title for the show came from a 1974 book by the Cuban dissident novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Schnabel incorporated the words in two 1993 oil paintings featured in Draw a Family, a recent catalogue of the artist's work over the past 40 years, published by Karma. But what the words mean in the context of Schnabel's art defies explanation.

Similarly, at Gagosian, three predomi-
antly red untitled works (from 1990–91) carried the words “los patos del buen retiro” (“the ducks of the Buen Retiro,” a park in Madrid). Isolated in a room of their own (the equivalent of a park, perhaps), the paintings created an environment reminiscent of Monet’s Water Lilies, but the words, which may have been floating in Schnabel's mind as he painted, revealed nothing about the works themselves.

The incorporation of words in paint-
ings is one of Cy Twombly’s favorite de-
vices, and it may be that Schnabel is simultaneously honoring Twombly and contesting him by suggesting that to include ideas in pictures subverts art’s vi-

Julian Schnabel

gagosian

Julian Schnabel’s 12 large-format paint-
ings in this exhibition, “View of Dawn in the Tropics,” were at once visually pow-

The on the other hand, the magnificent Ozymandias (1990), a huge composition of oil, resin, gesso, and leather on sail-
cloth, contradicts that contradiction. Here Schnabel recycles the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley’s sonnet Ozy-

mandias, about the perishable nature of glory. Like the broken statue in the poem, the painting is all fragments, with strips of leather glued onto the surface creating a three-dimensional effect, as if we were seeing the work from above rather than head-on.

The white shape domi-

ating the surface could indeed be the “shattered visage” of Shelley’s pharaoh half-buried in the sand. But unlike that poet’s smashed monarch, Schnabel’s rough pro-
file, along with all the other works in this show, is an homage to ruins and remains—the raw material transformed through imagi-
nation and memory into dazzling visual images.

—Alfred Mac Adam