

# GAY LETTER

THE NEXT FIVE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE. WE'RE GONNA GIVE IT TO YOU.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018, LETTER 471

## SUNDAY 2



### ART: ROSE TINTED - JUSTIN LIAM O'BRIEN & CELESTE RAPONE

Figurative painting has come quite far. For the sake of time, I won't dive into art history, but the times they are a changin'! **Monya Rowe** is the kind of gallerist who has helped usher in emerging/establishing careers for such wonderful painters like **Angela Dufresne** and **Louis Fratino**. For her latest, Rowe picked up Queens-born Justin Liam O'Brien and Chicago-based **Celeste Rapone**, both oil painters whose figuration uphold the conventional but carry on into the new normal. O'Brien softens his nameless, unspecified males with an earthy oil palette. Pulling inspiration from Grindr, Tinder and other Apps, O'Brien "examines the psychological oversimplified social-sexual environment queer people currently inhabit." And, while yes, O'Brien's paintings explore the seriously tender side of the gay male sexuality, I also just have to say these paintings are just so sweet. Rapone is a bit more heavy handed, but I'm certainly not mad. Her languid figures cast aside O'Brien's composure for innate discord. Her canvases challenge "the boundaries between abstraction and figuration within a psychological space that hints at discomfort and absurdity. [She] depicts figures engaging in some sort of newfound amateur endeavor, ranging from sports to mundane tasks." I like that one of her character's has a size tag stuck to their ass. The galleries in the flower district, which I feel compelled to add because I love it there, but "Rose-Tinted" is inspired by **Jean Baudrillard's** Simulations the section Rose-Coloured Resurrection. It's essentially a digression on trying, and in such heedy times, it's a wonder we are all trying anything at all. But in times of cultural dissonance, we look to art. Has it failed us yet? Open Nov. 29-Jan.5! -CHRIS  
FREE, TUES-SAT. 12:00PM-6:00PM, MONYA ROWE GALLERY, 224 W. 30TH ST. #1005, NY, NY.