

MOMUS

Inside the Ruins of American Masculinity: Jared Buckhiester at David Kordansky Gallery

BY PAIGE GRECO · **REVIEWS** · DECEMBER 18, 2025



Jared Buckhiester, *An Ax of a Stone*, 2025. Photograph by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

In *Continent of Misbelief* at David Kordansky Gallery in New York, Jared Buckhiester stages American masculinity as a ritual of collapse and works inside what's left of American power. Horse, chain, pedestal, knife—objects of the procedural brutality that built the monuments and the prisons. He incorporates these same emblems of violence into his drawings, sculptures, and paintings, but handles them like archaeological fragments, the remains of what once held sway.

Buckhiester's men, animals, and shapes move through an Americana already in collapse, a landscape in which gestures of control are repeated until they become signs of submission. In the paintings, pastures glow with a late-summer haze: trees cut down, grass browning, a landscape already spent. In his charcoal fields, the earth is a flat gray under a blackened sky. In one

drawing, a steed buckles and the cowboy is taken under, the horizon pressing down. Even the sky reads as gone. Everything in these scenes moves toward erosion—structures still standing but already failing. Under another darkened sky in an untitled 2025 drawing, there is a prelude to carnage: dogs closing in, teeth bared, over a bull. The drawing *A Wish to Travel Blind* (2025) shows a faceless seated figure holding a knife directed toward another body seen only from behind. The surface has been repeatedly reworked; the bodies appear uncertain, overdrawn. The knife, by contrast, stays fixed and uncorrected—singular, decisive. Buckhiester redraws everything except the blade. Its certainty shows where power lives in the drawing.



Jared Buckhiester, *Pursuit of Happiness*, 2025. Photograph by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

In *Pursuit of Happiness* (2025), faded gray foliage frames a cave created of that same sinister dark that Buckhiester used to depict the sky, which swallows a man and his horse whole. The man folds over the horse, his head rubbed out on the paper as he moves into what will consume him. The figure in *Efforts of Affection* (2025) slumps under a tilted stovepipe hat. His body swells into a blunt mass, more boulder than being. The muzzle of the dog pressed to his chest is either dissolving into the mass of the figure's body or being drawn out of him. The figure's hands settle over the dog's face in a posture that could be mistaken for prayer, but it appears more habitual than hopeful.

The figure in *A Naked and Headless Christ* (2025), paler than the man in the stovepipe hat and with features so eroded that they barely exist, carries a snarling lamb lodged into his torso. The figure's head is reduced to a hollowed cylinder, bent as if conceding its own outline. The lamb's horns and fur, like the figure's hands, look as if they're verging toward invisibility, the details fading out in the porcelain.



Jared Buckhiester, *A Naked and Headless Christ*, 2025. Photograph by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

The statues are mostly headless, with legs seated on or straddling pedestals, and torsos that twist and distort in dissonant postures. In *Go in Shadow* (2025), a pair of legs bears a human heart beneath a deformed hoof. The finish is uneven, as if the figure couldn't hold itself together. The result retains some trappings of a monument—the pedestal, for instance, which traditionally signals the significance of a sculpted figure—but feels more like a carcass reorganized, or ruins stacked for study. In citing the statue, the piece clarifies Buckhiester's larger project: dismantling the visual language of American masculinity by revealing the futility of its forms. In an untitled watercolor from 2014, a king becomes a partial figure, his crowned head tipped back and held in place by another's hands, the body gone. His authority disappears; masculinity appears here not as power but as a familiar emblem that can be easily erased. Buckhiester's men maintain their stances even as the bodies fail. The king still wears his crown, spines arched, shoulders square, hands clenched around knives or disappearing animals. One man leans forward with his head stamped out, the weapon in his hand the only thing left intact.



Jared Buckhiester, *Pursuit of Happiness*, 2025. Photograph by Dario Lasagni, courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

Buckhiester's approach to collapse conjures what Robert Smithson called a "ruin in reverse," a structure whose decay is built into its making. The figures and shapes in his drawings all appear to erode even as he renders them. There is no promise of restoration. I recall what Leo Bersani writes in *The Culture of Redemption* (Harvard University Press, 1992): "A crucial assumption in the culture of redemption is that a certain type of repetition of experience in art repairs inherently damaged or valueless experience." Buckhiester's repetitions refuse that repair. The same sky, same knife, and fractured bodies reappear but suggest a version of masculinity undone by its own choreography. Fallen kings, failed cowboys, inverted intimacy. There is nothing left.
