



CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS *CHANGEMAKERS* AT EXPO CHICAGO 2025

AN EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS BY THREE GENERATIONS OF BLACK TEXTILE ARTISTS:
CAROLYN MAZLOOMI, SHARON KERRY-HARLAN, AND GIO SWABY

ON VIEW AT BOOTH #344
APRIL 24–27, 2025



New York, NY | March 2025 – [Claire Oliver Gallery](#) is pleased to announce its return to EXPO Chicago for the tenth year with *Changemakers*, a presentation of three generations of important textile works by Black textile artists Carolyn Mazloomi, Sharon Kerry-Harlan, and Gio Swaby. *Changemakers* charts a historic, material, and matrilineal legacy of textile art across three generations, a parallel to how the medium itself is grounded in the craft and artistic lineage of Black women. Featuring new, life-scale works by Mazloomi, Kerry-Harlan and Swaby, the gallery will showcase three unique modalities of figuration and representation through textile.

Changemakers is on view at booth #344, April 24–27, 2025.

CAROLYN MAZLOOMI

Artist Carolyn Mazloomi has worked nearly 60 years to develop the bold achromatic quilts that bear resemblance to newspaper clippings, which have become her signature. The themes Mazloomi explores in her work prioritize Black American history and the fight for racial equity, with a particular emphasis on the civil rights movement and subjects often being Black American visionaries from this era. At the 2025 edition of EXPO, Mazloomi will debut new quilts memorializing two pivotal Black historical figures and leaders in the pursuit of civil rights: Martin Luther King Jr. and CJ Walker. Carolyn Mazloomi's quilts have been featured in over 90 museum exhibitions, with one of her works recently acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago. Notably, her work was recognized as one of the ten most significant acquisitions made by the Art Institute in 2024, underscoring the cultural significance of her art.

SHARON KERRY-HARLAN

Through a blend of traditional techniques and contemporary methods, Sharon Kerry-Harlan uses fabric as her canvas, altering, dyeing, and manipulating it to create large-scale tapestries and rust-dyed textile works rich in historical and socio-political narratives. Exploring themes of memory and cultural identity, Kerry-Harlan often recycles cloth and repurposes materials or found objects to further engage and communicate stories regarding the complexities of the African diasporic experience. This year marks Sharon Kerry-Haran's debut at EXPO Chicago, following her recent acquisition by the Smithsonian American Art Museum, where she will unveil *I See You*, a striking new tapestry crafted from cotton fabric, fabric paint, mixed media, and intricate appliqué and quilting.

GIO SWABY

Gio Swaby's life-scale portraits, composed of fabric and thread, portray Black female figures. Her primary mediums—sewing and embroidery—reference practices traditionally analogous with domesticity and female-centered activities, an association Swaby uses to confront and reclaim spaces where Black women have historically been excluded. With affection and admiration for the strength of her community, her subjects embody the shared experiences related to Black identity – paradoxically balancing hypervisibility and disregard. Yet, their gaze meets the viewer directly, demanding to be authentically seen. This year marks the third time Gio Swaby has shown at EXPO, where she will introduce two new life-scale portraits. Her work can be found in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was also honored with a solo exhibition in 2023.

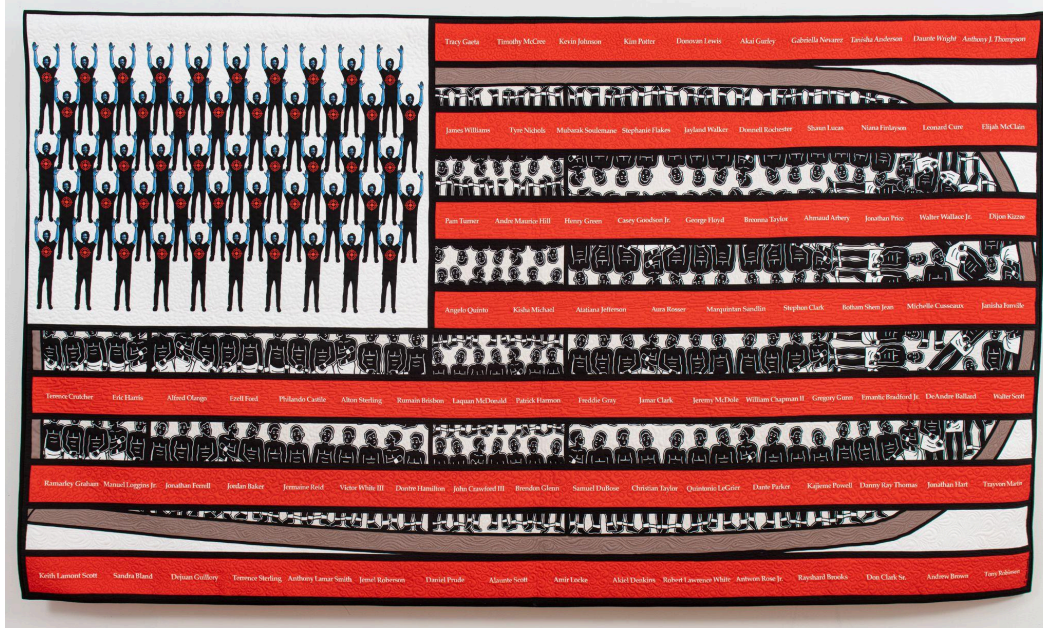


IMAGE CAPTIONS T-B

Gio Swaby, *As I Am: Tyler*, 2025. Cotton fabric and thread, 61 x 60 in. Image courtesy of the artist and Claire Oliver Gallery

