong Kong. Challenging the practice of abstract expressionism and the status quo of their respective eras, these Pop heroes made an indelible mark on the way we see consumer products and digest mass-produced imagery.

Among Edward Tyler Nahem's pop offerings is Warhol's sculptural work, *Hammer and Sickle* (1977), which takes political iconography from the Soviet Union's national flag and turns it on its head. The piece represents the union of industrial and agricultural laborers under the Communist movement; this motif also featured in other works by the artist. Kirk Varnedoe, former curator at MoMA, said regarding one such painting: "Instead of painting an American flag, which would in principle be a symbol of unity or cohesiveness for his audience as Jasper Johns had done, Warhol paints in the middle of the Cold War the flag of the enemy or the symbol of the enemy, which would be about divisiveness and which would raise hackles." Warhol translates these politically-charged images from flat forms into three-dimensional objects, celebrating their aesthetic value as goods rather than their political value as symbols. By

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Roy Lichtenstein  
*Water Lilies with Cloud*, 1992

finding real tools from a hardware store and then branding them with his name, Warhol has effectively repurposed common objects for a fine art context, fusing high and low brow culture.

In another take on political iconography, Warhol manipulates an image of Mao Tse Tung—a common and recurring subject for the artist—former Chairman of the Communist Party of China, and translates it into a screen print, in washes of blue, black, and white. With *Mao* (1973), Warhol enlivens the face of a political figure often seen in uninspired hues of monetary currency and newsprint.

Another significant work on view is Jean-Michel Basquiat's *Untitled (Figure X-ray)* (1980), which is especially emblematic of his Neo-Expressionist style. The subject—an ambiguous human meets machine meets skeletal form—has fingers, legs, and genitalia that are rendered in squiggly, imprecise lines. Rosy pinks, oranges, and browns fill the page, and create a vibrant, pleasing image. Of similar sensibility, Basquiat's friend, Keith Haring, uses bold colors and thick lines to render cartoonish versions of babies, barking dogs, and flying saucers. *Untitled* (1983) features a near-symmetrical human form in orange-red, blue, and black acrylic paints on vinyl tarpaulin. Famous for addressing the AIDS epidemic, homophobia, drug abuse, and nuclear war in his work, Haring invents a new language for visual expression.

The selection of works on view notes interesting parallels between the practices of Pop art icons. Through paint, wood, steel, and screenprint inks, each generation of artists challenged political ills anew, and approached social hypocrisies with admirable moxie and originality of vision.

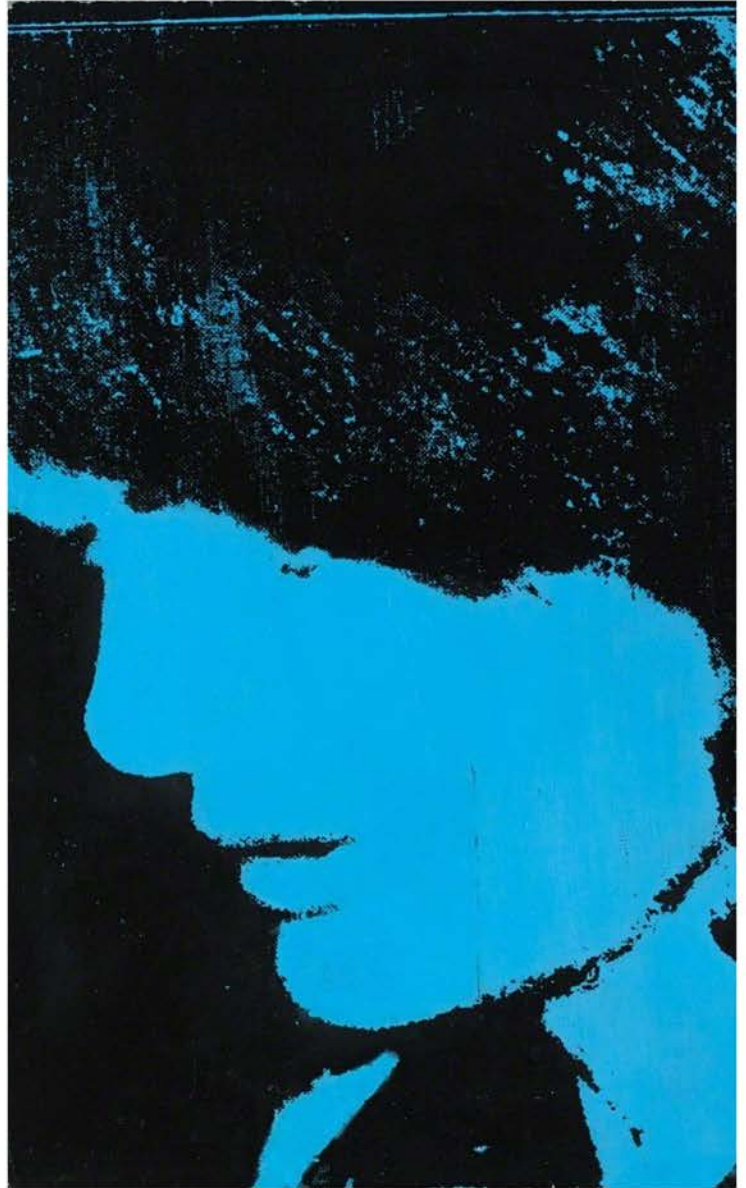
—Anna Furman

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Andy Warhol  
*Jackie*, 1964  
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