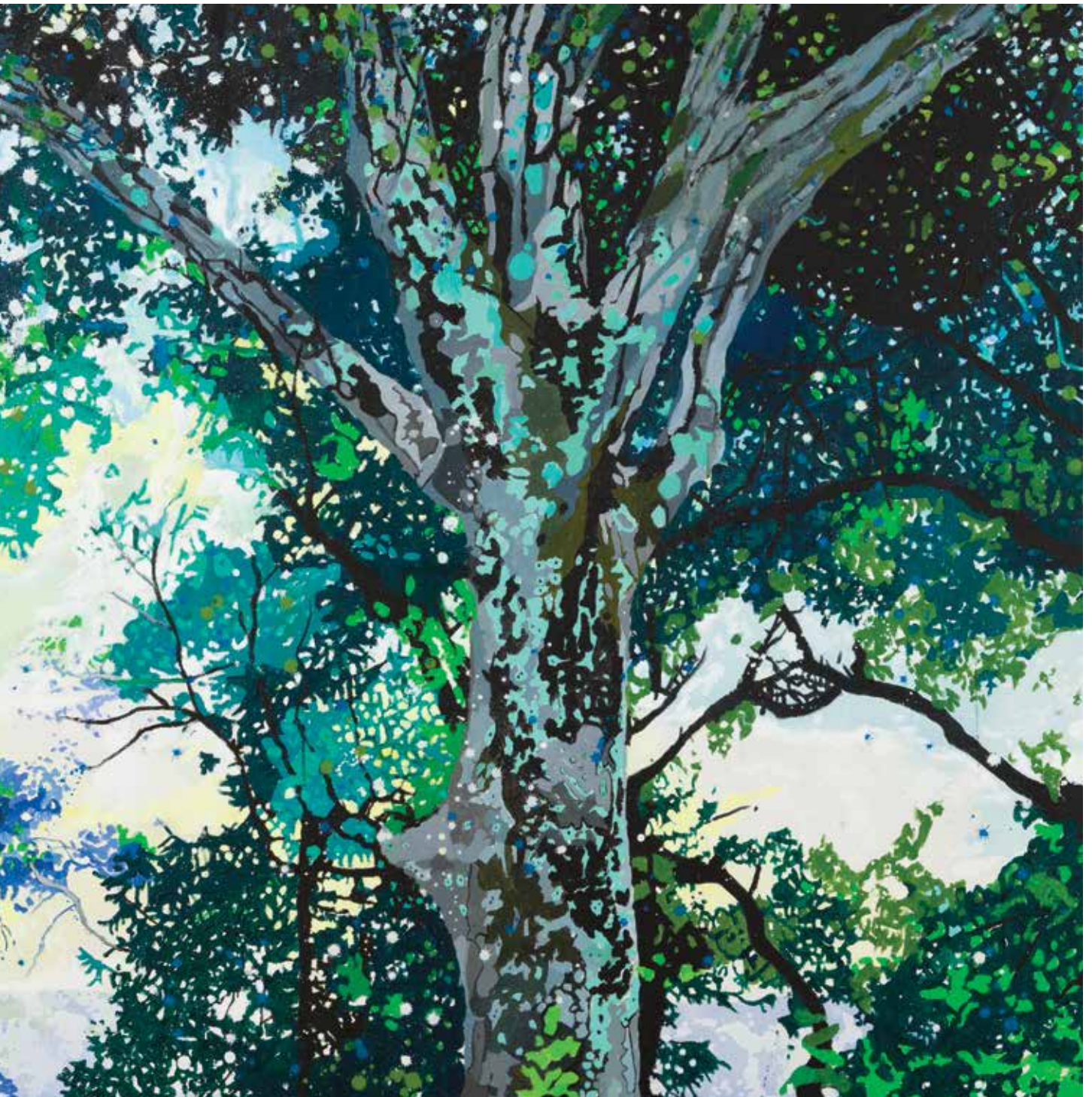


New England HOME CT

BLUE Attitude
SETTING THE MOOD



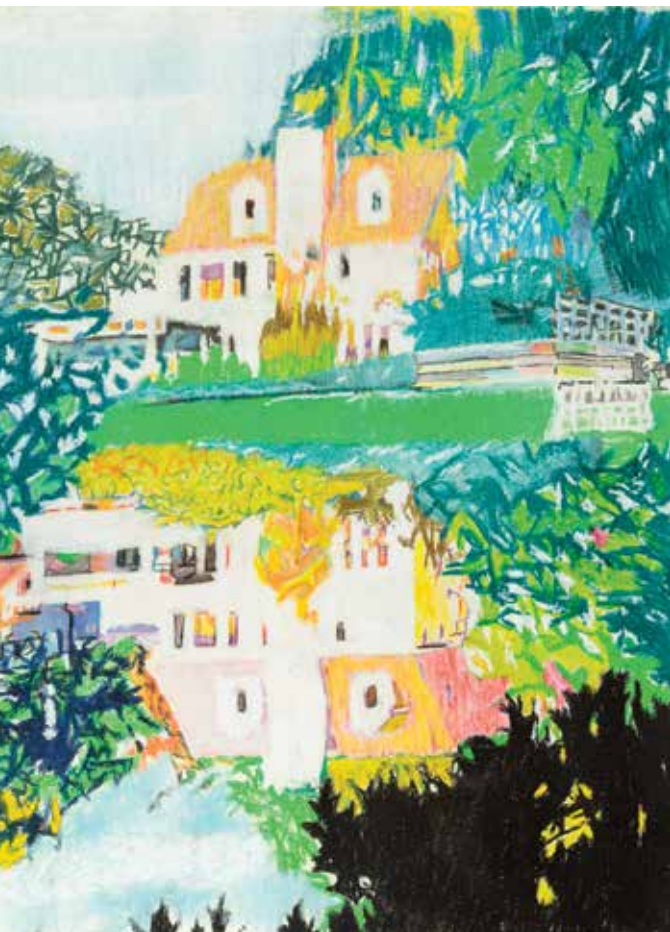


PAINTING WITH NUMBERS

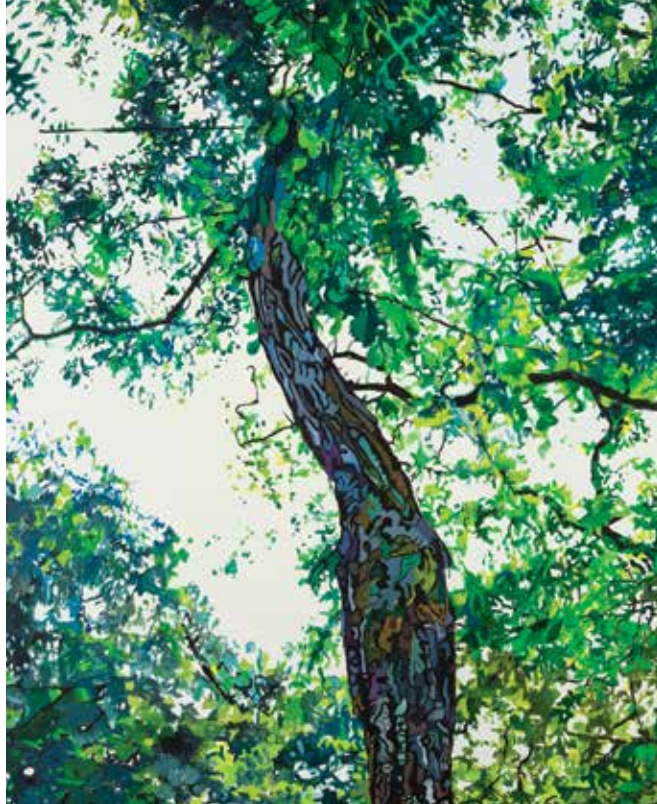
Lisa Warren's unique form of perception allows her to see everything from digits to days of the week as colors.

BY NATHANIEL READE

Sycamore
(2015), 48"H x
48"W, acrylic
on canvas.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Riverside*, 24"H x 18" W, pastel on paper. *Old Tree*, 60"H x 46"W, acrylic on canvas. *Wild Roses Dreams*, 18"H x 18"W, acrylic on panel.



We all see the world differently.

For Greenwich's Lisa Warren, that difference has a name: grapheme-color synesthesia. The trait causes her to experience numbers, letters, concepts, even days of the week as color, with feelings attached to the hue. So where as you might see Monday in your mind as letters on a calendar, she sees it as layers of light blue. And even though you might think of blue as somber, Warren says, "I view it as freshness, clarity, and optimism."

At the Rhode Island School of Design, where she earned her BFA, and Yale University, where she earned an MFA, Warren demonstrated talent in so many aspects of art-making—line, color, composition—that a professor rightly predicted it would take her longer to discover her visual voice. And her synesthesia meant that she finds multiple colors, or colors positioned close together, too overwhelming, like several people shouting at once or the noise of city traffic. As a result, she has gradually refined her technique into something like a genius version of paint-by-numbers.

Look closely at Warren's acrylic-on-canvas painting of a sycamore tree, for instance, and you see the peeling bark,



TOP TO BOTTOM: *Summer*, 24"H x 48"W, acrylic on canvas. *Along the Path*, 18"H x 24"W, acrylic on canvas. *Hannah*, 36"H x 24"W, acrylic on canvas.



the moss, the shadows cast by light through the leaves. But she doesn't combine colors on her brush, or layer one color over another, the way other artists might. Instead she creates monochromatic shapes. Close up, they look like different-colored amoebas. Pull back and, like the pixels on your TV screen, they blend, interact, compete, and move. None of Warren's colors literally match the actual colors of the bark, moss, or shadows, but rather they do what good art ought to do: communicate a feeling.

Warren has brought her unique eye to a range of subjects over the years: family members, houses, flowers. Lately she's been drawn to trees, many of which have been blue, a shade she experiences as "full of possibility and hope." Now she wants to paint a tree series that explores other feelings and colors, such as "the slight grief and foreboding" of reds and oranges.

Or as she sees it, "more Wednesday and Sunday."

EDITOR'S NOTE: To see more of Lisa Warren's work, visit lisawarrenstudio.com.

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