

Title: “Parchment”

Medium: Parchment, New Inks

Artist: Jacob Hugh

2074 – 2120

The museum wing you are entering contains “Parchment.” This masterpiece, created by artist Jacob Hugh is exhibited behind climate-controlled casing, guarded by military personnel and monitored by twenty-four hour video surveillance. Photography of any sort is strictly prohibited. Please remain behind the velvet ropes and supervise children.

Once you have viewed “Parchment” move along your left so that others may have their turn. Progress down the corridor and read the informative wall panels detailing Hugh’s biography. Follow signs to the museum’s South Wing, which exhibits historic photographs, videos, media clippings, interactive displays, and ephemera from Hugh’s estate. Coffee-table books, documentaries, reproductions, postcards, and accessories are available in the gift shop.

The Colorful Life of Jacob Hugh

2074 – 2120

A Brief Biography

Jacob Hugh’s masterpiece rivals works by Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Rodin, Escher, Klimt, and Warhol. In his lifetime, Hugh became the most influential and highly valued artist in history. Jacob

Hugh was born in Tahiti in 2074; the only child of international courtesan Cora Hugh. Scholars and critics place great emphasis on Hugh's earliest childhood years in Tahiti. Captivated by color and light, Hugh often described his childhood as a kaleidoscopic realm where tanagers and iridescent parakeets flickered in emerald jungles; where prismatic fish drifted through aquamarine seas, and sunsets the colors of frangipani flowers gave way to phosphorescent tides below starry nights.

Little is known regarding the background and true identity of Hugh's mother, Cora; although there is evidence she may have served briefly as a spy for the French Government. She held passports under several pseudonyms. The identity of Hugh's father is unknown, although academics surmise he was of Polynesian descent.

In media interviews, art lectures, and documentaries, Jacob Hugh relayed the only family history his mother had ever revealed- vague details of how she had run away from a British foster home at the age of twelve. Regardless of her mysterious origins, there is no doubt Cora Hugh was a cultured, intellectual woman. After leaving Tahiti, Cora traveled extensively with her young son, residing intermittently in hostels, luxury apartments, and fine hotels of London, Paris, Milan, Berlin, Rome, and Bangkok. She hired an elite contingent of private tutors to educate her gifted son.

Though Cora Hugh never enrolled her son in any traditional school, she equipped him with an eccentric but extensive discipline in the visual arts. Nurturing his early artistic aspirations, she spared no expense on the finest paints, pencils and canvases. In interviews, Hugh later admitted how his mother frequently left the household to attend mysterious meetings; often vanishing for hours or days at a time. Though Cora never divulged her whereabouts, she always returned. When tutors or other caretakers were unavailable to look after Hugh, Cora deposited her young son in the halls of museums and art galleries, instructing him to memorize the works of art. Jacob Hugh credited his unusual upbringing as the foundation and inspiration for his masterpiece.

By age nine, the ambidextrous Jacob Hugh was producing accurate, detailed reproductions of works by Da Vinci, Escher, and Klimt. The most extraordinary aspect of Hugh's artwork was how he produced it entirely from memory. Most of these early works, done in graphite, watercolor, pen and ink; were lost in a fire that ravaged Cora Hugh's Milan apartment in 2087. Recently, however, five of Hugh's exquisite drawings were discovered in a safe deposit box his mother had purchased in Paris in 2085. Four of these original drawings (produced by Hugh at the age of nine) sold for over fifty million dollars a-piece in a Christie's auction. The fifth drawing is displayed in the South Wing of this museum.

In 2089, Cora Hugh died tragically in London. Medical records cite her cause of death as an overdose of barbiturates and alcohol. She was thirty-seven years old. Whether this overdose was accidental or intentional is not known. Regardless, the tragedy left Jacob Hugh orphaned at the age of fifteen. He began work on his masterpiece that same year.

Funded by the considerable inheritance his mother had left him, the grieving Jacob Hugh returned to Polynesia, where he apprenticed himself to a traditional tattoo artist, a Samoan Chief named Tyrian Freewind. Under the guidance and tutelage of Freewind, Hugh became a celebrated tribal tattoo artist. Hugh inked the initial tribal tattoos on his own arms during that period in Polynesia; elaborate bands of geometric designs that morphed into coiled, scaled serpents circling his biceps.

