

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Sotheby's hosts fall auction curated by newly-minted painter Skepta

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A close-up of Skepta's painting "Mama Goes to Market." Image credit: Sotheby's

By AMIAH TAYLOR

Luxury auction house Sotheby's is collaborating with British-Nigerian grime musician and producer Skepta on its second annual edition of Contemporary Curated.

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The latest Contemporary Curated collection, an initiative featuring art direction from famous figures, was guest curated by Skepta. The sale will include hand-selected pieces from an emerging generation of artists as well as an inaugural painting from the celebrated musician.

Culture as inspiration

Bidding for Sotheby's highly anticipated collection begins on Sept. 7, and the London-based online auction will last from Sept. 9 to Sept. 13.

Auction highlights include Banksy's sculpture, "Homeless di Milo," a self-entitled portrait of actress Michaela Coel by Serge Attukwei Clottey, and Elizabeth Peyton's "Evan Recording."

Sotheby's short film "A Life Less Ordinary: Skepta" features its co-curator

In a promotional film for the collection, Skepta explains the motivations behind his "Mama Goes to Market" piece, the creative's first painting for sale.

The artwork was achieved using oil and spray paint on canvas and the back features graffiti tags from artist Slawn, graphic designer Chito and producer Goldie.

Outfitted in a gold chain and vibrant green and red sweater, Skepta reveals that a visit to the Nike Art Gallery in Lagos inspired him artistically. As his painting came to life, he visualized it was hanging on the walls of the prestigious gallery.



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"I honestly will say, this painting came from a real frustration," Skepta says in the film. "And I know anybody who was in lockdown especially big mouth Skep would understand going from shows all the time, always expressing myself to just in the crib and I couldn't do anything."

Painting became an artistic outlet for the British musician, a way to channel his emotions into tangible creative works.

According to Skepta, "Mama Goes to Market" will likely be his first and last painting, excluded only by the occurrence of another circumstantial lockdown.

Art industry darlings

Aggregate sales by dealers and auctioneers reached \$65.1 billion this year, soaring by 29 percent from 2020, according to a global [report](#) from Art Basel.

And while all sectors of the art market rose from 2020 levels, auction houses have experienced the highest rebound, at least partially fueled by the popularity of contemporary art. The dealer market rose in value by 18 percent and new artworks created in the last 20 years accounted for 37 percent of that value increase.

Skepta's painting is estimated to fetch anywhere between \$46,000 and \$69,000 at auction. Other notable contemporary artworks from the exhibition like John Baldessari's "Intersection Series: Automobile/High Rise Building" are projected to sell for over \$200,000.

It is easy to see that with new artists commanding high selling points for their creations, it is in the best interest of luxury auction houses to discover new and compelling talent in the art world to satiate consumer demand.

Luxury auction houses are also increasingly embracing digital strategies to keep up with new asset classes such as NFTs ([see story](#)).

Beyond collaborating with music industry talent and embracing digitalization, Sotheby's has unveiled one of the world's most saturated pink diamonds, announcing that the jewel could sell for over \$21 million in an upcoming Hong Kong auction ([see story](#)).