

## Guimi You - *Color Me*

Guimi You could well be termed a “painter’s painter”. Trained in both Korean traditional painting at Seoul National University and painting at the Royal College of Art, You’s practice combines the lucidity and richness of both techniques, resulting in canvases reveling in the beauty of natural environments and the communication of joy through pigment.

You’s current subject matter is inspired by her real-life experiences, both as a mother and a recent transplant to the San Francisco Bay area. Walking to and from her studio, she gains inspiration from the gardens and greenery, in particular the colorful, healing presence of flowers. The volatile beauty of the California landscape is captured, with some works inspired by native natural disasters such as wildfires. In You’s paintings, female figures often appear, dwarfed by the landscapes around them, or else disembodied, turned away from the gaze of the viewer.

Whether in large- or small-scale, acrylic or oil, You’s compositions astound in their intimacy and play. This quality has been further enhanced since the birth of her son. Immersing herself in kid’s toys, clothes, and coloring books, she began to emphasize the playful abstractions already present in her work, imbuing an almost color-by-numbers quality to recent works. This inspiration is reflected in the title for You’s upcoming solo show with Make Room, **Color Me**. Featuring a return to large-scale oil work after a focus on smaller, acrylic work during the Pandemic, **Color Me** continues to explore You’s fascination with the landscapes of Northern California. Forms from her son’s playroom, such as sticky toy snakes and Chutes and Ladders, also appear as signifiers of the domestic surrealism of motherhood.

The exhibition’s eponymous painting is indicative of this shift: You’s large figural composition replaces topography, the colors of her dress and the shadows on her neck mirroring the palette of the space around her. The limited palette nods to the influence of color-by-number books, and the presence of dinosaur toys alludes further to the aesthetic influence of motherhood. Even within this seemingly domestic image, perspective, line, and form create an atmosphere of unbridled, fiery energy. Other works in the show, such as *Pasted Passerby*, utilize this inspiration within the established techniques of You’s style. Crystalline circles of pure color hang in the sky over a hazy landscape, a surreal touch further compounded by the central figure of the title, a sketch of a woman whose image seems to have been glued into the landscape, gleefully disrupting the composition. With *Color Me*, You takes on the mantle of an artistic lineage that includes Henri Matisse, Edvard Munch, and Leonora Carrington, applying a precise and profound subjectivity to her playful explorations of the world.