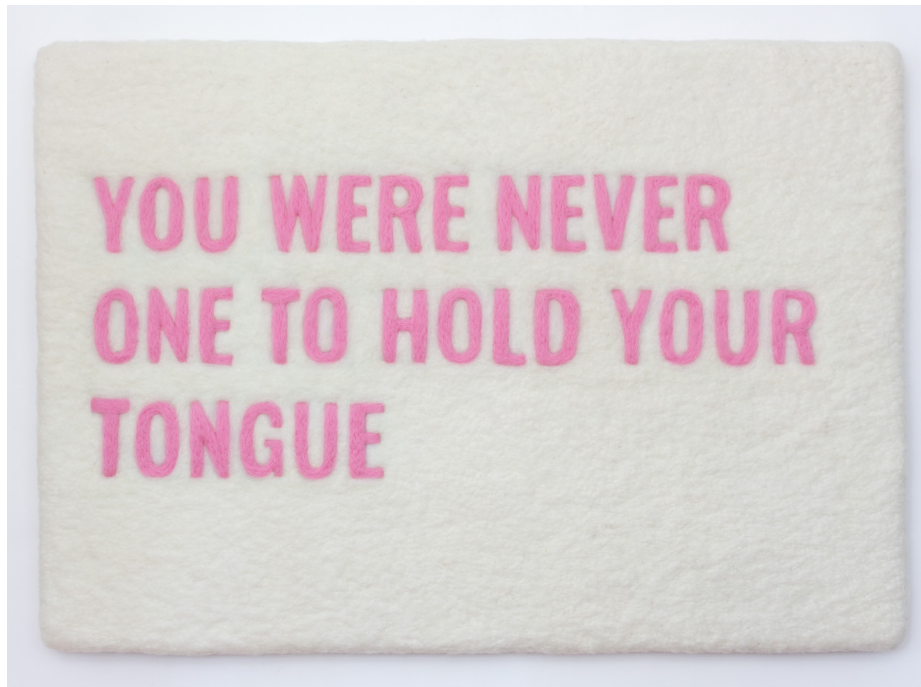


HARSH COLLECTIVE

What Is She Made Of?

December 3rd, 2022

For Immediate Release, November 21st, 2022.



By *The Skin of My Teeth*, 2021, needle felted Romney wool on foam, 49 x 70 x 4 inches.

Harsh Collective is pleased to announce *What Is She Made Of?*, a solo exhibition featuring four series from Kelly Chuning: "Mestiza," "IT'S ALL JUST TALK," "PRETTY LITTLE THINGS," and "WOMB." Opening reception on December 3rd, 2022, at 4pm, located at 484 Broome St.

Kelly Chuning (b. 1997) is an interdisciplinary Latinx artist from southern Utah currently based in Detroit, MI. She received a BFA in Studio Arts from Southern Utah University. Chuning utilizes felting, mark-making, and derogatory language as a form of activism within her practice to examine the power dynamics attached to gender, racial identity, and language. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, with her first solo exhibition at The Red Arrow Gallery (TN) in 2022. Her work has been featured in *The Nashvillian*, *create!* Magazine, *All SHE Makes*, *Artsin Square*, and *Friend of The Artist*. She recently completed residency at *Stove Works* in Chattanooga, TN and her work is in collections at *Onna House* in East Hampton, NY and the *Southern Utah Museum of Art*. Chuning is currently pursuing her MFA in the Fiber Department at *Cranbrook Academy of Art*, where she was awarded a *Gilbert Fellowship*.

Artist Statement

I consider my work autobiographical, shedding light on the power dynamics attached to gender, racial identity, and language.

Utilizing the materials of my upbringing, I am interested in the divergence of memory with material and how that dictates our perceived notions of subjectivity. The act of making has become a form of activism within my practice. One brought about through the mediums I use; felting, mark-making, and derogatory language. Through these vessels, I am reclaiming ownership of them and exploiting them, bringing back their agency for myself and the viewer.

Vulnerability is at the forefront of my work, calling attention to intimate moments with family members, friends, strangers, and myself. The isolation of being without a sense of place—both racially and environmentally—has become a device of romance and indifference, finding its bearing in my psyche, blurring the lines of subjectivity. I view my work as a middle ground for cultural intersection, with fiber and language in tandem with one another as vehicles of emergence. Together, both have paved the way for civilizations and industry, obtaining the possibility to represent articles of healing and change.

