



CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS *I WILL BLOSSOM ANYWAY*
AN EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS OF ART BY GIO SWABY

ON VIEW MAY 19 – JULY 29, 2023
Champagne Toast: May 19th, 6 – 8pm

I Will Blossom Anyway Coincides with the Artist's Second Solo Museum Exhibition, *Fresh Up*
On-View At The Art Institute of Chicago Through July 3, 2023



NEW YORK CITY, May 2023 | Claire Oliver Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new work by artist Gio Swaby, *I Will Blossom Anyway*. The exhibition features life-scale textile works including six self-portraits and a grid work of nine silhouettes. This new series explores the concept of dual identities and the cognizance of “other” experienced by immigrants living in a foreign culture. Through detailed sewn line drawing and quilting, Swaby conveys intimacy and beauty in the humanity and imperfection of her subjects. The artist displays the back sides of her canvases to the viewer as the finished work to showcase the knots and loose threads, which signify the sitter’s ongoing journey of

life. In *I Will Blossom Anyway*, Swaby turns this reflection and loving gaze inward, an introspective view of her own journey. The works will be on view in Harlem May 19 – July 29, 2023.

Swaby's work is a marked counterpoint to this: intentionally serving as a love letter to Black women, often her friends, through a gaze that is loving and aims to see the whole person in their imperfections, personal style, strength and eccentricities as a counterpoint to the often-politicized depictions of Black bodies. *I Will Blossom Anyway* uses this framework to turn the artist's signature embrace inward, offering an intimate and unguarded view of her personal self-reflection and identity.

"In this series, I reflected a lot on my own path and started to recognize how many parts of myself exist in the in-between spaces. In-between many cultures, being born and raised in The Bahamas, and spending much of my adult life in Canadian cities. In-between many selves, having experienced many versions of who I am today and feeling conflicted about which parts to share and which parts to keep hidden — who I should be at home in The Bahamas, and who I should be at home in Toronto," says Gio Swaby. "This work marks an exploration of those in-between spaces and multiple selves — it is a visual manifestation of my ongoing journey of striving to approach all of these parts with acceptance and love. It is learning to embrace the dualities that exist within me through a process that emphasizes accountability and compassion."

Having grown up in the Bahamas surrounded by the materials her seamstress mother used, Swaby chose to work in textiles—a medium traditionally associated with domesticity and femininity—as a means to imbue her works with both familiarity and labor-intensive care. She upends tradition, however. Not only do her life-size portraits give a sense of monumentality to the techniques of embroidery and piecing, but she also presents the reverse side of her intricately rendered canvases so that the stitching process of her free motion technique—the normally hidden knots and loose threads—is visible. While there's a vulnerability to "showing the back," Swaby embraces and elevates these imperfections.

I Will Blossom Anyway is Swaby's second solo exhibition at Claire Oliver Gallery. The presentation coincides with the artist's second solo museum exhibition *Fresh Up*, currently on view at the Art Institute of Chicago. Swaby received her MFA from OCAD University in Toronto, where she currently resides.

IMAGE CAPTIONS:

Gio Swaby, *Where I Know You From 3*, 2023, Cotton fabric and thread sewn on muslin, 66 x 55 x 1.5 in
Image courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery

Gio Swaby, *Together We Bloom 3*, 2023, Cotton fabric and thread sewn on muslin, 64. 52 in.
Image courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery

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ABOUT CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY

Claire Oliver Gallery is located in Central Harlem in a four-story brownstone. For nearly 25 years, Claire Oliver Gallery has showcased and celebrated artwork, with a focus on work by women and people of color, which transcends and challenges the traditional art historical canon. Our forward-thinking program and exclusive commitment to the primary market allows for an intensive focus that has nurtured and grown the careers of our artists. Many of the gallery's artists have been included in The Venice Biennale, The Whitney Biennial, and biennales in Sydney, Pittsburgh, and Lyon and have exhibited works in major international museums including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, Center Georges Pompidou, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art amongst others. Claire Oliver Gallery artists are included in the permanent collections of many important museums worldwide including The Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Tate Britain, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The State Hermitage Museum, MoMA, and the Museum of Arts and Design amongst many others. Claire Oliver Gallery held the first American exhibition for the Russian collaborative AES+F, whose work went on to twice represent Russia in the Russian pavilion of the Venice Biennale. Gallery artists have received prestigious fellowships including Fulbright, Guggenheim, USArtist and National Endowment for the Arts.

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