Hugh's quest for spiritual enlightenment coupled with his passion for adventure, art and philosophy led him from Polynesia to India. In 2093 He traveled from Calcutta up the Ganges River to Bangladesh and Delhi, studying with various Swamis, learning the practice of Yoga, the art of henna tattoo. In Delhi Hugh decorated his arms and legs with elaborate Godna tattoos.

Shocked by the extreme poverty he found in cities along the Ganges, Hugh gave away most of his inheritance to the children, the poor, the sick and hungry of India. He trekked on toward Nepal, traveling at times by foot, by bus, by camel and caravan. He became disoriented and lost in the Himalayan Dessert during a sandstorm. He suffered dehydration, starvation, extreme exposure to sun and wind, and early

stages of photo keratitis- desert blindness. His sunburned skin began to peel in white sheets. All hues and colors of the surrounding desert faded, and soon he saw only vast white light. When death seemed most certain, Hugh came upon an ancient boulder of metamorphic rock. The boulder offered shade, protection and relief from dry, violent winds.

Growing safely in a fissure of the boulder, Hugh discovered a gnarled pomegranate tree, bearing one ripe fruit. Hugh survived for seven days, curled within the fissure of this boulder, nourished by the seeds and blood-colored juice of a single pomegranate. On the seventh day he was rescued by Tibetan monks, who found him and carried him to the safety of their Zen Monastery. Nursed to health by the monks, Hugh recovered his strength. His vision and perception of color slowly returned. Hugh soon adopted the Buddhist practices of the monks. He shaved the dark locks from his head and donned a monastic robe. He spent the year of 2094 with the monks, fascinated in particular, by their tantric art of sand mandalas.

Hugh assisted the monks in gathering substances used to create the mandalas; colored sands, crushed lapis lazuli, ruby dust and powder of crushed desert flowers. He knelt with the monks, painstakingly arranging colored grains into elaborate patterns. Hugh identified the moment of his spiritual awakening as a day in the Zen monastery:

“I balanced a single indigo grain of sand in the palm of my hand,” Hugh explained in later interviews “admiring it in rays of golden sunlight. Suddenly I saw my whole life reflected in that grain. As Himalayan desert wind swept the grain from my palm, I understood the purpose of my life.”

Hugh parted ways with the monks, traveling on to Paris and Amsterdam where he served brief stints of employment in various tattoo parlours, inking under the pseudonym T.J. Windhue. During this period (2095-2098) Hugh began to experiment with inks, pigments and carriers. He began an extensive correspondence with European and Asian ink manufacturers, as well as other notable tattoo artists. He began developing recipes.

In 2009, in Germany, Hugh rented laboratory space in a science building owned by the Berlin University of the Arts. (Hugh's early notes, along with recipes and sketches for his masterpiece, are exhibited in the Berlin University Gallery.) In Berlin, Hugh began importing small quantities of heavy metals, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, barium, cinnabar, as well as azo chemicals. He corresponded with chemists and gemologists, obtaining dust from rare, finely crushed Aubergine Tahitian pearls, gold, platinum, silver, copper, malachite, opal and various precious gems. He obtained rare earth elements, ultra violet pigments, liquid crystals... all the while, perfecting his recipes for carriers and binders. He worked with engineering students in Berlin to develop a more precise tattoo gun.

Over the next year, Jacob Hugh illustrated his chest with stunning layers of tattoo; silver dust, aquamarine, indigo... he captured the dazzling waters of the south Pacific; adding images of tropical fish, sea fans and turtles. He etched an over-layer of ultra violet ink, until his chest and shoulders glowed with a phosphorescent aura. On the surface of the ultramarine, rippling water; just over his heart, Hugh inked a portrait of his mother. Her gentle face floated faint, diaphanous; as though distant and viewed through deep water. Some critics claim that Hugh mixed his mother's ashes with various ink pigments and silver dust to achieve her vitreous portrait.

The complexity of Hugh's project evolved as he illustrated his body with memories of his fantastic travels. Phosphorescent waters of the South Pacific spilled down his torso, swirling into darker waters of the Ganges River, which ran the length of his left thigh. Faces, exquisite portraits of his spiritual leaders shimmered like holograms emerging from dark currents of the Ganges.

