

Jordan Eagles

Blood Artist

Words by Luis Amate Perez

“**Blood Artist**” may sound like the next installment in what has become a pop resurrection of the vampiric—namely the *Twilight* saga and HBO’s *True Blood*—but for Jordan Eagles, the label is the easiest way to describe what he does, which is create art with blood.

Detail of BAR 5, 2009
Blood preserved on plexiglass and UV resin, 8' x 32' overall
Photo by Andy Brown





Untitled, 2009,
Mixed-media installation, five overhead projectors, preserved blood panels, dimensions variable;
and two color photographs (production stills), 64" x 50" each

Untitled Production Still, 2009,
(Opposite page) 64" x 50"; Photos courtesy of the artist





For twelve years he has been doing it—even “before *it* was cool.” His resume features notable blips on the pop culture spectrum: the drop curtain on Alice Cooper’s “Theatre of Death” tour features what looks like a one-eyed skeletal version of Cooper’s head poking out of a tear in a 50” x 30” reproduction of one of Eagles’ blood works. Even *Page 6* magazine featured Eagles in a trend piece on “Vampire Style.” The mag quoted the artist as answering a question “chillingly.” But just one look at his work and you know Eagles’ blood is no gimmick.

A house in suburbia is both his studio and getaway from New York City. A domestic-looking Frigidaire freezer in the garage stocks up to 20 gallons of cattle blood. “Cattle blood” seems more palatable than “cow’s blood.” Cattle = food. Cows = sad people thinking about cows and their big, sad eyes.

The blood work happens in the basement, which is kept at 88 degrees—the perfect temperature because blood must thaw before it can be used to “paint.” What looks like blood on Plexiglas are really layers of blood on resin. Plexiglas is the substrate upon which Eagles manipulates the blood with brush, heat lamp and hairdryer. Burning the blood is what brings about those wild geometrical cracks visible in many of the works.

I watched him fill a Plexiglas panel 94” tall x 40” wide—one of the nine 250-pounders he was preparing for his recent solo show, *Hemosapien*—and from my angle, the panel, already two or three layers deep with blood and resin, looks like burned flesh. Another layer of resin atop it “will change it,” he says. I move to a different side of the panel, and the same work looks volcanic. Both images—one gruesome, the other sublime—are hypnotizing.

In *Hemosapien*, Eagles created a “blood environment” in a 3,000 square foot space by using overhead classroom projectors to throw “blood light” on the walls. The panels acted as huge gels through which light was blasted. Life-size photographs of nude models,

on whom blood patterns were projected, populated the space. Many of the models were friends who told Eagles that when you’re naked and the blood is projected on you, you feel clothed. Scars and stretch marks disappear. Speaking of one friend, Eagles says, “She looks fabulous covered in blood.”

Mirrors were present at *Hemosapien* so that those attending would be able to lift their shirts and see what they looked like “covered in blood.” The blood, in this case, looks more tribal than gory—more like henna than hemoglobin. The interactive nature of the exhibit only added to Eagles’ oeuvre of lush, visual complications, which tempt one to believe in such things as preservation and transcendence...but not vampires. 🩸