



CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS DEBUT EXHIBITION BY ARTIST GIO SWABY

**BOTH SIDES OF THE SUN MARKS THE ARTISTS' NEW YORK DEBUT
SOLO EXHIBITION FEATURING MORE THAN 20 NEW WORKS THAT
SERVE AS A LOVE LETTER TO BLACK WOMEN**

ON VIEW APRIL 10 – JUNE 5, 2021



NEW YORK, NY | March 2021 – Claire Oliver Gallery announces debut solo exhibition in New York City of Bahamian artist Gio Swaby. *Both Sides of the Sun* is comprised of more than 20 new works that range from life-scale threaded line works, created entirely from thread without the aid of pre-drawn sketches, to small-scale intimate mixed-media textile portraits. Swaby's work seeks to underscore joy and resilience while showcasing the beauty in imperfection and individuality as a counterpoint to the often-politicized Black body.

"I consider my work to be love letters to Black women," states Swaby. "My work operates within the context of understanding love as liberation, a healing and restorative force. These works celebrate personal style, resilience, strength, beauty, individuality and imperfections. They are a tribute to Black women and residue of the beautiful connections we've created. Being dispersed geographically, I thought of the sun as a connector between us – love radiating out like the sun."

Ranging from life-scale black and white sewn line portraits to polychrome floral quilted works, Swaby is a multi-media textile artist whose figurative work explores the intersection of womanhood and Blackness: celebrating individuality and multiple ways of being rather than a flattened singular narrative.



In her life-scale line sewn portraits, from the series *Pretty Pretty*, the viewer meets the gaze of the artwork that has been rendered on the reverse side of the canvas, forefronting the beauty in imperfection. The process of stitching is laid bare, showcasing the knots and threads on the reverse side, which makes reference to the complexity of these individuals and shares a moment of vulnerability with the viewer. Swaby explores personal style as a tool of resistance; resisting being unseen and navigating the contradictory experience of invisibility and hypervisibility. This work also explores resistance through the gaze, navigating the power dynamics of looking and observation in public space and the ways in which Black bodies often become a spectacle. Nodding to activist and author bell hooks's statement "there is power in looking," this series explores the concept of looking back as a moment of empowerment, a tool to subvert the white gaze.



In her polychrome textile series *Love Letters*, Swaby creates intimate portraits of the black women who surround her, celebrating their individuality and reclaiming space through unapologetic self-expression. Imbuing her sitters with what the artist terms "Black joy," Swaby aims to redefine the often-politicized Black body that is so frequently linked to violence and trauma. In a rebuke of this narrative, Swaby's work reinforces the multitudes of emotions, talents, preferences, and characteristics that form an individual. Swaby's process begins with a photograph, capturing a moment of empowerment in her sitter that is the starting place for the work's exploration.

Both Sides of The Sun will be on view April 10 – June 5, 2021

Swaby is a graduate of Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver, Canada. She is currently an MFA candidate at OCAD University in Toronto, where she currently resides.

IMAGE CAPTIONS (L to R, top to bottom):

Gio Swaby, *Pretty Pretty 5*, Fabric and Thread Stitched onto Canvas, 3ft x 7ft, 2021

Gio Swaby, *Love Letters 3*, Fabric and Thread Stitched onto Canvas, 3ft x 7ft, 2021

Gio Swaby, *Pretty Pretty 7*, Fabric and Thread Stitched onto Canvas, 3ft x 7ft, 2021

Gio Swaby, *New Growth 1*, Fabric and Thread Stitched onto Canvas, 38 x 14 inches, 2021



All images courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery

MEDIA CONTACT

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ABOUT CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY

Claire Oliver Gallery is located in Central Harlem in a four-story brownstone. The gallery's exclusive commitment to the primary market promoting significant emerging artists has allowed for an intensive focus that has nurtured and grown the careers of their 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 and MoMA. 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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