

ALLISON JANAE HAMILTON

CELESTINE

On View: January 30 – March 8, 2025

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 30 | 6–8 PM

509 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011

New York, NY – Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Celestine*, an exhibition of new work by Allison Janae Hamilton (b. 1984; Lexington, KY). For her second solo exhibition with the gallery, Hamilton turns her attention to the revelatory relationship of land and sky, of earthly and celestial.

Drawing on her upbringing in the American South, Hamilton weaves land-centric folklore, regional mythology, and family history into sculpture, paintings, photographs, and films that address the social and political concerns of the rural South. Layering narratives derived from folktales, hunting and farming rituals, Black feminist writings, and Baptist hymns, Hamilton imagines epic myths within the rural terrain as a way of examining environmental justice, land loss, climate change, and sustainability.

With the new work on view in *Celestine*, Hamilton retrains her lens from the earth to the sky, imagining the rich landscapes that permeate her visual language in the vertical, extending not from sea to sea, but from soil to stars. Across new painting, sculpture, and film, Hamilton reinterprets the evocative visual motifs found throughout her practice, building upon her ever-evolving examination of place—and the untold stories of those places. Reimagining her embellished antique fencing masks in bronze, Hamilton frees them of their attachment to the wall, extending their vertical axis and adorning them with provocative symbols: flowers, antlers, and grapes. Undulating serpent ouroboroses—a motif Hamilton has previously employed in the form of alligators—frame a mirror in which the viewer can see themselves, a subtle inversion of the way the nearby fencing masks obscure the face. Into the glass of the mirror, the artist has etched “BRILLIANT SKY,” a phrase borrowed from a painting by Mary Ann Carroll, the only woman among the group of late 20th century African American traveling landscape painters known as the Florida Highwaymen. Radiant and elusive, the stacked, repeated inscription sends the viewer’s gaze skyward. For a new series of small-scale sculptures, Hamilton cast the hands of the family and friends in white plaster with a ghostly, haint blue undertone. The gestures—a combination of prayer and figa, a symbol of divine protection throughout the African Diaspora—offer a direct link to the celestial.

A suite of paintings and a new film bring the sky directly into the gallery. The trancelike, time-lapse film—titled *Celestine (Florida Storm)*—captures the sky over North Florida. A recording of *Florida Storm*, a 1928 hymn written by Judge Jackson in response to the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926—a text which has informed Hamilton’s work for years—plays on a loop underneath the astrophotography on screen. The meditative lyrics—performed in a rich, sultry voice by Florida native Candice Hoyes—provides the soundtrack to the moon and stars and clouds and treetops. With three large-scale paintings—an evolution of the artist’s *Yard Sign* works on canvas—Hamilton imagines vast, swirling skyscapes, the gestural nature of the paint application allowing stars to twinkle. Painting in oil, Hamilton subtly references the brutal history of turpentine production—a harsh industry that kept primarily Black laborers across the Southeast in debt for decades. Together, the film and paintings serve as a reminder that the sky—that the heavens, the weather, and everything in between—contains past, present, and future, unfolding ceaselessly above the land we inhabit.

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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Hamilton's practice has always been deeply connected to place—the artist was born in Kentucky, raised in Florida, and spent time on her maternal family's homestead in western Tennessee. Throughout Hamilton's work, the topography of the land itself—the soil, the foliage, the water—has been a primary protagonist, even as mythic figures appear throughout. At the heart of Hamilton's connection to the Earth is an ever-present tension, between the magnificent, mythic power of the natural world and the violence inherent to the landscape, both natural and man-made. With *Celestine*, Hamilton draws her focus to the sky above—to hurricanes and heavenly beings and the remarkable beauty of the cosmos itself, heightening this ongoing tension. By bringing the celestial to the fore, Hamilton allows for new narratives to emerge, for the personal to take on a new element of the mythical.

ABOUT ALLISON JANAE HAMILTON

Hamilton has exhibited widely across the United States and abroad. Her work has been the subject of institutional solo exhibitions at the Georgia Museum of Art, the Joslyn Art Museum, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), and Atlanta Contemporary, as well as a commissioned solo project with Creative Time. Her sculpture, *Love is like the sea...* (2023) is currently on view in the Poydras Corridor Sculpture Exhibition, presented by The Helis Foundation in New Orleans, LA. Select recent group exhibitions include *A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration*, organized by the Mississippi Museum of Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art; *there is this We* at Sculpture Milwaukee; *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse* at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; *Shifting Horizons* at the Nevada Museum of Art; *Enunciated Life* at the California African Art Museum; *More, More, More* at TANK Shanghai; and *Indicators: Artists on Climate Change*, Storm King Art Center. Hamilton's work is included in public collections such as the Hood Museum of Art, The Menil Collection, Nasher Museum of Art, Nevada Museum of Art, and Speed Museum of Art, among others. Hamilton has participated in a range of fellowships and residencies, including at the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, NY; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and Fundación Botín, Santander, Spain. She is the recipient of the Creative Capital Award and the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant. Hamilton holds a PhD in American Studies from New York University and an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University. She lives and works in New York.

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