

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Howard Rosenbaum, President
561-994-9180, howardr@rosenbaumcontemporary.com

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**Breaking Through—Miami :
Art Performance and Auction To Raise Funds for Diabetes Research Institute**

BAL HARBOUR, Fla.— St. Regis Bal Harbour, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Rosenbaum Contemporary are presenting *Breaking Through—Miami*, featuring artists Omar Hassan and Helidon Xhixha, on Thursday, December 3, from 6 to 9 p.m. in the BH Burger Bar at the St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort in support of the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation (DRIF). During the evening, Omar Hassan will create a new painting in his *Breaking Through* series, which will be auctioned off to benefit the DRI immediately upon its completion. Helidon Xhixha is also donating his sculpture *Monolite d'acciaio* to the charity auction. Event attendees are asked to RSVP by November 30 to Kristina.ustinova@stregis.com. The work of both artists will remain on display at the St. Regis from Dec. 3 to Dec. 6.

About Omar Hassan

Omar Hassan was born in 1987 in Milan, Italy, and was diagnosed with diabetes as a child. At age 15, he was enticed by his best friend, a prolific graffiti artist, to join him in experimenting on the walls of Milan. Hassan later witnessed his best friend falling to his death, an experience which led him to explore other paths, including boxing, a sport for which he had natural talent.

"I fought with the great Italian champions and managed to hold my own," Hassan said in an interview with *Sport* magazine. "But then I came across an opponent too big for me alone to beat. During the strict medical exams before a big tournament, my diabetes was discovered, and I was disqualified. They told me I was unfit to fight. Being diabetic is considered an 'aggravated risk' to the already normal risks involved in boxing. My dreams, my aspirations, my outlet, the years of hard training—all blocked by a red stamp from the sporting bureaucracy."

Knocked down, but not out, Hassan rechanneled his energy back into his art, developing a new technique, inspired by his past experiences, in which he dips his boxing gloves into buckets of paint and punches large white canvases, resulting in colorful expressions of his determination to "break through" the struggles of life.

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“You discover the inner me in this work,” Hassan told *Sport*, “the boxer who wants to fight, to throw punches at life in a blind rage. The inner rage must be vented in some way, and I channel that on to the canvas, rediscovering the pleasure of a sport I have been prevented from practicing.”

Works from Hassan’s *Injection* series, which directly reference his daily insulin shots, will also be on display at the St. Regis. The points of light in these paintings represent the artist’s positive outlook in bursts of bright color.

Hassan exhibited in the Italian Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011 and has had numerous commissions including One Wall at the Palazzo della Regione in Milan, the Museo Mille Miglia in Brescia, the Accademia delle Belle Arti Adllo Galli in Como and Colour Cube in London’s Brick Lane. He is also featured in *Street Art London* by Frank Steam alongside artists such as Banksy and has work in the permanent collection of Ravenna Museum of Art.

About Helidon Xhixha

Helidon Xhixha, whose mother suffers from diabetes, is also committed to finding a cure for the disease. He was born in Durrës, Albania, in 1970, was raised in a family of artists, and inherited his respect for the fine arts and passion for sculpting from his father.

While waiting to begin his studies at the Academy of Arts in Tirana, he decided to move to Italy where he attended the Brera Art Academy of Milan. Through a scholarship he won in 1998, he was able to attend London’s Kingston University where he improved his techniques in engraving, sculpting and photography. He graduated from Brera Art Academy in February 1999 and very quickly became renowned in the academic art sphere for his unique style. His creations included works in Murano glass and sculptures in stainless steel using innovative and specialized techniques.

Within a period of a few years, steel became the base of all of Xhixha’s work. He discovered how to unite the power of light with this material by confining it, transforming it by using “special effects,” and ultimately setting it free. The hardness and resistance of the steel are uniquely molded by folding and turning it inside out.

Today, Xhixha is renowned for his public sculptures, such as the monumental sculpture *Riflessi Dal Cielo* permanently installed at the Regional Government building in Milan, Italy; the monument *Sound of Steel*, installed at the Violin Museum, Palazzo dell-arte, Cremona; and *The Three Monoliths* installed at the Motanstahl building in Stabio,

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Switzerland.

His installations *Iceberg*, *Schegge*, *Pillars of Light* and *Four Elements*, a statement on global warming, were exhibited at the 56th Venice Biennale this year. Xhixha's work can also be found in private collections in Albania, Brazil, China, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

About the Diabetes Research Institute

The Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and its supporting foundation were created for the sole purpose of curing diabetes. As the largest and most comprehensive research center dedicated to curing diabetes, the DRI is aggressively working to develop a biological cure by restoring natural insulin production and normalizing blood sugar levels without imposing other risks. For millions of children and adults affected by diabetes, the DRI is their best hope for a cure.

About Rosenbaum Contemporary

Rosenbaum Contemporary, founded in 1979, is based in Boca Raton with a second gallery inside the St. Regis Bal Harbour Hotel in Miami. The gallery caters to international collectors interested in investment-quality works by Postwar, Modern and Contemporary masters and presents nationally recognized museum-level exhibitions throughout the year. The gallery also offers a wide range of free services to collectors worldwide including acquisition advice, art consulting, sourcing of artists, art collection building and management and resale of select works of art.

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High-res. images available upon request from Julie Kolka, Web/Marketing Manager, juliek@rosenbaumcontemporary.com, 561-994-4422 x136.

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OMAR HASSAN, *Breaking Through #8*, 2015, Mixed media, 78.74 x 62.99 inches (200 x 160 cm)



HELIDON XHIXHA, *Monolite d'acciaio*, 2015, Mirror-polished stainless steel, 27.95 x 9.84 x 6.3 inches (71 x 25 x 16 cm)