

Martina Simeti

Curtis Talwst Santiago

A man not in the mood for salsa

25 January 2024 – 15 March 2024

Opening Wednesday 24 January, 6 - 9 pm

“All colors are the friends of their neighbors and the lovers of their opposites”

[Marc Chagall]

Martina Simeti is pleased to present “A man not in the mood for salsa”, Curtis Talwst Santiago's second exhibition with the gallery.

In this show, the artist proposes a new collection of drawings and paintings, complemented by a series of dioramas and objects. Memory, ancestry, and diasporic imagination are intertwined in a joyful and playful manner. Central to Santiago's oeuvre is the idea of entanglements shaping the consciousness of the postcolonial condition. Singer and musician he reconnects with music as part of an identity that is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Fragments of childhood memories, feelings of yesterday yearning to be felt again, black & white masks strolling the streets of African metropolises (*Parktown @2pm, driving with the windows down*), dancing halls, jazz clubs (*Afro-Sonic Mapping*), haloed daemons, carnival traditional figures (Jab Jab, Midnight Robber, Dame Lorraine displayed in the diorama *Queens Park Fete*), are the recurring themes in these works.

Some reveal violence, past and present, inherent to the struggle of the diaspora. The diorama *How Will Survive in America* sheds light on the horrendous prison industrial complex. A car on fire in the drawing *The immolation of Darren Seals*, also an homage to Basquiat, reminds us of the brutality of the daily violence experienced and interiorized by black people in the Americas. Doubles, couples with no gender, twins, angels, or devils allowing our emotion to spring.

Santiago travels across the Atlantic Ocean. In the lower room, Caribbean dolls, and a group of objects from west Africa, offer a nest for the artist's nose casted in glass, a place to look for himself in a mirror.

Nothing is left aside. And no one is cast off because the artist is involved in mankind in each piece of work. Santiago shapes arenas and ideas both minuscule and colossal. And once again, as in *Olokun*, he makes the invisible visible.

Curtis Talwst Santiago (1979, Edmonton, Alberta) studied as a pupil of the artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. Solo institutional exhibitions include Art Gallery of Alberta in 2022, Can't I Alter in 2020 at The Drawing Center, New York, NY. His work has been included in group shows held the Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven), The New York Museum (NY), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Pérez Art Museum (Miami) and the SCAD Museum of Art (Savannah). He participated in the Biennale de Dakar and SITE Santa Fe in 2018 and the Toronto Biennial in 2019.

Santiago has completed several residencies including Fountainhead, Miami, Florida, Black Rock Senegal, Pioneer Works Brooklyn, and at the University of Tennessee. In 2022 he participated in «Imagine the City», a project by Kunst und Culture Hafencity in Hamburg. His works can be found in the permanent collection of The Studio Museum in Harlem.