

rachel uffner

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Rachel Uffner Gallery at Frieze Viewing Room 2020

Focus: Curtis Talwst Santiago *Infinity Series*

VIP Preview: October 7 - 8, 2020

Public Access: October 9 - 16, 2020



Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present new and recent sculptures by Canadian-Trinidadian artist **Curtis Talwst Santiago**. Our virtual exhibition is focused on his *Infinity* series, an ever-growing body of work that consists of carefully constructed miniature dioramas built within antique and reclaimed jewelry boxes.

Santiago began the *Infinity* series in 2007 as a way to unearth and critically address histories of migration and colonialism. Initially drawn to the antique jewelry boxes for their implicit associations with trade and wealth, he quickly realized the inherent functionality of the self-containing objects. Santiago leads a particularly nomadic lifestyle, working across the world in cities such as Munich, New York, Toronto, Lisbon, and Cape Town. These meticulously assembled scenes reference specific people, places, and histories gleaned along the way.

Upon encounter, the small yet cinematic tableaux create an intimate and slow exchange between viewer and object. When shown together, Santiago leads the audience from diorama to diorama through a series of compelling narratives. In this way he enacts the ancestral practice of storytelling in African and Caribbean culture - a form of resistance against dominant social, political, and cultural forces.

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In addition to his dialogue with colonialism, Santiago culls inspiration from art history (with references spanning from 15th c. painting to his contemporaries, and artists such as Francisco Goya to Kerry James Marshall), music, fashion, pop-culture and current events. Works presented here poignantly address issues relating to police brutality, racial injustice, the COVID-19 pandemic, and pivotal moments of social upheaval experienced over the last decade. The new works also find space for joy and celebration through recreations of old family photographs. These works depict tender moments from the artist's childhood and memories shared by his parents of time spent on the dance floor or at house parties with friends.

On a whole, the *Infinity* series participates in a timely conversation about cultural and geographical heritage. Santiago's goal is to bring to light the absence of certain narratives and the presence of others in dominant culture, calling into question the means and production of our historical understanding and the lasting consequences of colonization.

Curtis Talwst Santiago (b. 1979, Edmonton, Alberta) studied as an apprentice of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. Santiago has exhibited internationally at venues such as The FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY; The New Museum, New York, NY; The Eli and Edythe Broad Museum at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI; the Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA; the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan, Canada; The Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; and the SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA; among others. The artist was included in the inaugural 2019 Toronto Biennial of Art in Toronto, Canada, the SITE Santa Fe SITELines.2018 Biennial, Casa Tomada, in Santa Fe, NM, and was featured in the 2018 Biennale de Dakar in Dakar, Senegal. The artist's solo exhibition *Can't I Alter*, was on view at The Drawing Center, New York, from February - September 2020. His work is in the permanent collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY. Santiago considers himself decentralized and lives and works between Munich, Germany, New York, NY, Lisbon, Portugal, and Toronto, CA.

Image: Curtis Talwst Santiago, *Quarantine and Basketball*, 2020, mixed media diorama in reclaimed jewelry box, 2 3/4 x 2 x 1 3/4 in (7.1 x 5.1 x 4.6 cm)

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