- Kelly Chuning



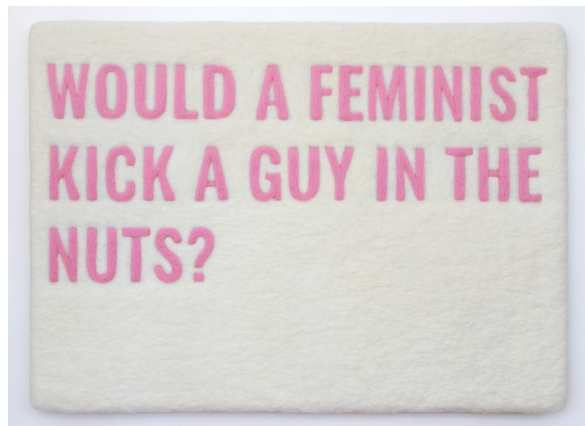
Mestiza, 2022, latex interior paint on vintage serape, 46 x 89 inches.

"Mestiza" explores and acknowledges my experience as a biracial Chicana through language and material. The mixed-raced Mexican identity category is one wrought in colonialism, with its origins tracing back to the *Casta* system employed by the Spanish with the intent of social control through a racial hierarchy.

During the Mexican Revolution, both *mestiza* and the serape acted as mechanisms of Mexican nationalism that permeated the notion of a homogeneous "Mexican identity" within Mexico. Now, *mestiza* acts as a remnant of a caste system that itself has migrated. The works within "Mestiza" address issues of legibility, text, identity, and histories made inaccessible by mainstream North American racism.

Each serape acts as an embodiment of assimilation or mixture. Some are derogatory in nature, with their intent to cause affliction or induce a negative response, but it is within these words that I found a sense of place within the Latinx community.

As a final act of protest, house paint is thrown onto the serapes, blurring the boundaries of subjectivity. It is a bridging of my whiteness—and the privilege that brings—with the acknowledgment of my Mexican ancestry. These words are identifiers in the Latinx community, and I am owning them.



Instagram DM's, 2020, needle felted Romney wool on foam, 49 x 70 x 4 inches.

"It's All Just Talk" investigates the impact of the rhetoric surrounding women, exploring the political and personal dynamics of language informing identity. Between backhanded compliments and societal pressures to conform, the female body and psyche are constantly being critiqued and commented on—frequently without permission.

Commonly small in scale, the medium of felting has been viewed as a domestic, feminine craft. Creating large felted pieces expands the medium beyond its domestic expectations drawing attention to the collective pasts of women. The contrast of materials used to create this body of work sheds light on the power dynamics attached with gender and language. By removing the phrases from the context within a conversation, "It's All Just Talk" exposes what was said as an act of restraint and manipulation on women. Each piece acts as a gateway for a broader commentary on the words we say and the power they hold.



WOMB 03, 2018, Unique gum bichromate print with menstrual blood used as pigment, 6 x 7.5 inches.

“WOMB”

Whether its attraction or repulsion, material inherently carries a message or a concept in its own right. My fascination with material started at a source of pain and necessity; it started with blood.

Eight days was the minimum time I would bleed every month. From the time I was 11 until I was 19, I would spend eight to ten days bleeding, sometimes longer, for weeks or months. It was a material I struggled to see any benefit from and one that anxiety took hold of. In 2016, a tumor was discovered on my left ovary, and the removal of that ovary had to take place. After the surgery, I was officially diagnosed with endometriosis, a condition affecting 1 in 10 women. After my diagnosis, the first question I would get asked was not how I was emotionally or physically, but if I could still have children. A single print was created each day of my period, resulting in 8 prints. By producing images with menstrual blood, I am looking at the use of the material and the connotations of that material outside of its “intended” domain.



Lace Back No-Show Thong 02, 2019, Gum bichromate print with cheek/lip stain, fiberglass insulation, and watercolor pigment, 8 x 10.5 inches.

“PRETTY LITTLE THINGS”

Pubescent teens are often confined by the infrastructure that houses society's outlook on them. Teen girls, in particular, are the front line of feminism and how we evolve into a society that sees them. They are the defining generation that will instill the perspectives of their childhood into adulthood. With lingerie companies pursuing adolescent women as their target demographic, the ideology of “sex sells, is becoming increasingly geared towards younger audiences. How does this affect their outlook on their identity and sexuality, if they are pegged as an object of attraction? If young women are being sexualized from their earliest memories with consumerism, can marketing and media act as a tool of constructing identity?