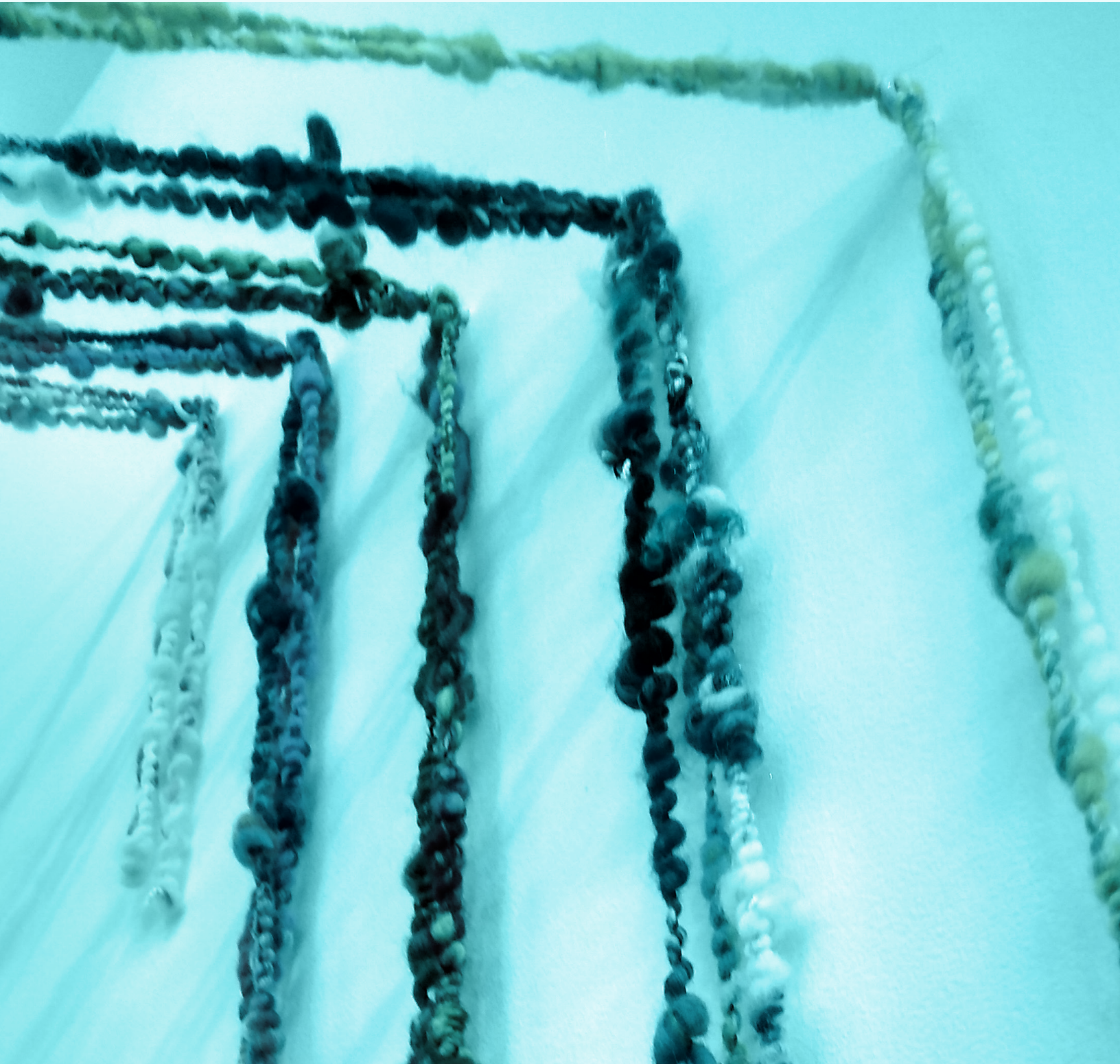


# Intrinsic Hues

by Gregory Blanche



Over the course of the last two years, I have been gradually getting to know my cohort in Graduate Fine Arts at CCA. The first year in pandemic-induced Zoom squares, we only saw each other's work behind glass through screen sharing. In this second and last year of our educational arc, we have finally been able to meet in person, pausing for casual conversation as we cross paths in the long hallway of the industrial building that houses our studios in the Dogpatch neighborhood.

Within the partition walls of my studio, I face the challenges of making drawing and painting relevant, with forays into mediums that are new to me, and benefit from creative engagement all around me as emerging artists expand their disciplines and experiment with new solutions for their expressive needs. My work has concentrated on tonal description while working in monochrome over colored grounds. Each member of my cohort has a different relationship with color. Here, I have weighed in on four artists' work in the 2022 MFA exhibition.

