

HE'S GOT NEXT

by: noavi

HASSAN RAHIM is the same age MICHAEL JORDAN was when he won his first MVP award, and exactly half JORDAN's age now. I'm not sure that's a coincidence. RAHIM's work relies heavily on childhood memories –of which the NBA plays a large role (as well as the American space program)- and he sources them expertly to create seamless collage works that weave detailed narratives, that is, if you're able to catch all the references he subtly layers.

RAHIM is not the type to self congratulate, though maybe he should start. For JORDAN's 50th birthday party this year at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, NIKE commissioned HASSAN as one of 50 artist to interpret a different highlight in the GOAT's career. RAHIM's "highlight" was the clause in JORDAN's Chicago Bulls contract which stipulated that under any circumstances, bodily injury or otherwise, his contract could not be terminated; this became known as the "for the love of the game" clause, as well as title of HASSAN's submission and the large acronym engraved in the marble shrine of the collage. Other notable artists tapped for JORDAN's birthday included: KEVIN LYONS, MARK WHALEN, WILL FRY and GEOFF MCFETRIDGE.

But thematically, basketball isn't nearly as prevalent in RAHIM's work as the American Space program. And given his adolescent experience, HASSAN's fascination with leaving this earth seems less like a childhood dream and more like raw escapism.

RAHIM spent age 14-15 separated from his sisters in a government structured group home in Los Angeles that he now refers to as the Santa Ana Psych Ward. It was there he taught himself how to use a bootleg version of Photoshop on the home's communal PC. Time on the computer was limited, and doled out as his reward for completed chores and good behavior, and swiftly revoked as punishment when he misbehaved.

"They knew how much it meant to me so they would take it away when I was not doing good and shit. That was the first thing they would take away, which was kind of heartbreaking... it just pissed me off. I was like 'fuck you guys, I like this. This is the only thing that I care about' ...So I had to sort of work within that system to be able to have the privilege to use a machine like that."

Trouble at home and a general lack of parental figures proved a hindrance to graduating high school. Junior year found HASSAN truant, skating from morning till night and stealing from convenience stores. At the time, his passion was funneled into all things skateboarding. He got a job at a skate shop and began to create skate graphics. When continuation school didn't work out, HASSAN took the California High School Proficiency Exam that put an end to his forced schooling.

"It's actually a legal diploma, I could've went to Harvard if they accepted me-

(we both laugh)
"but uh... they would not have fucking accepted me..."

While his friends were finishing their senior years in high school, HASSAN was further along on the path of the autodidact, enrolled in a screen-printing class and other such interests at the local college. It was around that time that a friend from THE HUNDREDS skate shop put HASSAN in touch with the art department at INTERSCOPE RECORDS. Through that connection HASSAN created the mixtape cover art and a pair of VANS for EMINEM, as well as promotional art for THE GAME's and EM's joint track "One Blood". 17 years old and already creating graphics to be reproduced en masse, I asked HASSAN if this was the first time he felt as though he'd "made it".

No, never. Not even now.

Really?

Swear to god.

You showed at Art Basel Miami a few months ago, that's big.

I mean I showed in Miami, adjacent to Basel. I don't think it's a big deal. Like, it's cool to go out there, I mean anyone can do it...

The casual disregard for his own efforts at the premier art show in the Americas is proof of this man's humble constitution. Los Angeles based HVW8 gallery and its founder TYLER GIBNEY brought a small group of artists and their work to Miami this year and put on one of the most talked about shows (and parties) of the festival. Alongside JUSTIN WEST, ALESSANDRO MORODER, 13TH WITNESS, and host A\$AP ROCKY, HASSAN debuted his newest works to critical acclaim. Barely a month later, he would have his first solo at HVW8 Gallery in Los Angeles titled "The Air Above This Ground" which brought out the who's who of the LA art, music and fashion world. The show featured mostly collage work as well as a marble sculpture that he says is "*like a tombstone to an era*".

Between Basel and the HVW8 vernissage, HASSAN has come forward with a unique framing style that features asymmetrical conjoined frames, quickly becoming a signature of his work, and as recognizable as CYPRIEN GAILLARD's style of layering mattes around his polaroids.

HASSAN continues his collaboration with HVW8 gallery later this year in the form of a group show in Italy and Amsterdam featuring works by MORODER and LISA LEONE, though he will be moving on from basketball, thematically. But before he shuts the door on it entirely, I ask him where the fascination comes from, and why the era of late '80s early '90s in particular.

"My last art show was a concept show. And the original working title was 'Selective Memory'. Basically it was memories from [when I was] 5 years old to 12 years old. So they were all events that happened in my youth. So, a lot of the events that take place in my show that I showcase were DEE BROWN's All Star Slam Dunk and I contrasted that with the Challenger Space Shuttle's explosion which was actually 1985 or '86 I believe. So that was a pretty controversial thing that happened in America's Space Program, even though it happened before I was born, the sort of aftermath and ricochet of effects that it laid onto our media and our perception of space travel is something that applied to my whole childhood. So people always- especially my school teachers-would be really affected by it because a school teacher died in that space shuttle. The name of that piece was "Career Highlights". And it was like DEE BROWN's career highlight and obviously those astronauts' only time they got half way to space."

In the past year HASSAN has successfully executed more projects than it seems a human body could physically have the time to churn out. This makes him a highly desirable creative asset to have on a team, if you can get him to put on your jersey.

Right now RAHIM is the design director for ICONOGRAPH magazine, art director for THVM rag, founder and director of publishing company SHABAZZ PROJECTS- which has put out 3 (soon to be 4) books and a poster in one year, and collaborator at COMMONWEALTH PROJECTS' new publishing company SPA for which he created the website and brand identity, not to mention he's the newest artist to be tapped by the Standard Hotel in Hollywood to customize its lobby space. He's managed to do all that while putting on his first solo show and free-lancing design projects.

How do you have time to do all this?

"That's why I'm sick right now, drinking coffee. It's really difficult. ... I'm obsessed with print so I work on magazines. If you want to or you don't want to regardless you have to just sort of know whether it's good or not for you at the moment or even for you in the future in general. So anyways, I guess for anyone that's working with me right now, I love you."

<http://hassanrahim.com/>

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