About the Artist

Curtis Talwst Santiago was born in 1979 in Edmonton, Alberta, to parents who immigrated to Canada from Trinidad. He first visited Trinidad when he was seven for the annual J'Ouvert celebration that marks the beginning of Carnival. That experience has come to symbolize, for the artist, the imaginative transmission of generational knowledge, and serves as a point of departure for his exhibition *Can't I Alter*, which opened in February at The Drawing Center. *Can't I Alter* is an immersive installation that explores the theme of ancestry and the struggle to access lost and tangled histories.

Activity

Curtis Talwst Santiago's artwork explores the idea of “genetic imagination” with respect to his ancestry. Think about and study your own family, ancestors, and history—as recent or distant as is known. Create a detailed drawing depicting an imagined persona or character that embodies the spirit of your ancestors and their culture(s). Then give a name to your persona and draw objects and surroundings to reflect special traditions and celebrations, stories and memories, cherished belongings, and other expressions of joy and pride.

Related Publication

To learn more about Santiago and his work visit drawingcenter.org to read the full catalog *Curtis Talwst Santiago: Can't I Alter.*

“Drawing, for me, always comes back to music,” Santiago has said. “I never studied music, but the minute I'm onstage or with a group of musicians, I know what to do...I apply that to drawing. I want my drawings to feel like jazz compositions.”

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Drawing Activity #6 Curtis Talwst Santiago

Curtis Talwst Santiago Work Samples

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