### **Liz Lis**

Liz Lis's staple color is a shade of green that I have seen them use throughout their work, and even in their hair. The color is discretely present in their recent installation, the last perch infested with splendor (memory of a future fossil), 2022. On a large (60" x 120") painted and collaged paper support, they have rendered a background of emerald green, sapphire blue, and a touch of coral pink that extends like an expressionistic map, a vague geography and ocean. On top of this, there is a textural photographic collage in brown and black, which describes a visceral tree rising and quirkily narrowing into slender branches. Though wintry and skeletal, the tree has green and red velvet leaves stitched in gold and harbors a selection of cut-out



*the last perch, infested with splendor (memory of a future fossil), 2022*  
watercolor, acrylic, walnut ink, graphite, found paper, glitter, chain, velvet and thread on paper and glazed ceramic sculpture, 56 x 120"; 11 x 21 x 29" (image courtesy of the artist)

birds that Lis has drawn accurately in charcoal. The branches are decorated with wispy metallic representations of long, frozen water drops, and are decked with lengths of jewelry chain.

The green in Lis's work readily calls to mind ecological concerns. Of "Western-European and Anishinaabe descent," Lis finds inspiration in the variety of life within the bioregions that surround them: in the oak forests and marshes of San Rafael, where they are from, the Point Reyes National Seashore, and even urban weeds in San Francisco, where Lis now lives.

So far I have described just half of the installation: below the work on paper, there is a dark ceramic octopus-like tree trunk with wriggly limbs, tranquil and reserved. It suggests the "future fossil" in the title. Perhaps after retiring to an angle of the deep sea, an octopus later solidified into a tree, was cut or broken off, and over the course of eons turned to stone. Now, a dejected head-like dome above its limbs surveys its burnished inky brown surface.

The trunk may be a future relic of the treetop, whose tactile branches are seen struggling to thrive in a still verdant world. The two trees share a common existence in art, and with eclectic materials usher in Lis' "... questions about ecological future and the potential of transformation and regeneration that is found in the 'natural' world."

### **Jasmin Viducic**

Magical color gradients delicately alternate in Jasmin Viducic's coiling strands of wool, like watercolor skies compressed into soft swirling lines. In each of her installations, *Can I Talk to You?* and *Safe Haven*, both 2022, these strands are displayed close together in parallel columns suspended midway from high above, their spiraling



tips dangling at varying heights above the ground.

Viducic's strands are composed of locally sourced wool that she hand-spins and colors with natural and synthetic dyes. Her solitary communion with these warm fibers, from the time she gathers plants she cultivates or forages for specific hues, to hours spent dyeing, carding, and pulling strands together on a spinning wheel, gives her comfort and healing. She produces long irregular spirals that she considers "timelines of emotional fluctuation," the alternating colors echoing "my own struggles of daily life living with anxiety and depression." The connection that Viducic feels for wool is also inspired by her family heritage. One side of her family has origins in Croatia, where for generations they raised sheep and spun wool yarn for their garments.

In *Can I Talk to You?* five strands are dyed in countless subdued streaks of gray, black, faded blue, and purple, together with three light strands in almost imperceptible tints of antique rose and white. Together they form a muted palette that she says "represents the calm peaceful moments of time that I have while spinning."

*Safe Haven* comprises five strands in a dynamic mixture of bright green, red, purple, yellow, and blue, alternated with flashes of black and white. They start from positions on the wall that ascend like steep steps and rise to anchor points. Then the strands cross the corner of the room diagonally, above a doorway, before returning back by the same path. They form an enclosure that Viducic has created to share her experience of envelopment as she works, and to convey "the sense of calm, safety, healing and joy" that she feels making wool yarn.

Viducic's variegated wool strands, still close to their initial state, offer warmth, comfort and



***Safe Haven*, 2022, wool fiber, synthetic dye, natural dye (madder root, red roses, hibiscus), cotton thread, dimensions variable**

transformative potential, animated by hues that evoke the mutable nature of our spirits.

### **Linda Fenney**

Linda Fenney image link Caption: Uncertain Futures (Mo), 2022, acrylic and oil on canvas, 60 x 72" (image courtesy of the artist)



***Uncertain Futures (Mo)*, 2022, acrylic and oil on canvas, 60 x 72" (image courtesy of the artist)**

Saturated yellow brushstrokes define the interrupted rectangle of the floor in Linda Fenney's *Uncertain Futures (Mo)*, 2022. The pale lemon cream wall in this interior seeps through the raspberry stripes that flow in parallels over the contours of an armchair. Black scumbly strokes whisk together a figure's legs but are left incomplete, daring to show us the artist at work. A faded monochrome houseplant seems like a drawing waiting to come to life from its ghostly pot. Three-dimensionality starts to emerge from a young man's face and torso. Wonderfully wonky, his massive body gently floats, pinned to his small delicate face. Is he real? He certainly has familiar characteristics. The expression of someone watching TV, or vacantly staring across the room. Beer or soda in one hand, cigarette in the other, he straddles an armchair. Sporting a gray hoodie and black jeans, he is a portrait of youthful ennui. Maybe he works long hours, his energy spent when he is free, or maybe he is just postponing everything. The flowers in a pitcher behind him wilt in desperation.

