

# Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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## **RICO GATSON: *FIRE*** **FEBRUARY 19 – MARCH 25**

Rico Gatson will exhibit recent video and sculpture in his first one-person show at the Feldman Gallery. In this series, which focuses on the Ku Klux Klan, Gatson continues his exploration of complex issues pertaining to identity and race. Playfully using stereotypes, the artist creates visual metaphors to convey the disparity between Klan membership, ordinary people drawn from the mainstream community, and its violent aim. Gatson compresses the horrific and the comic into multi-layered symbols, identifying the power of symbols within the political sphere.

Included in the exhibition are three videos that relate to the demonization of “the other” to justify violent reckoning and retribution. *Fenced In* shows the artist, in a flowered print costume fashioned after the Ku Klux Klan, running, Chaplinesque, to the point of exhaustion within the confines of a picket fence. *Invisible Divisible* portrays the artist against a pink background, making faces and holding up symbol-laden objects. *Flaming Hoods* melds flames with a barely seen hooded figure. The images, abstracted by the effects of solarization and the manipulation of speed, repeat on endless loops.

Sculptural works create an atmosphere of domesticity and religiosity, reflecting the comfort of a daily life in which evil is so omnipresent as to be invisible. Whimsical pastel candles, in the shape of gnome-like Ku Klux Klan figures, rest on shelves that are crafted to suggest American traditional homemade furniture. Framed cases display the relics used in the artist's video. A white wooden house is suspended to shoulder height, containing the sound of fire within.

Other works alluding to fire include an electrified wooden cross, containing a myriad of bulbs of various colors and shapes, which evokes the carnival-like atmosphere of small town Klan parades and pageantry and recalls the brutal reality of the *Fiery Cross*. Also included is a series of color photographs, video stills of unidentified flames. Knowledge that these seductive images originated as flames from a barbecue grill suggests that the KKK is as American as the Fourth of July.

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Rico Gatson was included in two group shows at the Feldman Gallery: *Faux*, 1994 and *Other Rooms*, 1995. Exhibited extensively in Brooklyn, he has had solo shows at Pierogi 2000 and Momenta Art, and was included in *Beyond Technology* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999. Gatson received a Masters Degree in Sculpture from Yale University in 1991 and is currently on the faculty of Brandeis University.

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There will be a reception for the artist on Saturday, February 19 from 6:00 – 8:00. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, Monday by appointment, 10:00 – 6:00. For information and photographs, contact Breck Hostetter (212) 226-3232 or [breck@feldmangallery.com](mailto:breck@feldmangallery.com).