

John Feodorov: *Assimilations*

Curator-Mentor: Ruba Katrib
February 25 - March 31, 2021

Assimilations: A conversation with John Feodorov, Ruba Katrib, and Asia Tail

Saturday, March 27, 4pm ET
RSVP for Zoom link

CUE Art Foundation is pleased to present *Assimilations*, a solo exhibition by John Feodorov, curated by Ruba Katrib. Drawing upon his experience growing up half-Navajo (Diné) and half-white in the suburbs of Los Angeles, Feodorov's multimedia installation, paintings, and prints explore how identity and memory are shaped amidst the violent pressures of cultural assimilation and the legacy of settler colonialism in the United States.

In the front gallery, Feodorov's installation, *How I Learned To Be A Christ-jun*, displays Pentecostal and Jehovah's Witness hymn books and pages along with a New Testament Bible translated into the Navajo

language in an altar-like space. Manipulated recordings play a Christian congregation singing hymns combined with looped audio of the artist's mother and grandfather singing traditional Navajo songs. In the main gallery, large paintings combine the artist's family photographs and original photographs, pages from Pentecostal hymn books, symbols of Americana, industrial imagery, Google satellite maps, and natural landscapes with bold fields of textured paint. Combining explorations of representation and legibility with vivid and joyful mark-making, the artist reflects on the violence of white settler culture and federal policies towards Native communities, while at the same time honoring the history, stories, and sacred significance of his family homestead and traditions. The print series, *Collectibles*, layers the weave of a Navajo rug and stereotypical advertising copy that commodifies Indigenous cultures over his own obscured family photographs, highlighting the media's appropriation and othering of Indigenous people along with corresponding assumptions about their identity and spirituality.

Throughout the exhibition, the artist reflects on the history of coerced Navajo conversion to Pentecostalism in the 20th century in order to explore the lasting loss and duality that those forced to abandon the cultural and spiritual traditions of their ancestors experience in the present. Feodorov's work explores the fragmentation of identity and search for belonging among urban-born Indigenous communities caused by the United States' history of settler colonialism. In the exhibition catalogue, Ruba Katrib writes: "Throughout Feodorov's work, a range of defining institutions converge and are at odds. These include formal and informal institutions of culture, of nation, of faith, and of belonging. It is actually the impossibilities, as well as the traumas, of reconciliation that needle and probe the works in his exhibition, *Assimilations*."



John Feodorov, *Living Beneath A White Rainbow*, 2020. Acrylic, latex, ink, graphite, and collage on unstretched canvas, 66 x 78 inches.



John Feodorov, *Assimilation #2*, 2020. Acrylic, latex, graphite, needlepoint, and collage on wood panel, 48 x 42 inches.

Of mixed Navajo (Diné) and Euro-American heritage, **John Feodorov** grew up in the suburbs of Southern California in the city of Whittier. As a child, his family made annual visits to his grandparents' land on the Navajo Reservation. His time spent there continues to inform his art. Feodorov both engages and confronts the viewer through questioning assumptions about identity, spirituality, and place within the context of consumer-driven culture. Recently, his work has focused on the exploitation and degradation of Indigenous lands by governments and corporations, and its potential impact on identity, connection, and sense of place.

Feodorov has been featured in several publications, including *Time and Time Again* by Lucy R. Lippard; *Art + Religion*, edited by Aaron Rosen; and *Manifestations*, edited by Dr. Nancy Marie Mithlo. He was also featured in the first season of the series *Art 21: Art for the 21st Century*. He is co-founder of *Animal Saint*, an interdisciplinary art collaboration with composer and musician Paul Amiel. Feodorov served as an Arts Commissioner for the City of Seattle from 2000-03 and holds the position of Associate Professor of Art at Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies at Western Washington University in Washington State.

Ruba Katrib is Curator at MoMA PS1 in New York, where she has curated exhibitions such as *Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991-2011* (co-organized with Peter Eleey); the retrospective of

Simone Fattal in 2019; and the solo shows of Edgar Heap of Birds, Karrabing Collective, Fernando Palma Rodríguez, and Julia Phillips. From 2012-2018 she was Curator at SculptureCenter in New York, where she curated over twenty exhibitions including *74 million million million tons* (co-organized with artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan) and solo shows with artists including Carissa Rodriguez, Kelly Akashi, Teresa Burga, Nicola L., Charlotte Proddger, Aki Sasamoto, Cosima von Bonin, Anthea Hamilton, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Gabriel Sierra, Erika Verzutti, and Jumana Manna. In 2018, Katrib co-curated SITE Santa Fe's biennial, *Casa Tomada*, with José Luis Blondet and Candice Hopkins.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 32-page color catalogue, with texts by John Feodorov, Ruba Katrib, and Asia Tail. The catalogue will be available online and free of charge to gallery visitors. For more information please contact Programs Director Lilly Hern-Fondation at lilly@cueartfoundation.org.

This exhibition is a winning selection from the 2020-21 Open Call for Solo Exhibitions. The proposal was unanimously selected by a panel comprised of artist Guadalupe Maravilla, curator Sohrab Mohebbi, artist Ronny Quevedo, and curator Legacy Russell. In line with CUE's commitment to providing substantive professional development opportunities, panelists also serve as mentors to the exhibiting artists, providing support throughout the process of developing the exhibition. Originally paired with Sohrab Mohebbi, due to unforeseen circumstances Mohebbi was unable to continue the work. We are honored that the curator **Ruba Katrib** was able to step in as the curator-mentor to John Feodorov.

CUE Art Foundation is a visual arts center dedicated to creating essential career and educational opportunities for artists of all ages. Through exhibitions, arts education, and public programs, CUE provides artists, writers, and audiences with sustaining, meaningful experiences and resources.

Major programmatic support for CUE Art Foundation is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Anholt Services (USA) Inc.; Aon PLC; Chubb; Compass Group Management LLC; The Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, Inc.; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation; Vedder Price P.C.; and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

