

MONYA ROWE GALLERY

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For Immediate Release

JUSTIN LIAM O'BRIEN & CELESTE RAPONE

Rose-tinted

November 29, 2018 - January 5, 2019

Opening reception: Thursday, November 29, 6-8 PM

Monya Rowe Gallery is excited to announce a two-person exhibition of paintings featuring **Justin Liam O'Brien** and **Celeste Rapone**. The title of the exhibition, *Rose-tinted*, is inspired by Jean Baudrillard's (1929 - 2007) *Simulations*, specifically the section *Rose-Coloured Resurrection*, which considers ideas about artifice, surface, and the notion of *trying*. It is also a color signifier for blushing, embarrassment, anger, or stimulation.

Justin Liam O'Brien's paintings of nameless unspecified male nude figures are wrought with sexuality and alienation. The protagonists are depicted awkwardly embracing, engaging in sexual acts and taking pictures of each other. Drawing inspiration from phone apps such as, Grinder, Tinder and Scruff, O'Brien examines the psychological oversimplified social-sexual environment queer people currently inhabit. His paintings explore the immediacy and emotional distance of this current digital landscape, but also the tenderness and feeling.

Like O'Brien, **Celeste Rapone** challenges the boundaries between abstraction and figuration within a psychological space that hints at discomfort and absurdity. Rapone depicts figures engaging in some sort of newfound amateur endeavor, ranging from sports to mundane tasks. Familiarity with these activities is learned through painting, thereby acting as both self-portrait and a metaphor for painting itself. Rapone's constructs combine personal history with the unknown. Her humorous autobiographical portraits explore anticipation and doubt.

Justin Liam O'Brien (b. 1991, Flushing, NY) received a BFA from *Pratt Institute*, Brooklyn, NY and an AS in Visual Arts from *SUNY Suffolk*, Selden, NY. He was recently awarded residencies at *Trestle Art Space*, Brooklyn, NY and *Con Artist Collective*, NYC. Recent group shows include *Ortega y Gasset Projects* and *Re: Art Show*, both in Brooklyn, NY. O'Brien lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Celeste Rapone (b. 1985, Wayne, NY) received a MFA from *School of the Art Institute of Chicago* (SAIC), IL and a BFA from *Rhode Island School of Design* (RISD), Providence, RI. Her work has recently been exhibited in a two-person show at *Corbett vs Dempsey*, Chicago, IL and a group show at *Roberts Projects*, Los Angeles, CA. She is the recipient of a 2018 *Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant*. Rapone lives and works in Chicago, IL

Gallery hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 12 – 6 PM

Closed for the holidays from December 25, 2018 – January 1, 2019.

Upcoming: **HEIDI HAHN & VERA ILIATOVA**