This portrait is part of a series, *Uncertain Futures*, based on people Fenney knows and has observed coping with the frustrations of the gig economy. As Fenney explains, her subjects are "... recently out of college with a degree and no job using the education they worked so hard for ... with little prospect of a career they thought they would have at this stage in their lives. They are not intended as portraits of individuals, but more symbolic of those in their position." [She has] "never wanted to paint

true representations of people,” but says “... there is something about inferring a person in a piece that makes it more interesting to me and I hope, more relatable ...”

Fenney feels her approach “is getting closer to abstraction over time and less figurative.” This series unfolds in the two-dimensional universe of the canvas’ surface, where the interaction of descriptive contours and diffuse fields of color articulate Fenney’s contemporary narratives.

### **Jihyeon Lim**

An unresolved tension emerges between blue liquid splashes that drip down the walls and the subtle modulation of warm hues underneath, reminiscent of Bonnard’s elegant scumbling, in Jihyeon Lim’s *ID: grayishblue\_* one of three companion pieces in her 2022 Installation. It is a large painting that represents a bathtub in a tiled corner. Even though the colors suggest cheerful exuberance and Lim told me that the inspiration came from an occasion in which she dyed her hair, I can’t shake the implication of the aftermath of a violent episode, be it physical or emotional. Haircare products in perspective are visible on the tub ledge. These include a jar of blue “Manic Panic” brand hair dye, which a cartoon squiggle indicates is rolling away. Lim’s Instagram handle “@grayishblue\_”, also part of the piece’s title, is scrawled on the jar. A cat peers over the ledge. Perfectly round eyeballs are in the tiled corner, on the tub floor, and one of them is next to a perplexed rubber duck that looks out at us. She says the eyeballs were inspired by the ever-present stare of her cats.

Lim was born in South Korea and has lived in many countries. Blue has a special significance for her. She relates that the expression “blue mountain” in Korean is the equivalent to “utmost paradise”, and



***grayishblue*, 2022, oil on canvas, 48 x 72"**


that for her blue has always signified the sense of a home that she gave herself by collecting blue and purple things that would remain with her. For an immersive experience, she painted the adjacent corner walls of the installation a deep purply blue.

The companion painting, *Bird of Paradise*, features an overhead view of two carefully rendered bird of paradise flowers in a foreshortened black plastic vase on a sidewalk painted with blue spray paint. Two flat, sky-blue toy birds stand next to the vase, with bloodshot eyes. One of the bird's eyes has popped out and is hanging by a spring. More eyes are on the sidewalk and stuck in the flowers. They lightheartedly suggest Lim is reciprocating the viewer's gaze. Two wobbly, glazed ceramic blue puddles on the floor complete the installation.

In both paintings Lim alternates perspective and flatness idiosyncratically, combining realism, action painting, and cartoon motifs to construct a playful and enigmatic world.

Through the suggestions of just one hue or a wide variation of hues, color is intrinsic to the expression of all four of these artists and articulates the moods, symbols, and associations that give significance to their work. Reflecting on the diversity in their approaches, and talking to them about their concerns is a source of inspiration that continues to fuel the evolution of my own chromatic research.





**Gregory Blanche** is an artist from Berkeley, California who has lived in Florence, Italy for much of his life. His paintings, drawings, and sculptures depict abandoned places and dilapidated everyday things.

**Liz Lis (b. Godbey)** is an artist of mixed Western-European and Anishinaabe descent. Born and raised in the Bay Area, they are deeply inspired by the more-than-human life of the surrounding bioregions.

**Jasmin Viducic** is a Bay Area-based artist who uses local sheep's wool with synthetic and natural dyes to create handspun yarn threads which connect her to the Croatian heritage of her family who used wool in everyday life.

**Linda Fenney**, originally from London, now lives and works in Northern California. She has always painted in parallel to her career as a physician. Her colorful large-scale works frequently address loss and uncertainty.

**Jihyeon Lim** is a South Korean artist living and working in San Francisco. She combines painting, drawing, printing, and collage to build a narrative of mundane yet magical scenes that investigate her Asian/Western identity, displacement, and her ideal home.