

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY
NEW YORK | ASPEN

JAMMIE HOLMES
What We Talking About

On View September 8 – October 8, 2022

507 W 24th Street, New York, NY 10011



Jammie Holmes, *Gold Geneva*, 2022, acrylic, oil pastels and glitter on canvas, 84 x 60 inches.

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *What We Talking About*, Jammie Holmes's debut solo exhibition in New York. Holmes, a self-taught artist, creates complex allegorical works that draw on personal memory, self-portraiture, recurrent motifs, and intersocial relationships to investigate and illuminate themes of Black life across America. *What We Talking About* will be on view from September 8 – October 8, 2022, at the gallery's 507 West 24th Street location.

Holmes examines and repositions perceptions, experiences, and themes of Black life as they relate to both African American history and contemporary realities. Various signifiers of status and power, luxury and appropriation, acceptance and exclusion are significant themes in the artist's work. Ornate gold frames simultaneously reference the exclusivity of art museums (Holmes did not visit one until he was an adult), and the colonial looting of gold from Africa, foregrounding the historical complexities of power and the difficult history behind much cultural presentation in institutional contexts.

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When Holmes was first teaching himself to paint, he studied Gordon Parks's photographs, Rashid Johnson's complex abstractions, and Kevin Williams's iconic paintings of African American culture. As Holmes says, he studied faces, and the ways artists rendered them, until the organization and structure of the features clarified in his mind. This emphasis on faces is a leitmotif of Holmes's work: Many of the paintings include a self-portrait, where the figure of the artist himself stands in, metonymically, for the presence of Black men in U.S. society.

Parallel to Holmes's incorporation of portraiture into his painterly vocabulary, the paintings and video on view in *What We Talking About* reflect his ongoing engagement with contemporary and historical artistic practices: Holmes has recently been studying works from the Dutch Golden Age and the Italian Baroque. Visually, the influence of Caravaggio is evident in the deepening black of his palettes, while Holbein's famous memento mori is recontextualized in a representation of Black southern life. The social themes of luxury as well as bourgeois life that pervade the works that he is studying parallel the artist's formal and narrative explorations. Underlying this exploration is an intrinsically troubling or unsettling question: How to engage with the traditions of Old Master painting when the word Master is so violently charged in the history of American racism?

This capacity to simultaneously draw in and unsettle is exemplary of Holmes's work. Scenes of warm, quotidian social interactions — a game of dice, a gathering at a kitchen table — also include figures of violent surveillance, from the allusive presence of unnamed white men, to outright confrontations with police. The theme throughout is resilience and vibrancy, a particular vision into a culture that evolves and endures.

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Jammie Holmes (b. 1984, Thibodaux, Louisiana; lives and works in Dallas, Texas) is a self-taught painter. Following his graduation from high school, Holmes spent more than a decade working in an oil field. He relocated to Dallas in 2016. His work has most recently been presented in exhibitions at Library Street Collective, Detroit; Deitch Projects, Los Angeles; Marianne Boesky, New York; Nassima-Landau Projects, Tel Aviv; Dallas Museum of Art; and Dallas Contemporary, among others. His work is also included in the permanent collections of the Aishti Foundation, Brooklyn Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Hammer Museum, ICA Miami, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, New Orleans Museum of Art, Perez Museum of Art, X Museum, and The Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art.

About Marianne Boesky Gallery

Since its inception in 1996, Marianne Boesky Gallery has represented and supported the work of emerging and established contemporary international artists of all media. In its first decade, the gallery was instrumental in launching the careers of major artists through an innovative exhibition program; and in 2016, the gallery expanded its flagship location to its adjacent space on West 24th Street. The gallery actively represents many significant international artists such as Ghada Amer, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Donald Moffett, Sanford Biggers, and Frank Stella, among others. To learn more, visit marianneboeskygallery.com.

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