

Anton Kern Gallery

Marcus Jahmal

Booty

September 8 - October 31, 2026

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to present *Booty*, an exhibition of new paintings and installation by Marcus Jahmal. This marks Jahmal's third solo presentation at the gallery and his first since co-curating *GIVE ME TWO* at the Gallery in January 2026.

Pirates occupy a contradictory position in the popular imagination: figures who reject established authority in pursuit of their own motivations, while being romanticized symbols of freedom and resistance to monarchy. That mythology obscures piracy's material history, which is inseparable from European colonial expansion and fed on the transatlantic movement of goods, enslaved people, and colonial wealth.

In *Booty*, Jahmal turns his focus to this history of piracy and its historical contradictions. Jahmal's paintings draw on the fantasy of the outlaw who disrupts regimes of ownership and commerce while enacting the violence embedded in the history that produced the image. These simultaneous understandings are held together in scenes that are both playfully absurd yet fraught and complex.

The paintings continue Jahmal's practice of imagined scenes rendered with large grounds of color, and contorted, oblong anatomy. Depicting figures with the peg legs, hook hands, swords, and wide-brimmed hats, the paintings borrow from pirate iconography as defined through popular culture and Hollywood: the swashbuckler of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Jahmal casts this archetype with figures who fire cannons, walk the plank, and raise their swords, acting out scenes set by literature and film. Their hands and legs are warped and compressed, stretching anatomical proportion. Elements of contemporary fashion, bandanas, jeans, and jackets give them away as stand-ins playing a part rather than historical portraits of maritime piracy.

The exhibition's title, *Booty*, refers both to the material wealth seized by pirates and to its meaning in contemporary slang, in which the body itself becomes an object of desire, reward, and possession. On the floor of the gallery, Jahmal constructs piles of Swarovski crystals, accumulated into sculptural arrangements, waiting to be plundered.



Marcus Jahmal, *Hooked*, 2026, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches (121.9 x 91.4 cm)

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Marcus Jahmal lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. In 2024, Jahmal's work was featured in his first institutional exhibition, *Higher Animals*, at the Allentown Art Museum in Pennsylvania. His work has also been presented in solo exhibitions at Market Gallery, New York (2025); Almine Rech, Shanghai (2024); Anton Kern Gallery, New York (2023); Almine Rech, London (2022); and CANADA, New York (2016), among others.

Selected group exhibitions include: *Playing* (curator), Eighteen Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2026); *The Echo of Picasso*, Museo Picasso Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2023); *So Let Us All Be Citizens Too*, David Zwirner, London (2023); *Fire Figure Fantasy*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2022); *Figurative Vocabularies*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (2022); *The New American Galleries*, Allentown Art Museum, Pennsylvania (2022); and *100 Drawings*, The Drawing Center, New York (2020).