

Artist Statement:

Hugh Leeman's current works recount a year of experimentation with mediums that all share a hand in the inadvertent. In this body of work, Hugh has employed the use of blowtorches and candles to "draw" with as well as chemical reactions through which he "paints," additionally using tar to accent his works and oil paint to incorporate his signature realistic portraiture.

All of these works gain a creative independence from his previous bodies of work, as they are experimental and at times documentative of the artistic process reacting to an inadvertent condition set in motion by his use of non-traditional media.

These works hold principle to Hugh's previous career works by remaining strongly influenced by the urban environment. His subjects are transient street musicians, rolling stones, and strangers all given a moment to tell a bit of their story as translated by the artist's hands.

Hugh Leeman's recent MLK mural in Atlanta, GA – story below:

“This mural sits a block between the Martin Luther King Jr. historical society and Dr. King’s birth house, overlooking the heart of the MLK Jr. district of Atlanta. Initially I was given permission to do this mural by the restaurant owners of *The Sound Table*, who lease this building. Just before my arrival in Atlanta from San Francisco, I found this permission had been revoked by the building’s owner who was vacationing in Alaska. He both permits and profits from this Old English Ad on his building. The Ad agency in no way would allow any infringement on its space on this wall, even an MLK mural on his own doorstep.

My plane had arrived in Atlanta much later than expected due to an emergency landing in Wichita, Kansas. Finally in Atlanta, I dropped my bags and walked at 1a.m. to the restaurant - calling its owners on the way. Wanting to hear why my permission had been revoked in person, I received an interesting twist of fate as one of the owners had gone to R.I.S.D. with Shepard Fairey and could appreciate this mural’s value.

The Sound Table’s open mind and ability to see away an injustice served by the hands of corporate advertising are what initially and finally made this mural possible. In between a property owner, and ad agency, and an ad so distastefully placed in this historic district had blocked our permission.

Word spread fast through the neighborhood that scaffolding and a giant MLK mural were going up. As art holds the beautiful potential to interpretation, we began hearing “this is great, but why is it next to an “Old E” advertisement(?), that’s not cool.” So initially blocked by Old E then forced to downsize the mural by more than half, only to have the mural interpreted as slander towards him and all he represents. We saw this as a beautiful opportunity to start a dialogue amongst all those who saw this mural and ad next to one another.

Two signs were posted between the mural and the Ad. The one pointing to the Ad - “*The Sound Table* and muralist Hugh Leeman neither endorse, condone, nor benefit from this advertisement.” And another pointing to the new MLK mural stating “*The Sound Table* would like to thank Hugh Leeman and the Living Walls crew for this beautiful and uplifting addition to the Old 4th Ward.”

Finally after countless hours painting, printing, cutting, drawing upon 20 feet of scaffolding, and what seemed like endless amounts of 97 degree Atlanta summer sweat, we started to set the record straight. Only two hours after finishing I am on my way to the airport and get a text from *The Sound Table*, “The Ad Agency has sent a crew to paint over their ad and the signs we posted,” minutes later “They say it had nothing to do with the mural, only a coincidence.”

This is beautiful to see the Old English Ad go away and a MLK mural overlooking his birth house. And should another ad go up to take this ones place, hopefully it is in better taste to this honorable area. A special thanks to *The Sound Table* for giving me your wall and Living Walls for giving me great assistants and steady scaffolding.”