The Himalayas rose along Hugh's shoulder blades, jutting into a pale blue sky at the base of his neck where desert wind swept grains of sand into thin air. Brilliant dots of color, representing dust and sand, rose up the back of Hugh's neck, gathering at the top of his skull, swirling into a more cohesive pattern-- the edge of a mandala. It took Jacob Hugh seven years of painstaking work—dot, by dot, by dot to complete the tattoo mandala that eventually covered his entire face.

There was no anonymity for Hugh once his facial mandala was complete. In the streets of Berlin, people stared. Media and paparazzi pursued him, demanding interviews, answers and explanations for his unbelievable art. Tattoo artists begged Hugh to publish his innovative ink recipes. His Berlin laboratory was burglarized.

In 2101 Hugh retreated to a small island off the coast of Greece, where he continued to work on his masterpiece, adding mysterious neon inks to illustrations of urban streets and skylines of Paris, London and Amsterdam which ran the length of his forearms. But public curiosity could not be satiated. Finally, in 2102, at the age of twenty-eight, Hugh agreed to an interview and photo shoot with a young reporter from the *London Art Review*. Then came the exorbitant offers. A preeminent gallery in Basel, Switzerland offered Hugh one million dollars to pose, nude, for three days in their gallery, in conjunction with the opening events of Art Basel. Hugh accepted the offer.

Art critics went wild. Those who saw Hugh, nude, in the flesh during that first exhibition described the experience as pure rapture. They claimed his flesh glowed and glittered; as if he'd been dipped in stars. They praised his elaborate designs of sea creatures that morphed into Escher-like tessellations. They described his facial mandala as mystical, breathtaking, holographic—a layered millefiori of vibrant color. The medical community voiced concerns regarding toxicity of ingredients in Hugh's inks. The public demanded more showings of Jacob Hugh.

Some critics proclaimed his art as genius, revolutionary... the future of modern art. Others condemned him as a grotesque, deviant, circus freak. A prominent gallery in Rome invited Hugh to display his nude body, but the Vatican forbid the exposition and censored all media coverage. Protests, strikes and riots ensued in the streets of Rome.

Hugh was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2105. Prestigious art schools bestowed honorary degrees upon him, inviting him to teach and lecture on the intersection of Ethnographic art and Modernism. Once again, Hugh began to travel. Miami. New York. Los Angeles. Madrid. Moscow.

Cairo. Mexico City. Buenos Aires. Lima. Cape Town. Sydney. Galleries, museums, and art institutions worldwide scheduled exhibitions of Jacob Hugh. All the while, Hugh embellished his masterpiece. To him, it was always “a work in progress.”

Hugh took great pride in inking himself by his own hand. He commissioned a select group of renowned tattoo artists to assist in completing his designs on areas of his body he could not reach. There was ink between his toes, on the soles of his feet, his tongue, his gums, his earlobes and eyelids, the corneas of his eyes, his genitals. He had his fingernails and toenails sliced away, in order that he might access and illustrate the pinks ovals of empty flesh below. Fine art photographs and nude videos of Jacob Hugh circulated through the internet, appearing in pornographic websites and erotic publications worldwide. Much debate centered on Hugh’s illustrated genitals.

A pomegranate tree rose from Hugh’s loins, its windswept branches arced the length of his penis. On the right side of his scrotum, an ancient boulder shielded the tree from desert winds and gold rays of a neon sun that stretched over his right hip, blazing into his abdomen and pelvic region. On the left side of his scrotum, a fragile branch bowed with the weight of a single, crimson pomegranate fruit.

While visiting China in 2107 to lecture at a Beijing university, Hugh disrobed in a public park, exhibiting his tattoos to a group of art students. He was promptly arrested and imprisoned. The President of the People’s Republic of China chastised Hugh, labeling him as a vulgar, perverted, masochistic, nudist. Hugh spent forty days and nights in a communist prison while international governments negotiated his safe release. (This experience may have led to Hugh’s addition of the gleaming metallic handcuffs he inked around his wrists.) He was banned from China, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, Syria and several other countries. Media coverage of his artwork was censored in Cuba, North Korea, Sudan and Turkey. Hugh was offered political asylum in America, and granted American Citizenship through Refugee Status.

