

**Whitehot Magazine:** 'Painter Marcus Jahmal: No Place Like Home', By Branden Janese  
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# WHITEHOT MAGAZINE™

Painter Marcus Jahmal: No Place Like Home



*New York based artist Marcus Jahmal in his Brooklyn studio.*

No Place Like Home:

A Multisensory Installation by Marcus Jahmal

January 14th - February 14th 2016

Opening Reception January 14th 2016 5-8pm

FiveMyles Plus Space

558 St Johns Place, Brooklyn, NY 11238

**By BRANDEN JANESE, JAN. 2016**

Marcus Jahmal is a self taught painter based in Brooklyn whose latest collection is a reflection of the idiosyncrasies of the familiar. In his first New York City solo installation he presents pictures that represent *home*. He employs plexiglass, chains, genre and reverse painting to convey the complexities of a humdrum life.

*Branden Janese: One of the first things I noticed with your new works are the straight lines. In your earlier work you used all freeform. I don't remember you using plexiglass either.*

Marcus Jahmal: [The plexiglass] was an accident actually. I was using plexiglass as a frame for backpacks I was making. These backpacks were made from the canvases of old paintings. The plexiglass was a frame to display the backpacks in a gallery. I took the frame home, took out the backpacks and thought 'This looks really cool to paint on.' You can use reverse painting, paint on the back, and that's where you get your solid foundation. I'll show you (gets up, takes Untitled off the wall). On this one, I used acrylic on the back. It shows through the front, now you have front and back to work with. I used oil on the front. It's a relationship of different paints also front and back, a dimensional thing. This is my first time using actual straight lines in the work. As far as being linear and measured correctly. I wanted to add a balance into the work. Before as you said it was freehand and all intuitive. Now I wanted to mix the two.

*BJ: It's very interesting, adding the geometric feel to your signature freehand technique. It reminds me of a coming of age piece. Where experimentation mixes with firm beliefs.*

MJ: Yea, it really is a natural progression. Who knows what I'll get into next.

*BJ: Right, but I think that there is something to be said about the psyche of the artist and how that's reflected on the canvas. Or plexiglass in this case.*

MJ: Definately. Because no matter how separated we want to seem from our work, it's always synonymous.

*BJ: Who have you Studied?*

MJ: I feel like as a kid in Europe, you learn more about art history. It's apart of their system, their schooling, everything. In America, it's not something that is given to you unless you have wealthy parents who take you to all of the museums. Or if you go to an art school. That's the only time you would get that history. So I started studying [the classics] such as Matisse and Francis Bacon.

*BJ: What did you learn through your studies?*

MJ: How they displayed life in their times. How they reflected on their environment. It was a representation of what was going on. We all have our own content and new experiences regardless if it's the same process or not.

*BJ: Talk to me about Black artists.*

MJ: I went to Jacob Lawrence's show at the MoMA. It was really inspiring. What I was doing illustration wise, I saw a lot of similarities. He is a very revered painter, I also started studying William H. Johnson.

*BJ: What struggles do you think you shared with Jacob Lawrence?*

MJ: Hmm, that's a good one.





*Marcus Jahmal, Yoga*





*Studio view*



*Marcus Jahmal, Mandrill*



*BJ: To say that you see your art, in another man's art - that's energy being shared on a massive level.*

MJ: That's totally true. At the time he was painting, it was much harder for African-Americans. It was the Civil Rights Era. Lawrence depicted the great migration of Blacks from the south to the north. The lifestyles were much different, that's for sure.

*BJ: I remember the collection I'd seen before definitely had that down south, desert vibe.*

MJ: I have family from Texas, it's one of the places I've visited the most. Honestly going to the south was one of the first things that inspired me to paint. I went to this farm town called Bostwick in Georgia. It was the first farm town I'd ever been to being a city kid from Brooklyn. Nothing in Brooklyn made me want to paint. When I went to the south, and looked at nature and the slow pace and everything that came along with it, it really slowed down time. It let me focus on the visual. These experiences made me want to come back and capture that visual. But the city is in there too, because it's where I'm from. I guess you could say that's apart of the geometrical feel. The tall buildings, the straight lines, the chains. I purposely didn't add ceilings to any of the work. When you look at these your imagination should be limitless. You don't know where it ends. It doesn't end.

*BJ: Do you throw more artwork away than you keep?*

MJ: No, I try not to throw away anything. Check out my sketchbook. (Passes Branden a book) I think at at one point I wanted to display more objects around me.

*BJ: Did you feel like you were losing something so you wanted to draw what you had around? That's how I feel like sometimes.*

MJ: Hmm, maybe so. You realize that maybe the fictional stories you read as a kid were the most factual. Categorization is a man made thing, who's to say fiction is fake. I have this connection with non-fiction and narrative and writing being an allegory to pictures.

*BJ: Where did you come up with the show's title?*



MJ: For one, the home depictions. [The works are] a depiction of the home. The other thing is that FiveMyles Plus Space, the gallery where I'm showing, is one block away from where I grew up.

Up the block on my corner, is the Weeksville Heritage Center. It's a museum of the first Black freed settlers in Brooklyn in the 18th century. We share the same land, before these houses were here, this was all Weeksville land. It's cool that I'm on that land and it's where I'm creating my work. It's a legacy. **WM**