

# Omar Hassan

## *Breaking Through*

November 17 - December 10, 2016



*Breaking Through #10 (detail)*  
Mixed media  
52 x 79 in | 132 x 200 cm, 2015

UNIX Gallery, in conjunction with the Lyfebulb Foundation and Contini Art UK, is pleased to present "Breaking Through," a solo exhibition and performance by Italian artist Omar Hassan at our 532 West 24th Street location in New York. This marks Hassan's debut with the gallery and his first solo show in New York. "Breaking Through" opens with a public performance by the artist on November 17 from 6 - 8 pm and runs for three and a half weeks.

A member of the Lyfebulb Entrepreneur Circle, Omar Hassan has used his type 1 diabetes diagnosis, as well as his former career as a professional boxer, as motivation to become an unconventional artist. Hassan will use his boxing skills to create a unique work of art at UNIX Gallery during a one-time performance on November 17 to raise awareness for diabetes in an innovative and interactive way. This work will be auctioned off after the performance. Proceeds from the silent auction will benefit the Lyfebulb Foundation. Founded by Dr. Karin Hehenberger, Lyfebulb's mission is to improve the quality of life for those living with the chronic disease now.

The time-honored tradition of abstract expressionism can convey strong emotional intent by the artist. Using revealing color combinations and gestural actions, like splashing, dripping, and throwing, lends a protean and evocative energy to the artwork. Omar Hassan references this in his *Breaking Through* series by synthesizing his past experience as a boxer with art as a pictorial gesture with a resounding visual impact. "Dipping the gloves in color and throwing punches at the canvas are simple gestures, but are actually really strong and powerful gestures," he explains. "Through this performative action, I wanted to celebrate the concept of boxing . . . the canvas and those noble movements of boxing to express this link through colors." These gestures are contextualized within the artist's oeuvre as a defining point in which he had to deal with his type 1 diabetes and serve as a life-metaphor: "In boxing, as in life, you are alone; boxing requires hard work and daily effort; when you are knocked down you must get back up on your feet and continue to fight."

Also included as part of the exhibition will be Hassan's *Injections* series. This series is a direct reference to Hassan's daily insulin shots in which points of light are formed using spray paint to create a pinhole or nucleus effect from which the paint drips down to the bottom of each canvas. There is a recognition of these works as autobiographical "self-portraits." The use of spray paint harkens back to the artist's exploration of street art while growing up in Milan, which Hassan fused with traditional fine art techniques while studying at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts. The illuminated points represent the artist's positive outlook in bursts of color on bright canvas.

Omar Hassan (b. 1987, Milan, Italy). Hassan graduated from the renowned Brera Academy of Fine Arts in 2010. Following several solo and group exhibitions, Hassan was invited by Vittorio Sgarbi, curator of the Italian Pavilion, to exhibit at the 2011 54th Venice Biennale. His work is part of several public works in Italy and the UK. These include *One Wall* at the Palazzo della Regione in Milan, the Museo Mille Miglia in Brescia, the Accademia delle Belle Arti Aldo Galli in Como and *Colour Cube* in London's Brick Lane. Hassan lives and works in Milan, Italy.

"Breaking Through" will be on view at UNIX Gallery from November 17 through December 10, 2016. UNIX gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and by appointment. For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the preview, contact Andrew Cole at 212-209-1572 or [andrew@unixgallery.com](mailto:andrew@unixgallery.com).