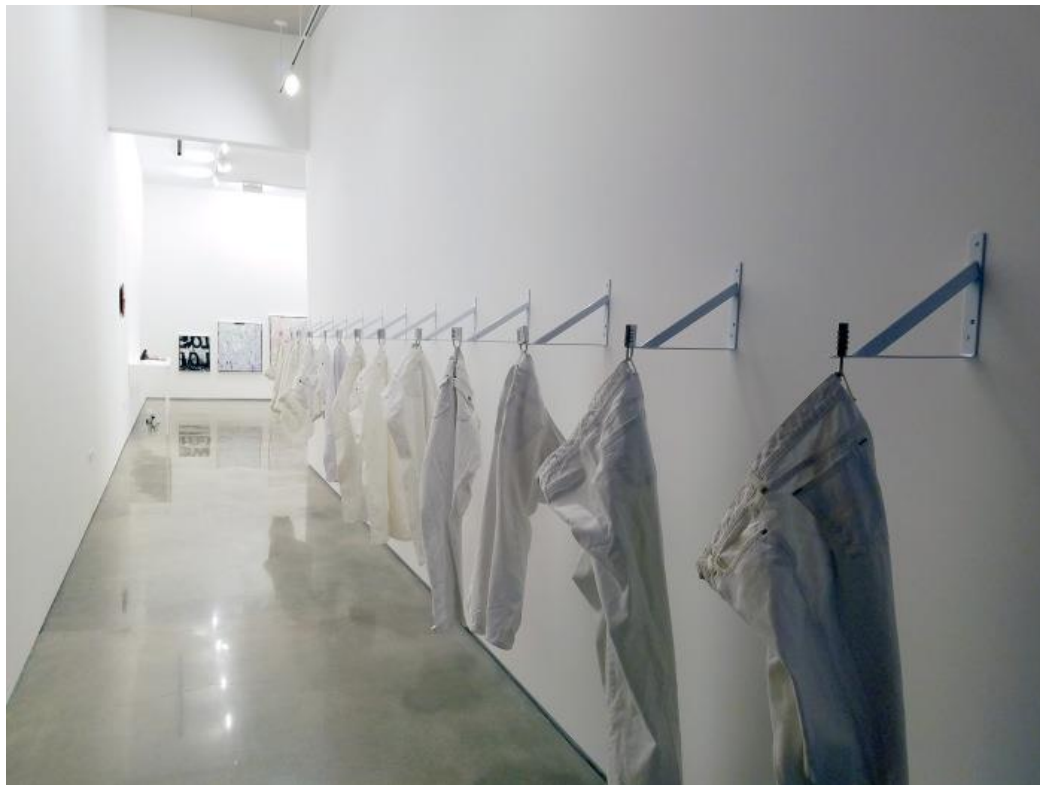


# ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

## Kendell Carter: *Marvel* Edward Cella Art & Architecture

By Amy Kaeser  
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Kendell Carter: *Marvel*. Edward Cella Art & Architecture. Photo Credit Kristine Schomaker

Now through May 6th Kendell Carter's solo show, *Marvel* is at Edward Cella Art & Architecture on La Cienega Boulevard, Los Angeles. An innovative set of site-specific installations, or "environments" as Carter prefers to call them; *Marvel* attempts to present meditations on race, gender, material culture, and shared history. As an artist whose practice has continually transected the divide between art and life, Carter's latest show casts its net far and wide to critique contemporary issues and policies: the police shootings of Keith Lamont Scott and North Carolina's abject neglect of its LGBTQ communities, to representations of the South's notorious "Jim Crow" laws of the 1950s. Carter's willingness to confront and renegotiate the meaning of objects and attitudes of our highly charged socio-political moment is indicative of an artistic practice that is aware of the impact of visual culture.



Carter, a graduate of California State University Long Beach's MFA program, utilized the idea of creating environments as installations from the very beginning of his career. Shortly after his graduation in 2006, Carter's residency at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Hammer Projects reflected the dynamic and at times the controversial nature of our societies relationship with black culture. Similar themes of "urban" and hip-hop culture are prominent in Carter's work, specifically the use of graffiti or "tagging" of words or phrases as paintings and sculpture. In *Marvel*, Carter recreates his iconic "LOVE" tag on a large-scale installation of seven individually mounted latex castings. Each one varies in size, the largest, *Waves for McQueen* (2017), 80 x 56 ½ inches. The use of latex as a substitute for the traditional canvas of painting as well as the use of spray paint instead of acrylic or oil paint suggest a subversion which Carter uses to point out the continually negated role of artists of color—as well as women and LGBTQ artists—who's contributions to art are historically left out of the canon.



Placed prominently at the entrance to the gallery is the work *Cranes for Solange* (2017). Consisting of white denim jeans hung from inverted wall brackets, which are secured by locks, the combination spelling out the word "sick," the installation lines the entry hall and into the open gallery space. Framing the row of jeans is an official sign from the era of segregation and Jim Crow laws that separated "white" from "colored" in public spaces during the 1950s and 1960s. As a comment on our material culture—as many of the jeans are designer brands but obviously second-hand—the work positions race and cultural value (what it means to wear designer brands) in opposition to the economic value of the item (its cost to the consumer). Now considered "art" the used jeans have a higher value because they hang on a gallery wall and not in someone's closet.



The idea of the used and worn versus the new and valuable is familiar subject matter for Carter. *Sewing and Reaping* (2017), the gold-plated sewing machine on custom made plinth, is juxtaposed with the found object of a 19th-century quilt, its decaying and stained fabric places it in stark opposition with the shiny gold machine before it. A pile of used jeans haphazardly sits in the corner of the gallery next to a sewing pattern tacked to the wall. *Effigy for a New Normalcy VI (Accepting Greatness)* (2017) is a pair of gold plated, high-top sneakers pinned to the wall above an alcove opening. The seemingly ambiguous nature of these items together fades as the viewer meditates on the significance of these objects, not just as work produced by an artist of color as Carter's practice has transcended this category, but also as visual markers of this specific moment in time.



Kendell Carter received his MFA at California State University Long Beach in 2006. He has exhibited at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; The Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA, along with multiple solo and group shows nationally.