Hugh became the wealthiest man in the world. He achieved status in *The Guinness Book of World Records* in 2109, as the most tattooed human in history; creator of the world's most vibrant tattoo art. He was celebrated as a man who stood beyond the bounds of race and skin color... beyond categories of ethnicity. With funds raised from his international exhibitions, he launched art schools, galleries, elite tattoo parlours, environmentally responsible ink manufacturing companies, color research corporations, progressive advertising design firms, and art museums. He brought art schools, art initiatives and museums to far, impoverished corners of the globe.

In 2111, at the age of thirty-seven, Jacob Hugh contracted the HIV virus. The virus quickly progressed into AIDS. American tabloids claimed Hugh had contracted the virus from a gay lover in Tahiti. Those rumors were never substantiated. Art critics now claim the virus came from an infected tattoo needle. Lesions began to rise through the ink of Hugh's priceless masterpiece. The public clamored for a cure for Jacob Hugh. Hugh donated billions to research and pharmaceutical companies in search of a fast-acting cure. He agreed to serve as a test subject for a new, experimental AIDS antidote.

In an unprecedented, internationally broadcast Reality Television Series, Hugh shared his real-time experience with AIDS and with the experimental antidote. *Fifty Hues of AIDS* became the reality television series of an era. The visceral series ushered in a new genre of Reality Television. Reality Pharmaceutical Trials: *Cures and Futures*. *Real people, Real Progress: Yesterday's Epidemics, Tomorrow's Drugs*.

The AIDS antidote was hugely successful. In a matter of months, Hugh was entirely cured. Jacob Hugh became the spokes model and avant-garde advertising campaign for the pharmaceutical company that patented the antidote. Hugh honored the young biochemist responsible for creating the antidote by illustrating the man's portrait on the palm of his right hand. The pharmaceutical company copyrighted the slogan "Let's give a hand for the cure!" and ran this tag line and their logo, across a photograph of a joyous and grateful Jacob Hugh, applauding.

Produced from a particular genetic protein, found only in a near-extinct species of deep-sea, starfish, the AIDS antidote was prohibitively expensive, and initially produced in limited quantities. As scientists worked frantically to duplicate the protein synthetically, the antidote was made available to only the most extreme AIDS cases in the American public. Antidote distribution was managed by a new, government-subsidized health care initiative.

In a backlash against the government health care act, Hugh established a charity to assist AIDS victims and their families in obtaining the antidote. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. *Time Magazine* honored Hugh as Man of the Year, and published his iridescent face on their cover, along with the caption “The Man Who Became Art, the Art That Became the Cure.”

As Hugh’s fame escalated, so did concerns about his safety. Everywhere he went, people wanted to touch his radiant skin. He was mobbed in the streets by fanatics. In 2116, The US government designated Jacob Hugh as a National Treasure, and required him to employ body guards. While visiting the Caribbean in 2117, Hugh was approached by masked man carrying a vessel of battery acid. Fortunately, one of Hugh’s body guards wrestled the would-be attacker to the ground in the nick of time. Both the body guard and the attacker were grotesquely scarred and disfigured in the incident.

Following the horrific attempt on Hugh’s life, the US government demanded a halt to Hugh’s international travels and placed strict restrictions on his passport. Hugh vehemently protested these restrictions. He went into hiding in the mountains of northern Idaho, refusing to exhibit his masterpiece, granting only radio interviews.

Over radio broadcasts, Hugh proclaimed; “Below the ink, I am no different from anyone else. My skin is merely my chosen media to record my life story. Freedom of artistic expression, freedom of travel are imperative to my journey. I want to be with the people! I want to share a masterpiece that symbolizes the transformation of my life journey into spirit. My art is merely a map and archive of my time here. I need to travel and teach about the impact of art and ideas on social consciousness.”

Eventually, the US government lifted restrictions on Hugh's passport, assuaging him with a private jet to assist in his international travels. Hugh immediately scheduled a retrospective exhibit in Tahiti. En-route to Tahiti from LAX, on May 1st of 2120, Hugh's jet was hijacked. The jet vanished entirely from radar tracking systems and... Jacob Hugh disappeared.

