

# NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

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Gabrielle Moser, "Critics' Picks: Tau Lewis and Curtis Santiago", *Artforum*, Sept 2017.

## ARTFORUM

### TORONTO

#### Tau Lewis and Curtis Santiago

COOPER COLE

1134 Dupont Street

July 20–September 9

An admixture of antagonism and vulnerability animates the faces looking out from Curtis Santiago's paintings and those staring back from Tau Lewis's sculptures, visages that dare you to care. Entering the gallery, one is immediately confronted by Lewis's you lose shreds of your truth every time I remember you (all works 2017), a seated male figure with eyes downcast, shoulders hunched forward. He holds the end of a leash tethered to a small creature sitting cross-legged on the floor next



View of "Tau Lewis and Curtis Santiago: Through the people we are looking at ourselves," 2017.

to him—tufts of soft fur stretch across its wire and twig skeleton. The rusted chain linking the two connotes a long-term dependency, or a doubled portrait of interior psyche and exterior persona. In two self-portraits, Lewis imagines herself as childlike figures nestled in spaces of comfort and respite: a monkey, its head bedecked with the artist's hair, sits in a swing, while a young girl assembled from Lewis's own worn clothing reclines in a rocking chair. There is a provisional quality to these works that is reminiscent of David Hammons's self-portraits, but Lewis's sculptural proficiency and her deft use of unexpected materials also evoke the uncanny sensibility of Meret Oppenheim.

Spare, gestural paintings by Santiago—a Trinidadian Canadian artist best known for his miniatures housed in jewelry boxes, often credited to his other moniker Talwst—depict lush tropical landscapes and crude self-portraits in pastel, spray paint, charcoal, oil, and watercolor. Parktown, titled after a neighborhood in Johannesburg where the artist has spent time, centers on a purple goddess presiding over an azure pool and a potted plant: a space of spiritual replenishment surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. Together, these artists manifest worlds where the psychic costs of diaspora are made material, offering latitude where personal and historical memory can be reckoned with.