

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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RICO GATSON

HISTORY LESSONS & CLANDESTINE

April 23 – May 28

Gatson maintains a dual focus on the representation of African Americans in film, and on the many faces of fear. Whether the videos feature a giant raging gorilla, or a gruesome alien, the result is a mini-lexicon of terror that forces viewers to confront their own fears – a task that is never more relevant than now.

Merrily Kerr: **Flash Art**

Rico Gatson will exhibit two multimedia installations, *History Lessons* and *Clandestine*, that include video, paintings, and sculpture. Referencing events and the power of movies, Gatson links points of history in the twentieth century that have affected all Americans, especially the black population. In his previous videos, Gatson has reworked excerpts from Hollywood films to uncover unacknowledged racial stereotypes within a world of make-believe. With his new installations, he has created works that range in subject matter from racial politics to secrecy, lies, death, and war.

History Lessons, consisting of one video divided into four separate episodes, creates a tension between humor and horror to powerful effect. Repeated as large projections and on TV monitors encased in a freestanding, wooden structure, the video flashes refractions of dazzling kaleidoscopic images, transformed from film clips and other source material. The four episodes include: the 1915 silent film, *The Birth of a Nation*; stereotypical depictions of blacks in films from the 30s and 40s; the Watts riot in Los Angeles; and *A Bullet from a Bush*, based on the murder of the Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers with a sound track of a Bob Dylan song on the same subject. The seriousness of the lyrics is betrayed by a comic presentation of images echoing the notion that history can be easily forgotten or deemed insignificant.

An installation of black and white paintings and sculpture, *Clandestine* suggests the power of symbols to enforce secrecy and fraternity. The paintings are made up of small dots in which the grid is utilized as both an organizing system and as a metaphor for secret networks. The circle, derived from the Greek name *Kuklos*, is a reoccurring motif in *Masters of the Universe #2* and suggests the chilling secrecy that currently pervades our country. *Separatist Celebration*, a white structure resembling a house that has been turned inside out to reveal red lights, becomes a metaphor for the cozy domesticity and secretive activity of the Ku Klux Klan.

Concurrently on view during Gatson's exhibition at the Feldman Gallery is the inclusion of his work in *House: Working in Brooklyn* at the Brooklyn Museum from April 16 through August 15. Recent group exhibitions include *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* at the International Center of Photography; *Black Belt* at The Studio Museum in Harlem; *Living Inside the Grid* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art; and the Third Photo-Media Festival at the Gana Art Center in Seoul in 2003. Gatson has recently completed a video commissioned by the acclaimed hip-hop recording artist Mos Def.

There will be an opening reception at the Feldman Gallery on **Friday, April 23**, 6:00 to 8:00. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 to 6:00. Monday by appointment. For more information, contact Laura Muggeo at (212) 226-3232 or laura@feldmangallery.com.