

ARTslant

san francisco



Ever Heard of a Ritual Killing?

by Jolene Torr

[72 Virgins to Die For](#)

Frey Norris Gallery

456 Geary St, San Francisco, CA 94102

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It's not all blood, guts, and glory. Sometimes: it's just blood and guts.

In Joshua Hagler's exhibit at Frey Norris, he explores the myth and fetishization of the unreal purity of the "virgin" through very graphic and sometimes obscene renderings of religious sin.

The virgin in history has been the martyr. A human sacrifice to God. They give themselves unto another (in marriage, this other is the flesh and not the deity) and are constantly idolized as pure creatures. If this giving-unto-another (besides God) happens out of wedlock, it is dubbed as sin. We all know the story. And thus, the unchaste also must die. It is an honor killing.



These killings result from the perception that defense of honor justifies killing ones' own kin for misbehavior. And if they stay true? Let's take a crack at human sacrifice. The virgin always dies. Hagler examines this notion of the power of the light of God and the lure and consequence of religion.

These virgins are at a bright and overpowering mothlight, in which they encounter a God who is larger than they expected. Like a moth to a flame... The virgins' faces are buried in Fibonacci arcs, turning in tandem with one another, obscured by images of moths.

In one especially grotesque scene, *Golgotha*, a character is de-fleshed and being pulled by its strangely Bosch-ian bird-head by the shameful, shrouded spectators. Like Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, this figure is fantastic with its mythological head as well as monstrous in its capacity for torture.



--Jolene Torr

(*Images, from top to bottom: Joshua Hagler, *Golgotha*, 2008, oil on canvas, 72 x 108", courtesy of the Artist and Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco. Joshua Hagler, *Virgin Martyr*, 2008, oil on canvas, 36 x 36", courtesy of the Artist and Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco. Joshua Hagler, *S & M No. 1*, 2008, oil on canvas, 48 x 48", courtesy of the Artist and Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco.)

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