

MARTOS GALLERY

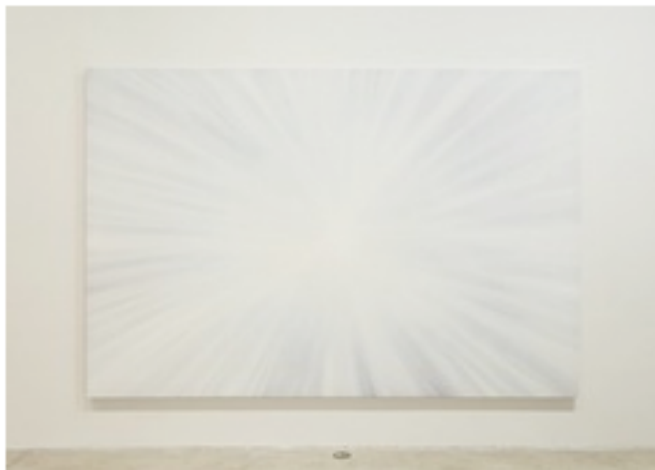
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Prentnieks, Anne, "Jason Metcalf at Martos Gallery" *ArtForum*, March 12, 2015

ARTFORUM

Jason Metcalf at Martos Gallery



Jason Metcalf, (*α 17h 45m 40.0409s / δ -29° 0' 28.118"*), 2015, airbrushed acrylic on canvas, 74" x 9' 25".

"Hie to Kolob," Jason Metcalf's cathedral-like exhibition, explores the quintessentially American qualities of regional evangelism and religious art, especially the pioneer's folklore of Mormonism. Metcalf himself was raised in Utah, and his personal history is deeply steeped in the residual culture around the state's predominant religion.

Titled after a Mormon hymn that incants aspirations to reach Kolob, a star recognized by the LDS Church for its supposed proximity to God. "Hie to Kolob" is a winking homage to the massive Christus installation at Salt Lake's Temple Square, colloquially known as Space Jesus.

The series positions large, airbrushed supernova-like canvases beside a graduating-light installation of incandescent lamps, and *A paved work of pure gold*, 2012–15, which, as its title suggests, is a foot-square tile made of aerospace-grade aluminum plated with a 99.999% pure layer of gold. The metal is the most thorough reflector of infrared radiation (footnote to NASA's use of gold to plate the surfaces of astronauts' helmet visors); a sharp pillar of light that radiates to the ceiling from the single square punctuates the room with an ecclesiastical luminosity.

Religious narratives and imagery are by nature often surreal and irrational; though Metcalf humorously acknowledges this absurdity via his co-opted devices of melodrama-via-airbrush and staged lighting, at heart these are not cynical works. The chromatic vibrance of the paintings increases as the lamps over them brighten, producing a fool's-gold effect of religious divinity that climaxes with the reflected light of real gold: The experience may be dominated by special effect, but there is sincerity at its core.