



**CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY ANNOUNCES PRESENTATION BY ARTISTS
GIO SWABY, SIMONE SAUNDERS AND SUYAO TIAN
AT ART TORONTO 2024**

October 24-27, 2024 | Metro Toronto Convention Centre | Booth # C26



Toronto, ON, October 2, 2024 | Claire Oliver Gallery is pleased to announce its presentation at the 2024 edition of Art Toronto as part of the Discover program, presented by the Royal Bank of Canada. The exhibition showcases more than ten recent works from the gallery's program, including new works by artists **Gio Swaby, Simone Saunders, and Suyao Tian**. Additionally, Gio Swaby's work will be featured in the fair's FOCUS exhibition, curated by Rhéanne Chartrand. Claire Oliver Gallery will be located at **Booth C26** at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from October 24 - 27, 2024.

The artists featured in this group exhibition work across a rich variety of media, ranging from the water-based paints of Suyao Tian to the intricate textile works of Gio Swaby and the meticulous tufted and

mixed media pieces by Simone Saunders. Each artist deeply engages with themes of taking up space as a woman, self-empowerment, and uplifting others within their communities, while marking their identities in relation to community and belonging.

Simone Elizabeth Saunders, a textile artist based in Mohkinstsis, Canada, utilizes meticulous punch-needle techniques to create allegorical narratives that celebrate Blackness and womanhood. Her process begins with collages and sketches that transform into vibrant, large-scale tapestries, capturing the nuanced individuality of her subjects and showcasing the strength of Black women.

Gio Swaby explores the intersections of Blackness and womanhood in her work, aiming to elevate the visibility of Black identities in the art world. Her pieces serve as a love letter to Black women, creating a space where they are not only represented but celebrated. She examines the paradox of hypervisibility and the yearning to be truly seen, reflecting on the connections that shape our identities.

Additionally, Claire Oliver Gallery is thrilled to announce that Gio Swaby's *Together We Bloom 5* has been selected for FOCUS, a curated exhibition led this year by Rhéanne Chartrand. Located at the front of the fair, FOCUS is recognized for highlighting exceptional and impactful works. The 2024 FOCUS exhibition will center around the theme of "home," both tangible and intangible, spatial and temporal. Gio Swaby and other selected artists will address various conceptions of home, examining how it intertwines with identity, history, politics, and geography.

Suyao Tian, an artist and curator based in St. Paul, Minnesota, creates emotive watercolor paintings that construct dreamlike landscapes filled with peculiar beings. Her work is informed by her experiences growing up under China's one-child policy, instilling in her a desire to break free from societal norms and expectations. Tian draws inspiration from nature, channeling fragments of memory and subconscious thought to encourage imaginative freedom in both her art and for her audience.

Together, these artists forge a powerful narrative that emphasizes the importance of representation and the shared journey of self-discovery and community building among women, celebrating their identities and the spaces they create. Claire Oliver Gallery provides a platform for voices that have historically been underrepresented, creating a more equitable field in which these powerful women can shine.

Public Programming Highlights from Gallery Artists include:

Weaving New Histories: Michaëlle Sergile and Simone Elizabeth Saunders

Sunday, October 27, 12:30 PM

Platform Stage at Art Toronto

Moderated by curator Liz Iriko from the pioneering artist-run center TPW, this talk brings together two innovative textile artists, Michaëlle Sergile and **Simone Elizabeth Saunders**, who draw motifs from popular culture and revisit historical accounts of gender and race. The discussion will focus on how their work creates powerful new iconographies that challenge and inspire.

Art of Our Time: New Artists at Art Toronto
Saturday, October 26, 3:00 PM
Platform Stage at Art Toronto, presented by RBC

The Discover program, presented by RBC, connects attendees with contemporary artists shaping the art of our time. In this conversation, artists exhibiting at Art Toronto for the first time will discuss how they engage with various mediums and push artistic boundaries through the incorporation of new materials, sculptural effects, and thoughtful curation. The discussion, moderated by Adelina Vlas, Head of Curatorial Affairs at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, will feature panelists **Gio Swaby** from Claire Oliver Gallery, Sophia Lapre from Towards, and Robin Crofut-Brittingham from Tian Contemporain.

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IMAGE CAPTIONS

Simone Elizabeth Saunders, *Girl with Birds*, 2024. Hand-punched acrylic, chenille, cotton and metallic yarn on cotton rug warp. Image courtesy of Artist and Claire Oliver Gallery

Gio Swaby, *Together We Bloom 5*, 2024. Thread on fabric, 9-panel grid. 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. 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.

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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 SIMONE SAUNDERS

Simone Saunders' work delves into the search for belonging by examining the Black female body, personal identities, and connections to Black history. Through her artwork, she embeds repetitive ideologies of powerful creatures, serving as talismans that enhance themes of otherness and the Black body's relationship with power and survival. Saunders creates narratives woven from cultural mythology, history, and personal landscapes. Her work emphasizes a connection to the global Black diaspora, The outcome is a body of work of large textiles that illuminate creative content rooted in a powerful history.

Simone Saunders' is included in several public collections, including 21c Museum Hotels in Louisville, KY; Harper House in Detroit, MI; the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Minneapolis, MN; The Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC; and the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, MN. Her recent solo exhibitions include "Unearthing Unicorns" in 2023 at Claire Oliver Gallery in Harlem, NY; "u·n·i·t·y" in 2022 at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, ON; and "u·n·i·t·y" in 2021 at Contemporary Calgary in Calgary, CA.

ABOUT SUYAO TIEN

Suyao Tien is a visual artist living and working in the Twin Cities, MN. Tien uses water-based media to craft imaginative abstract works, employing amorphous shapes and enlarged organic forms to paint dreamlike landscapes. From her imagination, peculiar, otherworldly beings come to life in her unique world.

Suyao Tien's work is part of the permanent collections at the North Dakota Museum of Art and the University of Minnesota. Her current and upcoming solo exhibitions include the MSP International Airport from 2024 through 2025 and an exhibition at Claire Oliver Gallery in 2025.