

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

NEW YORK | ASPEN

CELESTE RAPONE

Nightshade

A Debut Solo Exhibition

Opening Tuesday, May 3 – June 11, 2022 | 507 W 24th Street, New York, NY 10011



Celeste Rapone, *Purist*, 2022. Oil on Canvas, 26 x 30 in

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Nightshade*, Celeste Rapone's first solo show with the gallery. For this exhibition, the artist will debut a group of nine paintings. In her newest body of work, Rapone continues to examine the potential of painting through the human form. Drawing inspiration from her native New Jersey, Rapone seeks to communicate both personal and collective feelings of anxiety, longing, and nostalgia experienced in contemporary life. *Nightshade* will be the artist's first solo exhibition in New York and is on view May 3 – June 11, 2022, at the gallery's 507 West 24 Street location.

Rapone's works focus on the figure, often centering on women protagonists whose bodies impossibly contort and twist up to the confines that Rapone creates within the painting, or at other times capturing a tender exchange between a pair of figures. Rapone produces her works without preliminary drawings, gradually building the compositions of her paintings through a dynamic interplay between scale, color, pattern, and the shapes of the human form.

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In the settings of her paintings, the artist populates the space with an array of allusions, pulling from art history, pop culture, autobiographical sources, and drawing influence from the stylized figuration introduced by the Chicago Imagists. Her debut New York solo show *Nightshade* brings Rapone back into proximity to her hometown in New Jersey. A complicated feeling of nostalgia for her suburban upbringing inspired Rapone to infuse these works with subtle references to that setting: the patterns of New Jersey Transit bus seats, the Cutco knives that her older brother's prom date sold when Rapone was growing up, and the rustic color palettes of her Italian Catholic home. These nods to her upbringing, however, only provide the backdrop for more complex examinations of the anxieties and disconnect caused by societal expectations. For instance, in Rapone's painting *Purist*, a figure is shown hunched over a terrazzo table, transfixed by the act of slicing garlic with a razor blade. On the figure's left shoulder are markings of cupping therapy, a self-applied remedy the artist has used for her shoulder pain. To Rapone, these indicators of precision mirror her studio practice, which is rooted in an intensity toward the formal elements of painting.

Ranging in scale, each work within the show is unique and multifaceted in its development. At times, Rapone has a narrative in mind from which a thematic environment evolves for her characters to navigate. In others, the onset of a work is driven by formalist concerns, in which the artist begins with a unique color configuration or an abstract composition of shapes that then influence the formation of a painting's scene. The resulting forms of her figures, whose bodies defy the rules of proportions and scale, are both undeniably present and vulnerable within the canvases.

"I imagine these paintings as a synthesis of my everyday experience as a painter in Chicago and projected realities of women interacting within their own sets of circumstances, in many cases informed by my nostalgia for and removal from suburban New Jersey. I became really interested in negotiating these overlays as a point of entry to this work. Posing these initial narrative questions gave me something new and unpredictable to respond to in the studio," said Celeste Rapone.

"We are thrilled to host Celeste's first solo show in New York and debut this new body of paintings," said Marianne Boesky. "Celeste's works are so distinct – she works from a basis of complex formalist concerns such as surface, pattern, and color, to create her narrative paintings that both capture and evoke the complex emotions of our time."

Among the diverse presentations of characters and narratives in *Nightshade*, Rapone probes through a multi-layered approach the roles of subject, artist, and the viewer. Her figures dominate the scenes of her paintings, and yet, in the way that their bodies are squeezed and cropped into the canvas's frame, they remain exposed. To this extent, the works become self-referential allusions to Rapone's artistic process as she navigates the technical problems found while creating her paintings. On a broader scale, the perceived tensions of her protagonists who confront, or at times fail to confront, the pressures of contemporary adult life become a common thread throughout the works, allowing for a delicate interchange of humor, anxiety, and introspection.

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Celeste Rapone (b. 1985, New Jersey) received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2007 and her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013 where she is now an adjunct professor in painting and drawing. Rapone's work has been exhibited widely across the U.S. and abroad at Josh Lilley, London; Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago; Roberts Projects, Los Angeles; The Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago and Georgia Museum of Art. Rapone was the 2018 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. She has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at Josh Lilley in London and Corbett vs Dempsey in Chicago. Her work is currently included in ICA Boston's exhibition, *A Place for Me: Figurative Painting Now* on view from March 30 – September 5, 2022. Rapone lives and works in Chicago, IL.

About Marianne Boesky Gallery

Since its inception in 1996, Marianne Boesky Gallery has represented and supported the work of emerging and established contemporary international artists of all media. In its first decade, the gallery was instrumental in launching the careers of major artists through an innovative exhibition program; and in 2016, the gallery expanded its flagship location to its adjacent space on West 24th Street. The gallery actively represents many significant international artists, including Ghada Amer, Sanford Biggers, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Donald Moffett, and Frank Stella. To learn more, visit marianneboeskygallery.com.

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For more information about Celeste Rapone, please contact Gallery Director Kelly Woods at kelly@boeskygallery.com or 212-680-9889. For press inquiries, please contact Anika Zempleni at anika@hellothirdeye.com or 212-355-9009.

Image Caption: Celeste Rapone, *Purist*, 2022. 26 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen.

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