

NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY

MOSES SALIHOU | *ESSENCE DE LA VIE*

PRESS RELEASE

September 7th – September 21st

Moses Salihou's second exhibition at the gallery, *Essence De La Vie*, will be on view from September 7th through September 21st. There will be an opening reception with the artist on Saturday, September 7th from 1-3PM.

Salihou will also participate in a tour of his exhibition led by Joséphine Denis, the Director of Curatorial Initiatives at Black Artists' Networks In Dialogue (BAND) on Saturday, September 14th at 1PM. The talk, *From Cameroon to Toronto and Back*, will focus on Salihou's origins in Cameroon, the country he emigrated from over a decade ago, and how it has influenced his practice while living in Toronto.

Essence De La Vie marks a noticeable shift in Moses Salihou's approach to his portraits. During a recent trip to Cameroon to visit family, Salihou was struck by the intense feelings he experienced while reconnecting with relatives. When he returned to his Toronto studio, he became interested in body language and interpersonal relationships, widening his lens and encompassing multiple figures within a single composition. In one painting, a child hangs onto their father, in another, a woman rests her head on her partners'. These small gestures of connectivity were inspired by specific relationships he witnessed back home. Even in individual portraits, Salihou provides small but meaningful clues about the sitter's personality and sense of style.

Accompanying the evocative portraits are paintings of bouquets. Salihou was only introduced to the concept of freshly cut flowers when he moved to Canada and they have been a recurring motif for him over the last few years. They are treated in a similar manner to his portraits, with fluid, gestural brushstrokes leaving the composition in perpetual motion. The vases beneath the bouquets are barely perceptible, the flowers refusing to be anchored down. One of the aptly titled still lifes, *Juste une Sourire*, or 'just a smile,' reminds us that the ephemeral nature of flowers does not hinder their beauty, but rather heightens their sweetness by encouraging us to appreciate them in the moment.