

ART VERGE



Celeste Rapone, *Girl Friday*, 2018 Oil on canvas 62 x 56 in 157.5 x 142.2 cm

Playful Interplay of Volumes and Colours Command Celeste Rapone's Paintings

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Known for her female-centered compact scenes illustrating elongated figures rendered in inflated and rounded silhouettes, **Celeste Rapone's** paintings seem to celebrate a more contemporary and humorous representation of the female nature. Putting a significant emphasis on the casual moments of the modern human being, the paintings focus on interior spaces and the daily events that take place during intimate time. **The figures' gestures look detailed and congenial, while their pose is identifiable as one in a clumsy and tangled situation. Rapone excels in capturing the moment either in a domestic situation or in a social context.** This could be real or imagined; the artist successfully destabilises distinctions between reality and fantasy as both equally coexist on the canvas. Rapone can be seen as a modern storyteller or portraitist painter who investigates the depiction of multiple identities.



Celeste Rapone, *Resorting*, 2017, oil on canvas, 62 x 62 inches

Uncommon body captures, depicted in easily identifiable environments, develop an elaborate contradiction that entertains the eye with ideas, patterns and colours based on a palette that interestingly unites vivid hues. Observing her work, it looks like the painter concentrates on close ups of a scene rather than analysing bigger frameworks. Even if the images are shaped in limited surface, there is still enough space to introduce some more remarkable details that enhance the aesthetic outcome and offer additional information about the painting's protagonist. Everlast boxing gloves, a fishbowl, small or larger fans, and selfie stick contribute some interesting add-ons in her recent imagery.

Rapone's paintings are suffused with plasticity; all figures examine their bodily flexibility and exercise their ability to excessively stretch their arms and legs to the extent that their appearance looks supernatural. The artist's recent body of work, despite the exaggerating formations and their interestingly pliable positions, employ discernible squeezed arrangements that almost fit within the canvas' borders. All oversized figures dominate the surface of the painting with figurative and representational visual narratives depicting everyday life, gestures and positions with playfulness and sensitivity. Her range of visualizations includes uncoordinated images of these quotidian scenes, such as a young girl at the office desk, a woman working out, or a couple playing tennis. *'I think less about imperfect bodies specifically, and more generally about the imperfections that come along with being human —doubt, expectations and standards, commitment, boredom, shame; all conditions present in the process of painting as well'* Rapone mentions herself.

Born and raised in New Jersey, USA, Celeste Rapone (b. 1985) lives and works in Chicago. In 2007 she completed a Bachelors of Fine Arts from the Illustration Department at the Rhode Island of Design. The painter also received a Masters of Fine Arts from the Painting and Drawing Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013. Her work has predominately been exhibited in many art galleries around the United States. Rapone is represented by the Chicago-based **Corbett vs. Dempsey gallery**.

Art Verge: Can you tell us about the process of making your work?

Celeste Rapone: Each piece starts with a narrative prompt, or problem, that I have to address through painting. I'll usually start a new painting by just spending a few hours mixing color; I love the task of assigning a palette to a narrative that doesn't have any specific color associations. After that I'll get to work developing the composition—I very rarely make drawings to start, I find something gets lost in the intuitive process of composing when I've already solved the puzzle.

AV: How would you define your work in few words (ideally in 3 words)?

CR: Anxious, Humorous, Playful

AV: Can you name any artists you, lately or generally, take inspiration from?

CR: Lee Lozano, Maria Lassnig, Matisse, Guston, Nicole Eisenman, Margot Bergman, Paula Rego, Charline Von Heyl, Tal R...it's a list that is long and constantly evolving

AV: Observing your work, it seems that oversized female bodies have a dominant presence on your canvases. Is there any major attraction behind the idea of an imperfect or uncommon human body that you usually rely on or draw inspiration from?

CR: I think less about imperfect bodies specifically, and more generally about the imperfections that come along with being human—doubt, expectations and standards, commitment, boredom, shame (all conditions present in the process of painting as well). About a year or two ago, I began incorporating the whole figure into my compositions—no cropping. I think there's a vulnerability in having your whole body exposed, not being able to hide, that I'm interested in. The scale and body language of the figures in relationship to their environment tries to reinforce that notion of discomfort.



Celeste Rapone, *Home Gym*, 2018, oil on canvas, 64 x 56 inches

AV: Creating a new painting can be a solitary process. If this applies to you, when you concentrate on a new artwork does it affect your social life at all?

CR: Haha—new, in-progress, finishing, there is all the same potential for a great day in the studio or horrifying frustration. Though there is something about starting a painting that is like no other feeling, when anything can happen and there's no pressure to commit. Day 1 on a painting is my favorite; after that it's a series of pushing and pulling until it's done. My husband is usually the only one on the receiving end of me being completely absorbed in the cloud of new paintings. But I think he'll take that aloofness over the tornado I am when I come home from a bad studio day.

AV: How do you know when an artwork is finished?

CR: When I add one more element that seems unnecessary. I'll wipe it out and call it a day.

AV: Which exhibition did you visit last?

CR: The last few were Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series at The Phillips Collection in DC, Peter Fagundo at Shane Campbell in Chicago, and Christopher Wool at Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago.

AV: What do you hope audiences will take from your work?

CR: I hope they will enjoy the experience of just taking in and looking at the paintings, and maybe discover something familiar in them that resonates in some way—an object, surface, expression, action. I recently listened to a recording of Charline Von Heyl's artist talk at the Hirshhorn, and she discusses the challenging desire for a painting to work both immediately and to develop over time to allow the viewer to rediscover something beyond the initial presence of the painting—I think that is the ultimate goal.

AV: Are you a morning person or a night owl?

CR: Morning person.

AV: Is the glass half empty or half full?

CR: Half empty by nature, but a productive day in the studio can turn that around pretty quickly.

AV: Which are your plans for the near future?

CR: I have my first solo show opening at Roberts Projects in LA in Sept. '19, so I'll be in the studio all the time. Though that's really no different than any other time.



Celeste Rapone, *Young Hopeful*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 54 x 48 inches