Hysteria rocked the world of modern art. Had Hugh been kidnapped? The FBI and the CIA launched an extensive investigation. Art critics raised the possibility that Hugh had grown weary of fame, fortune and publicity, and finally staged his own disappearance.

Two days after his disappearance, a ransom note arrived at the White House. Hugh's captors demanded that trillions of dollars-worth of the AIDS antidote be immediately funneled to a list of foreign governments. An emergency UN summit was called, and the decision was made to meet the demands of the terrorists. The UN provided emergency funds to assist the Pharma Company with production of the vaccine. The World Health Organization enacted a medical distribution task force to rapidly transport and distribute the sensitive vaccine. As the WHO endeavored to meet demands outlined in the ransom note, the FBI traced clues and tips regarding Hugh's kidnapping and whereabouts.

Seven days after his disappearance, FBI agents located Hugh and his captors on tiny island near French Polynesia. Employing stealth surveillance and night vision cameras, FBI agents pinpointed the unmistakable glow of Hugh's elaborate tattoos. In a secret meeting, on May 8th of 2120, the U.S. President authorized a covert operation to liberate Hugh from an island compound guarded by terrorist kidnappers. FBI agents and SWAT teams planned a night raid to overtake the compound.

But something went amiss in the jungle on the dark tropic night of May 9th, 2240. A flock of florid parakeets startled one of the kidnappers. Two American Green Berets and an FBI agent were killed in a sudden burst of machine gun fire. The remaining SWAT team members opened fire and took the compound by storm. But they were too late. In an apparent suicide pact, Hugh's captors had taken their

own lives, as well as the life of Jacob Hugh. A single bullet to the chest had pierced Hugh's heart, as well as the diaphanous portrait of his mother, Cora.

Hugh's body was flown to a forensic morgue in Washington, DC. As news of his death made its way around the world, investigations and international litigations were launched against the U.S. Government. Had the government covered up crucial information? Mystery, controversy and conspiracy theories swirled as the world mourned. Memorial services were scheduled in Tahiti, Nepal, India, France, Germany, the US, and an array of other countries.

Hugh left no heirs, and no known family. As lawyers struggled to untangle Hugh's estate, assets, and will, several counties began to argue over his body. Tahiti petitioned for the return of their native son. The US upheld Hugh's status as an American Citizen and National Treasure. Monks from the Buddhist monastery in Nepal pleaded for a traditional cremation ceremony on their land. The Pharma Company that had cured Hugh of AIDS, produced and publicized a document that Hugh had signed (in ultra violet ink) donating his body for exclusive, scientific research by their company.

"Who Owns the Late, Great Jacob Hugh?" ran headlines of the *International Herald Tribune*. Litigation dragged on for months as Hugh's body lay cold in the morgue. Finally, the case reached U.S. Supreme Court. In a pivotal ruling, the Supreme Court initiated the process of dividing the complicated ownership of Hugh's body. Hugh's skin was granted to the U.S. Government as a National Treasure, under conditions that his flesh be removed and adequately preserved by a select team of medical experts and parchment archivists. Hugh's internal organs became property of the Pharma Company, on conditions detailing the transport of all bones and unused parts to a grave site in Tahiti and a Buddhist Monastery in Nepal.

Today, millions of guests arrive annually to experience the "Parchment." Many describe the journey as a pilgrimage. Those who knew Jacob Hugh in his lifetime claim that the priceless

“Parchment” has lost its once vibrant glow. Yet, children who never knew Hugh in the flesh; marvel at its fresh, halo-like aura. Every visitor describes a different experience with “Parchment.” Some visitors are fixated by the colors, vibrant hues, designs and patterns. Others seek meaning in the timeline of geographic travels. Some are awed by its potential to influence and impact. Some express horror, disgust, guilt and shame; or anguish, denial and grief. Still, others experience healing and spiritual awakening. Many admit their perspectives on “Parchment” are dynamic and shift over time. Most express concerns that despite best efforts toward preservation, “Parchment” will ultimately crumble to dust.

In an effort to further this exhibit as a progressive, educational and interactive experience, we invite you to reflect and share your comments, thoughts and responses to “Parchment” in the guest book pages provided below.

Thank You for Visiting “Parchment”