Carolyn Mazloomi, *Hands Up ... Don't Shoot #2*, 2024. Poly-cotton fabric, cotton thread, cotton batting, fabric paint, 58 x 102 in.

MEDIA CONTACTS

DEPARTMENT PR

Sarah Brown McLeod

sarah@department-pr.com

Roberta Zertuche

roberta@department-pr.com

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. The gallery's forward-thinking program and exclusive commitment to the primary market allow 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, Centre 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.

[2288 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard](#)

New York, NY 10030

www.claireoliver.com

ABOUT CAROLYN MAZLOOMI

Based in West Chester, Ohio, Carolyn Mazloomi is an artist, curator, and writer. Her practice is rooted in the quilting tradition, using textiles—a personal and metaphorical material—to communicate the stories of individuals who have made significant contributions to social justice and landmark events that have shaped American history. She is the founder of the African American Quilt Guild of Los Angeles and the Women of Color Quilters Network, and a board member of the Studio Art Quilt Associates and Alliance for American Quilters. Over the course of her career, Mazloomi has had solo exhibitions at institutions and galleries across the country including the Los Angeles Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Kenyon College, Gambier, OH; Kent State University, Kent, OH; Malcom Brown Gallery, Shaker Heights, OH; University of Michigan, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Ann Arbor, MI; and Quilters Hall of Fame, Marion, IN.

Mazloomi's work is in the public collections of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, AL; Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH; Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, OH; Museum of Fine Art, Boston, MA; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN; Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY; National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN; National Endowment for the Arts Washington, D.C.; Quilters Hall of Fame Museum, Madison, IN; The Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Smithsonian Museum of African American Culture and History, Washington, D.C., among others. Mazloomi is the author of several books, and has most recently published *Visioning Human Rights in the New Millennium* (2019), *Yours for Race and Country: Reflections on the Life of Colonel Charles Young* (2019), *We Who Believe in Freedom* (2020), *We Are the Story: A Visual Response to Racism* (2021), and *Black Pioneers: Legacy in the American West* (2022).

ABOUT GIO SWABY

Gio Swaby is a Bahamian interdisciplinary visual artist, living and working in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She is known for her textile portraits that explore and celebrate Blackness.

With a multimedia practice that encompasses textile, installation, collage, performance and video, Swaby has exhibited in several galleries and museums including Claire Oliver Gallery in New York City, Die Textile in Schmallenberg Germany and The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas.

Swaby holds an Associate of Arts degree in Fine Art from The University of The Bahamas, a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Film, Video and Integrated Media from Emily Carr University of Art + Design and a Masters of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary, Art, Media and Design from Ontario College of Art and Design University.

ABOUT SHARON KERRY-HARLAN

Sharon Kerry-Harlan (b. 1951, Miami, FL) is a visual artist living and working between Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and Hollywood, Florida. Raised in a family of artists, Harlan learned quilting from her mother and elements of design and abstraction from her uncle, an artist and designer. She integrates traditional

quilting techniques with contemporary approaches to fabric manipulation to create her signature 'rust-dyed', monochromatic large-scale textile works for which she is celebrated.

Kerry-Harlan's textile work, mixed-media collages, paintings, and figurative objects—such as the Black Eyed Pea dolls—are deeply informed by race, history, and the socio-political landscape. Her artistic practice centers on designing her own textile patterns and fabrics, sometimes incorporating found and inherited materials into her compositions that balance geometric forms, figurative elements, and intricate patterns. Inspired by her African diasporic heritage, the rhythm of modern metropolitan life, and the interplay between historical narratives and contemporary events, Kerry-Harlan positions herself as a keeper and translator of information and histories, crafting visual narratives that convey multifaceted perspectives. Her work transcends temporal boundaries, fostering a dialogue that bridges the past and present.

Sharon Kerry-Harlan holds a BA from Marquette University and studied art at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, both located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her work is part of the permanent collection at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and she has exhibited at numerous national and international institutions, including the Harn Museum (Gainesville, FL), the Racine Art Museum (Racine, WI), the Erie Art Museum (Erie, PA), the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center (Wilberforce, OH), and the California State Museum (Sacramento, CA), among others.