



**CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS  
WHOLE CLOTH: NARRATIVES IN BLACK AND WHITE  
DEBUT EXHIBITION BY CAROLYN MAZLOOMI**

ON VIEW SEPTEMBER 3 - NOVEMBER 2, 2024

Private View: August 28 - 29, 2024

On View September 3 - November 2, 2024



**JULY 1, NEW YORK, NY** – Claire Oliver Gallery is pleased to present *Whole Cloth: Narratives in Black and White*, the gallery’s first solo exhibition of work by Carolyn Mazloomi and the artist’s first-ever gallery exhibition, on view September 3 - November 2, 2024. Through the medium of large-scale quilts, Mazloomi recounts the valiant lives of Black civil-rights activists, leaders and revolutionaries, often overlooked or oversimplified in our nation’s historical record, who played a seminal role in shaping American history in the twentieth century. As a Black woman raised in the segregated communities of the Jim-Crow South, these leaders—including John Lewis, Josephine Baker, Ida B. Wells, and Fannie Lou Hamer—influenced every fiber of her being, and it is through her artwork that she strives to convey dynamic portraits of their extraordinary courage. Mazloomi understands that, in the wrong hands, the authoritative pen of history is likely to memorialize fraught and incomplete understandings of landmark events and figures. Therefore, with her needle, she quilts complex images that insist on authentic and thorough depictions of Black American lives that will carry these lessons from the past into the future. Centering her narratives through the medium of quilts, Mazloomi pays homage to the traditional textile craft, which conveys comfort, warmth and domesticity but whose complex narratives rendered in black and white convey charged histories.

“Quiltmaking is a tradition and a mode of expression that is both intimate and esteemed,” states Mazloomi. “Every human being has an intimate relationship with cloth. It is the first thing we are swathed in at birth, and the last thing that touches our body upon our death. Through the nuance of textile, difficult stories can reach audiences across identities and generations from a place of care, hearth, peace, and nurture.”

Mazloomi’s black-and-white quilts catalyze ideas illustrated in her diaries and sketchbooks, where she embarks on in-depth explorations into the lives of freedom fighters. From these pages, her drawings are printed onto cotton fabric in rich, black ink reminiscent of the bold graphics captured in woodblock prints and indelible photographs reproduced in newspapers. During the labor-intensive process of appliqué—a technique for creating shapes by sewing on fabric patches—Mazloomi builds the compelling and complex narratives of Black trailblazers, memorializing their stories for the future generations. Each quilt is framed by a patchwork border—kaleidoscopic, geometric patterns that celebrate the quilting community and those craft traditions that she has made significant contributions to as a curator, author, and community organizer.

As in a newspaper, the clear and bold black color ensures that no dimension of decoration distracts from an impactful and memorable portrait of these individual's lives. Throughout the quilts, circular motifs recur—symbols of perpetual, enduring life cycles. In a time where the histories of race, gender, and class are at risk of being erased from education by conservative forces in politics, Mazloomi's works serve as a seminal teacher. She is an artist who activates her practice to ensure that no oppressive body can suppress, or erase, the legacy of Americans who put their lives at risk to ensure a brighter future for their people. These quilts are shrines to acts of inimitable bravery, resilience, compassion, brilliance, and kindness.

### **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).

Claire Oliver Gallery  
2288 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard  
New York, NY 10030

[www.claireoliver.com](http://www.claireoliver.com)

Tuesday - Saturday 11 - 6pm

By appointment previews August 28 - 29

## **IMAGE CAPTIONS**

Carolyn Mazloomi, Nobody's Free Until Everybody's Free: Fannie Lou Hammer, cotton fabric, ink and thread, 2024, 78 x 61 x 1 inches | 198 x 154 x 3cm

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

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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. The gallery's 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, 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.