

ART REVIEWS

New York Galleries: What to See Right Now

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Marcus Jahmal's "Thief in the Night" (2019) in his new show, "Double Down." Credit Marcus Jahmal and Almine Rech

"Artists are gamblers," the artist Chris Martin writes in a news release for Marcus Jahmal's new show, "Double Down" at Almine Rech, because every time an artist paints over something he can't get it back. "Each adjustment," Mr. Martin explains, "is a possible disaster or perhaps a chance for glory." Making a career of art is a gamble, too, since it's impossible to predict what will resonate with audiences.

Mr. Jahmal, a Brooklyn-based artist, is on a winning streak. Rough and vibrant, his paintings, like "High Roller," "Thief in the Night" or "Lovers" (all from 2019) depict people who are gambling with money or the law or romance. Dice and cards float through the compositions and one room here is wallpapered with reproductions of illegal lottery cards sold in New York bodegas, and which include advertisements for the products and services of folk healers.

ALMINE RECH

Glimmers of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Henry Taylor and the tradition of Haitian painting can be detected in Mr. Jahmal's work. He is slowly creating his own idiom, though, somewhere between abstract and figurative painting, sculpture and installation. For Mr. Jahmal, the worlds (and underworld) of symbolic images and objects are vitally important; every painting feels like an emergency response. A painting must have magical qualities, after all, since winning or losing, in life and death and in art, depends upon them.

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