

## SARA MICHAS-MARTIN

# You Can Do Everything Right

In the backyard of the backyard party in the dream  
I applied sunscreen encouraged a bathroom stop  
kept carrots and cheese from touching  
measured potential encounters with sharp or  
partially falling objects confirmed there wasn't  
a helmet for the spine how bikes don't work well  
in water and then left my child too long  
very long in the pool *Mom. Look.*  
he said pulling back his towel  
a red peony bloomed large from his chest  
a feathered injury raw chemical burn  
heart beating wetly through the pleats  
I'd been practicing distance because  
eighty percent of my visual field  
conscious/unconscious is him squared  
and muscled divided from rocks darting  
between wheeled figures climbing on solid  
or flexible structures *Look Mom look*  
he said earlier raising a leg over the edge of a pool  
with no visible bottom I watched him balance  
saw him pleased with his effort at balance  
before moving on to the pool sloshing out

artificial waves turbulent and too loud  
I trailed behind collected dropped crackers  
at the shallow pool children stalked around  
like alligators which was of interest to him  
which for me (me me) meant  
I could practice distance I could  
aim for adult conversation unbroken  
until a dog abruptly without cause  
got up from the grass and not really then  
did I turn around or look closer  
I followed through without fracture  
being over here and without disturbance  
him being over there without circling back  
as one does to the difference between  
a scream or exaggerated sneeze  
hearing unreliable also time being what it is  
wine tampering with my hold of it then  
a ball sailed over a lawn chair a forgotten  
pie fork and a dog without visible cause  
got up from the grass and not then  
did I put my glass down did I go over  
I held out my necessary attempt  
the length of 20 paces I was loosening  
my radius and I thought coming next  
was the tedious exchange of wet  
to dry clothes and I was not ready  
to bargain or wrestle not yet.

**Sara Michas-Martin** is the author of *Gray Matter*, winner of the Poets Out Loud Prize and nominated for the Colorado Book Award (Fordham University Press, 2014). Her essays and poems are forthcoming or have appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *The Believer*, *Best New Poets*, *Harvard Review*, *jubilat*, *Kenyon Review*, and elsewhere. She teaches creative writing at Stanford University and lives in Carmel Valley with her husband and son.

## JOSE DE JESUS RODRIGUEZ

*Untitled, 2017*  
Acrylic, airbrush, and oil on canvas, 48 x 50 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST