

Cheri Christensen

McLarry Fine Art, July 17-31

IT'S ALL ABOUT the light in Cheri Christensen's playful paintings of farm animals. Each work is a dance of color and form through loose brushstrokes, where the creatures take center stage along with her honed techniques and individual style. "I chose animals as my subjects because I have the connection with them," she says, "but when I am photographing them, the lighting has to be how I want it."

Christensen is always on the hunt, so to speak. She often goes driving with her camera and when the moment strikes, she can capture the image for compositional reference. This process is key for the artist because "color is relative," she says. For instance, a white rabbit will look different depending on where it is located. "In Arizona or New Mexico with the dirt you end up getting pinks and purples," Christensen elaborates. "In Washington state you'll get the greens."

Her upcoming exhibition at McLarry Fine Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a nod to this artistic focus through its title *Lighting the Way*. While the name leaves the theme open-ended so Christensen can add in a street scene or two, most of her paintings will feature bovines, ducklings and the aforementioned rabbit.

Along with the light, Christensen has become recognized for her use of perspective. She considers the animals' vantage point in every work, meaning the viewer is at their eye level and meaning the artist can interpret the light from their level.

As an example, Christensen had the opportunity to photograph chicks and ducklings in her backyard. In *A TALE OF TWO CHICKS* she wet the patio allowing for the reflections to come through—blue skies and the red color of the concrete; whereas in *DUCKLING DREAMS*, which she set up in the same location, has a different feel because of



Regal Rabbit, oil on panel, 16 x 16.

the dry surface.

REGAL RABBIT is also at the lower perspective, with the suggestion of the landscape glowing behind its ears. The grass in its mouth, Christensen says, lets the viewer be led to the animal's face. **BRILLIANT BOVINE** has the glowing light as well, but with a focus on the grass to give the feeling that the creature is about to step out of the painting.

Lighting the Way is on view July 17 to 31. From 4 to 6 p.m. on July 19 an opening reception for the artist takes place. —*Rochelle Belsito*

contact information

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
A Tale of Two Chicks,
oil on panel, 10 x 8.

Duckling Dreams,
oil on panel, 12 x 9.

Brilliant Bovine,
oil on panel, 36 x 24.

