



LOS ANGELES

Edgar Arceneaux

Susanne Vielmetter // September 6–October 18

IN 1964 THE FBI SENT a threatening letter to Martin Luther King, Jr. Three years later, King delivered his “Beyond Vietnam” speech, in which he decried the United States’s involvement in the conflict, its tools made to kill and maim at the expense of social justice. “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today,” he stated. In 1968, Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey* compressed humanity’s prehistoric past with its spacefaring future. February of 2014: Dr. Bernice King (Martin’s daughter) writes a public letter condemning her brothers’ attempts to sell their father’s Bible and Nobel Peace Prize.

Edgar Arceneaux
A Pattern, A Figure, A Reflection, The Virtual I-V, 2014. Steel, glass, mirror, C-print, canvas, fluorescent light fixtures, each 58¼ x 12½ x 12½ in.

These are significant events. In Arceneaux’s exhibition, they make evocative links between scourges of our time—racism, poverty, war—and the course of human history from its past to its future. But it is how Arceneaux gives shape to time—how he puts these moments in a kaleidoscopic arrangement of films, paintings, photographs, drawings, copies, and mirrors—that is of interest here.

The artist’s facsimile of the FBI’s 1964 letter to King and Bernice King’s statement turns redaction marks into mirrors. Both letters are copied many times, sometimes set in glowing wall-mounted vitrines and sometimes displayed in glass cases, freestanding or mounted perpendicular to the wall. The viewer’s body is reflected in Arceneaux’s deletions-turned-mirrors, even as light from the glass-encased replicas spills outside the frame. In one instance, those redaction marks are not mirror but clear glass—a window through the work; in another, the marks show an image of Arceneaux photographing these documents. The photo of the artist’s body does not look so different from that of the viewer’s. Throughout the show, the distances between documents and their viewers, as well as between times and spaces, compress and refract.

Arceneaux’s history breathes and pulses. He turns his chosen events crystalline, maybe even hypercubic; all are moments with one foot in the past and the other in the future. It fascinates, this way of telling history.

—Ariel Evans