

EMERGE



ART ON DEMAND 9.2
MAR 24 - MAY 6, 2023

KRYSTAL
CHARLSTON



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Langley-based artist Krystal Charlston is determined to alter the perception of what it means to be a woman living unapologetically in a “man’s world.” She grew up on her family’s farm engaged in many of the physical, outdoor activities more commonly associated with men’s recreation and labour. The artwork in this exhibition invites a conversation about the importance of women’s contributions to male dominated industries and pursuits. Charlston’s multi-media works combine aesthetic elements typically associated with notions of femininity with images and found objects that represent her profound love of working on her family farm. Reflecting on her lived

experience, artist Krystal Charlston challenges the stability of gender constructs and the language that and ideas that surround them.

The term “tomboy” is often used to reinforce ideas about gender binaries, even as it subverts them. Conjuring stereotypically “masculine” activities and interests like sports, building, getting dirty, and the colour blue, it is a term often used to describe girls and women who eschew more “feminine” interests and qualities like the colour pink, wearing makeup and dresses, and going shopping. Charlston’s series *Tomboy* (2022) uses discarded tires that the artist discovered on

THE ARTWORK IN THIS EXHIBITION INVITES A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MALE DOMINATED INDUSTRIES AND PURSUITS

her family’s property, combining them with bright pink paint and other materials such as glitter, plastic gemstones, fabric, and flowers.

Charlston alters the tires by using colours, materials, and objects that are commonly considered to be “feminine.” These kitschy trimmings poke fun at the superficiality of gender stereotypes. *Tomboy* underlines Charlston’s personal experiences of feeling excluded from activities that she is passionate about—like farmwork and carpentry—because of her gender. Throughout her life, Charlston has been told that having long nails, false eyelashes, and a love for pretty things was at odds with the agricultural

lifestyle that she grew up with and loves. By “dressing up” the tire and displaying it in a gallery setting, the artist challenges its typical purpose as a car-part and reimagines it as a symbol of forward movement and progress.

Charlston invites us further into her life through a collection of family photos combined with applique patches, and colourful interventions made with alcohol markers in the series *HERitage* (2022). The artist alters the greyscale of the photos by vividly hand-colouring black and white childhood and family photographs, and “decorating” them with flower and butterfly appliques. The playful treatment of these images



communicates an unapologetic embrace of a childhood filled with joy, when it was perhaps easier for the artist to engage in activities she enjoys—like driving tractors, riding horses, and fishing—without the pressures of gender expectations weighing heavily upon her.

Through colour, found objects, language, and stereotypically “feminine” materials like rhinestones and glitter, Krystal Charlston honours her childhood as a time when dirt and glitter could seemingly co-exist. These works use autobiography, humour, and camp to challenge commonly held stereotypes about gender, and invite audiences of all ages to reconsider the boundaries that rigid male/female binaries impose on our lives.

Rachel Kehler
Emerge Curator

KRYSTAL CHARLSTON

Krystal Charlston is an emerging artist based out of Langley BC. She has her BFA and EDAS from Kwantlen Polytechnic University and is currently working on her BEd at Simon Fraser University. Charlston uses installation art to comment on female empowerment, gender equality, and her personal life of growing up on a farm.



Front Cover
Krystal Charlston, from the series *Tomboy*,
2022, Mixed Media, 25.5 x 25.5 x 7.5 in.

Inside, Left
Top left: Krystal Charlston, from the series *HERitage*,
2022, Mixed Media, 12 x 18 in.
Bottom left: Krystal Charlston, from the series
HERitage, 2022, Mixed Media, 12 x 18 in.
Right: Krystal Charlston, from the series *HERitage*,
2022, Mixed Media, 18 x 12 in.

Inside, Right
Krystal Charlston, from the series *Tomboy*,
2022, Mixed Media, 18 ft. by 32 in. by 9 in.

Back Cover
Krystal Charlston, from the series *HERitage*,
2022, Mixed Media, 12 x 18 in.



the reach
GALLERY MUSEUM

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY TY MARTENS