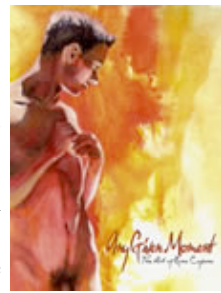**Visible Details: A Glimpse Behind the Art of René Capone**
by Jameson Currier

René Capone grew up in an Italian family in Albany, New York, and studied art at the Parsons School of Design in New York City. The oldest of four children, Capone, now twenty-eight, came out at seventeen and found acceptance from his mother and grandmother, but an estrangement from his siblings. Capone now lives in San Francisco and works out of his studio in the Potrero Hill neighborhood.

Since 2002, Capone's paintings have been featured in several solo and group exhibitions on the west coast. In December, he will be one of the artists included in "Foreplay," a group show at the Monkdogz Urban Art Gallery in Manhattan. Capone's art is rich in symbolism and narrative detail and was cited by Adam Sandel of the *Bay Area Reporter* for its "evocative blend of childhood wonder and eroticism." Several of Capone's paintings are now part of private and corporate collections. His work has been featured in *Gertrude*, *X-Y*, and *Joey*, and he illustrated "Close Quarters," an ongoing story by Mike Glatze about high school students in *YGA* (*Young Gay America* magazine). Four of his illustrations are included in *Stripped*, *The Illustrated Male*, recently published by Bruno Gmunder. *Any Given Moment*, forthcoming from Q Press, will collect almost fifty pieces of Capone's paintings over the last eight years.

Capone cites his favorite artists as Paul Cadmus and David Hockney, but he credits Steve Honicki, his high school art teacher at Niskayuna High near Albany, as one of his greatest influences. "He really made me realize that I was someone and that I needed to follow the path of my artwork," Capone says. "He made me finish high school, go to college, and be OK with being gay. He is one of those amazing teachers who actually changed my life, and we are still great friends today."

Recently I asked Capone to weigh in on the techniques and themes of his paintings.

Jameson Currier: *When did you first begin to draw and paint?*

René Capone: From as far back as I can remember I have loved crayons and comic books.

Currier: *Why did you decide to become a painter and not another kind of visual artist — or artist — such as a sculptor or a dancer?*

Capone: I could never be a dancer because I'm clumsy. Sculpture is not for me, I'm not patient and I just love watercolor too much to stop. I believe in the power of images, to represent and symbolize people's hopes and struggles and loves. A painting stays around and is burned into people's minds. They live with it and it speaks to them differently as the years go by. In a small way it's like I get to hang out with people for years without actually being there.

Currier: *What technique do you prefer to work in?*

Capone: Watercolor, it's very intuitive for me. I feel as if I understand what the water will want to do, and then I can direct it and manipulate it from there.

Currier: *How long do you usually spend on one painting?*

Capone: My paintings can go on for weeks and weeks, it just depends on the size and my inspiration. I always seem to work in segments of time, a few hours one day, maybe three hours the next.

Currier: *Why did you move to San Francisco?*

Capone: I was twenty-one when I moved to San Francisco

in the summer of 2000. I came to San Francisco because it seemed to be the place that a young gay boy could go, and it has this captivating pull and a mysterious, magical momentum. After just one visit here, I knew this was where I was to be... and I was right because I felt I could have a career here — where I could not have done that in New York City.

Currier: *How do you choose the themes and images for your work?*

Capone: I choose the image for my work by personal connection and often I take my own pictures to get what I want. A lot of people in my life have been very willing and supportive, friends and boyfriends who didn't mind letting me work them into my paintings. I like grand themes, but it has to feel real for me to go there. Often it's personal, even when I'm detached it's personal. I have told my life through my art, and learned to not think twice about it. Because when I do second guess my instincts the work stops resonating with others. It's got to vibrate with life and emotion, and not just borrowed feelings, but real feeling.

Currier: *You're drawn to "mythological dreamscapes" — what mythological figures inspire you?*

Capone: All Greek myths and love stories, they really work my emotions and thoughts. I like all the gay myths too, the ones left out of English class. Like Zeus falling in love with Ganymede. I love, love, love Greek statues. I've used a lot of poses from them in my work.

Currier: *What's your astrological sign? Do you feel this influences any of your work?*

Capone: I'm a Virgo/Libra cusp. So I read both horoscopes and take what parts I like. What it means for my art, I might say I strive for balance in my art.

Currier: *Have you experienced any kind of issues from dealers or editors because your work often features male erotica?*

Capone: There has been some of that, but also at the same time doors have opened because of it. I decided a long time ago to just make art the way I'm supposed to make it.

More of René Capone's work can be seen on his Web site: www.renecapone.com.

Jameson Currier is the author of a novel and two collections of stories, most recently, *Desire, Lust, Passion, Sex*.

Velvet Mafia is headed up by Sean Meriwether

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