Vera Girivi: Cats, Clocks, and a Bikini
Opens July 2, 2024
“The cat is an ancient animal. It has a certain kind of wisdom accumulated over time. It watches you, lets time pass, and calculates all of its moves.”

Vera Girivi

“Time is crucial to me now. A clock has been ticking quickly.”

Vera Girivi
VERA GIRIVI

*Untitled*, 2024
acrylic on found canvas
22 x 15 3/4 inches (56 x 40 cm)
VG360
“It was a print that I purchased at an antiques market, but after a while I no longer liked it. I cleaned the surface and decided to keep the old canvas. In this case, it feels like the material has a soul.”

Vera Girivi
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
31 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches (80 x 80 cm)
VG357
VERA GIRIVI

*Untitled*, 2024
acrylic on canvas
27 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches (70 x 70 cm)
VG358
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
39 1/2 x 47 1/4 inches (100 x 120 cm)
VG350
Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
31 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches (80 x 40 cm)
VG355
"The woman in this painting is young... When you are young, you feel like you can do anything you want."

Vera Girivi
VERA GIRIVI

*Untitled, 2024*

acrylic on canvas

27 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches (70 x 90 cm)

VG353
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
11 3/4 x 11 3/4 inches (30 x 30 cm)
VG349
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2022
acrylic on canvas
47 1/4 x 55 inches (120 x 140 cm)
VG298
“The gift of painting on a blank canvas always gives me the possibility to dream.”

Vera Girivi
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
35 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches (90 x 70 cm)
VG354
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
31 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches (80 x 40 cm)
VG359
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
31 1/2 x 15 3/4 inches (80 x 40 cm)
VG361
VERA GIRIVI

*Untitled*, 2024
acrylic on canvas
39 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches (100 x 100 cm)
VG351
VERA GIRIVI

Untitled, 2024
acrylic on canvas
39 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches (100 x 100 cm)
VG352
James Barron: Many of the paintings in this show have cats. What do you cats mean to you?

Vera Girivi: I love dogs and fear cats. I would also like to have a cat, but I can’t because they feel vulnerable to me—I would always be worried about a cat’s life. I would also be afraid of not being chosen as its owner. The cat chooses its refuge by itself.

When I paint them, I think it is about a search for protection expressed through the figure of the cat. The cat is an ancient animal. It has a certain kind of wisdom accumulated over time. It watches you, lets time pass, and calculates all of its moves.

JB: I’m intrigued by the relationship between the grandfather clocks and the stiletto shoes on the floor in one painting. Tell me about that.

VG: There are three important things in that painting: two that I would like to have but can’t, and one that I don’t want. I can’t have red shoes with stiletto heels because they are too flashy for me, and because I can’t walk in them. As I explained before, I want a cat, but I’m too afraid to have one. I don’t want the clock because it reminds me of time passing.

JB: Can you expand on that last part?

VG: My mom died on January 1, 2019. Time is crucial to me now. A clock has been ticking quickly since that day. When you have a mother, she’s your reference point, your guide, as someone older than you. When her story ends, you feel a void, but your own time continuing on. These clocks are pendulums. We have a window with shutters, so there is a hazy band of light across the painting, which represents time escaping somewhere else.
JB: There’s a painting with multiple clocks set to 12:15.

VG: These are the hands of a clock that is tired of turning. I am 62 now, and with age you notice the little thing. Even cooking a simple dinner takes longer. You lose stability, balance.

JB: Are you afraid of dying?

VG: Everyone is afraid of dying, but compared to 10 years ago, I’m less scared. I’m about to complete a life, and now what I have left is all I have. I have done everything, more or less well. Hopefully, I’ll finish it well, too.

JB: The women in your paintings are not merely a reflection of your own self passing through time. You paint a variety of women of different ages and backgrounds. How is it that you imagine women of such varying types?

VG: Imagining diversity eliminates monotony. The gift of painting on a blank canvas always gives me the possibility to dream.

JB: Tell me about the woman in the red bikini. It feels like such a refreshing and beautiful moment. Who is she?

VG: I’ve never had a red bikini in my life. I’ve always worn black. Those who choose red are strong and confident. The woman in this painting is young. While I was painting it, I was thinking about how when you are young, you feel like you can do anything you want, and you don’t even feel aches and pains from such an uncomfortable position, or the scratchy stone making contact with your skin.

JB: What about the woman looking at her own reflection in a full-length mirror?

VG: The woman comes out of the mirror. It’s an encounter. She’s looking at herself in the mirror and finding herself. She seeks contact with herself by touching her own hand that comes out of the mirror.

JB: As always, there’s an abundance of reflection and refraction in glass. What intrigues you about mirrors?

VG: I recently purchased yet another antique mirror, even though all the walls in my home are already occupied. To my mind, mirrors enlarge and dilute. They offer you security and space to breathe. You can see what you want to see in them.
JB: In the small painting of the woman with a clock as her head, there is a bird fluttering its wings in the window. What do birds mean to you?

VG: Lightness.

JB: Some of these paintings also take place outside. Tell me about the bathers.

VG: There are two women and a man at the thermal baths. At first, I wanted to put only one person, but then I often tend to fill all the spaces. It gives me a sense of security.

JB: The woman floating in the pond reminds me so much of Ophelia. I find it lovely that you have flowers that are floating in the water and over her body. Can you tell me about that moment and about the flowers?

VG: This is also a reflection. I imagined her floating on the clouds. The flowers are a form of protection that caress the body and delicately perfume it.

JB: I love that you painted on an old canvas. I adore the old patterned paper on the back. Can you tell us how this came about?

VG: It was a print that I purchased at an antiques market, but after a while I no longer liked it. I cleaned the surface and decided to keep the old canvas. In this case, it feels like the material has a soul.