Meanwhile, hip hop had broken into public consciousness, and Basquiat was friends with the avant-garde of the new rappers and graffiti artists such as Fab 5 Freddy and Rammellzee. Beside the street-smart sounds, hip hop offered another technique of incorporating the world into one's work: sampling. Basquiat's own favorite critic, Robert Farris Thompson, discussed his paintings in these terms, citing *Charles the First* (1982: p. 184) as an example: "The mnemonic and phonetic motors of the computer age, the keyboard instruments of instant retrieval, the letters, the signs, are used as another kind of brushstroke. This parallels hip hop, New York's musical revolution, at once funky and futuristic, in which certain rap recording studios have computer programmed the sounds of industrial noise, James Brown horn 'hits,' and other pulsations for instant playback on electric 'pianos.' Basquiat is not afraid of the hi-tech wolf. He sees enormous fun and potency. He sees ways of pulsing phonetic writing, literary allusion, and chromatic structure. The trick is having the beat, the visual metronome, to keep these different instruments going all at once."[3]

Because New York had been the world's art capital since the 1950s, this community-driven local scene found quick access to the big limelight. There was only a short way from the dance floor (where Basquiat practically lived for a time) to a globally distributed music video (Basquiat appeared in a cameo as DJ in the video to Blondie's "Rapture," which was on heavy MTV rotation from 1980 on). Success at an artist- organized group show could mean immediate entry into the rosters of blue-chip galleries worldwide. The painting of the time was about a new expressionism, a show of personality after the reign of conceptual art. The rising stars included Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Robert Longo, Francesco Clemente, and Basquiat's friend Keith Haring, who followed a similar career trajectory. From the older generation, it was Andy Warhol, not necessarily so much for his paintings—which despite themes from common life appeared cold and distant—but for his stardom, the way he combined art, party, and his persona into a instantly recognizable brand.

It seemed impossible that a black visual artist could achieve the same level of success. Yet while these pioneering days of the art market are often seen negatively as the start of a thoroughly commercialized era, they also created an intoxicating buzz. As Richard Marshall wrote: "Jean-Michel Basquiat first became famous for his art, then he became famous for being famous, then he became famous for being infamous."[5] Keith Haring described the same loop: "The hype of the art world of the early '80s became a constant blur. There was very little criticism that actually talked of the works themselves. Rather, the talk was about the circumstances surrounding the *success* of the work."[6] And yet the self-fulfilling hype and the unprecedented prices for contemporary art translated into very real opportunities for artists from outside any academic background. Basquiat summed up all the implications of this new, market-driven logic when he simply painted the words "5,000 Dollars" on a canvas of 1982 (p. 188), offering both a critique of the
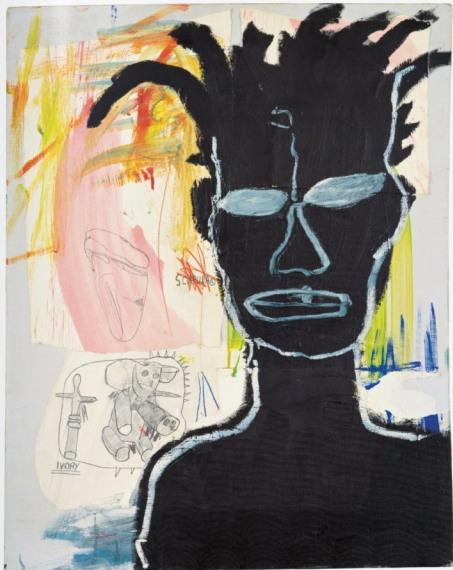
Untitled, 1984
Acrylic, oilstick, marker, graphite, and photocopy
collage on canvas, 76 x 61 cm / 30 x 24 inches

Page 9: **Untitled,** 1982
Oilstick on paper,
76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 inches

Untitled (Indian Head), 1981
Oilstick on paper, 61 x 45.5 cm /
24 x 18 inches

Untitled, 1981
Acrylic, oilstick, and marker on paper,
76 x 56 cm / 30 x 22 inches

Crowns (Peso Neto), 1981
Acrylic, oilstick, and paper collage
on canvas, 183 x 239 cm /
72 x 94 inches

Untitled, 1982
Acrylic and oilstick on linen,
193 x 239 cm / 76 x 94 inches

Boy and Dog in a Johnnypump, 1982
Acrylic, oilstick, and spray paint on canvas,
240 x 420.5 cm / 94 ⁷/₈ x 165 ¹/₂ inches