

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Arthur Jafa

April 4 – May 4, 2024

Opening Reception: April 4, 6pm – 8pm

530 West 21st Street

New York

Some films live in one's memory for what they are, some for what they could have been, some for both at once. Arthur Jafa first saw Martin Scorsese's movie *Taxi Driver* (1976) when he was in high school. He remembers the experience as overwhelming and confusing. He was attracted to the expressionism of the visual images with their extreme angles and hits of primary colors piercing the shadowed New York City streets; the kineticism of the camera movement and editing; and the soaring saxophone-led score that echoed John Coltrane's "Naima" so closely it could have been a steal. Jafa might not have been able to articulate what he saw and heard in the language that he would come to use as a cinephile and then as an artist who privileges time-based mediums, but he absorbed the movie and Scorsese's aesthetic became part of his own to this day. The explosion of violence in the climactic scene—the scene he recasts, literally and figuratively, in *BG*—undoubtedly horrified him, as it does me, even after watching it dozens of times. What might have intrigued him most was that New York City's Times Square district—the cruising ground for Travis Bickle, the taxi driver of the title—was populated almost entirely by black people. Unlike the black characters in early 1970s Blaxploitation movies, in *Taxi Driver*, they are treated merely as background color. It must be said that Travis's subjectivity dominates the narrative so completely that regardless of skin color, no other characters exist except through their reactions to or interactions with this racist, misogynist, pathologically narcissistic psycho-killer. Nevertheless, in Paul Schrader's dialogue-rich screenplay, fewer than twenty lines total are spoken by black characters. Of Travis, Schrader used to say, "He is just me."

Excerpt from Amy Taubin, *The Deflected Corrected*

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday, 12pm-8pm

Seoul gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm