

Bethel Art Alum's Work on Exhibit in NYC

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By Heather Schnese



Bethel Art Alumnus and NYC Artist Rico Gatson '89.

After 15 years in prison, Rico Gatson's brother and he reconnected—taking a long, emotional walk around the block. The experience spawned "Three Trips Around the Block"—a survey of Gatson's art now being highlighted as a 15-year retrospective of his work at Exit Art, an interdisciplinary cultural center in NYC.

Including Gatson's sculpture, painting, video, drawings, and installations, the survey creatively explores the very different lives of he and his brother. "It's an opportunity to look back and examine a body of work and to connect the dots, so to speak," says Gatson. "I hope that the viewer is made aware of a clarity of thought and experiences the breadth of work."

Gatson majored in art and graduated from Bethel in 1989. He went on to receive his master's of fine art at Yale before becoming a New York City artist, now represented by the Ronald Feldman Gallery. Born in Augusta, Ga., and raised in Riverside, Calif., Gatson's work typically explores the symbols and images from popular culture and mass media and challenges issues of identity and racial intolerance. Gatson also serves on the advisory board for Bethel's New York Center for Art & Media Studies.

"Rico stands a great role model for our current students, demonstrating that if a young artist wants to pursue a career in the arts, they can succeed if they push hard, develop their ability, and are self-motivated," says Wayne Roosa, chair of Bethel's art department.

Gatson says he doesn't think much about how faith, art, and culture intertwine in his work—they just naturally do: "My experience at Bethel shaped the person/artist I am greatly in that I began to think about how I might integrate identity into the work, especially from a racial and spiritual stand point."

"Three Trips Around the Block" runs Sept. 30 through Nov. 23. [Read more about the exhibit.](#)