



Two Generations: Joe Feddersen & Wendy Red Star
Curated by Mack McFarland

JANUARY 16 - MARCH 14, 2020

 **SCHNEIDER**
MUSEUM of ART

OREGON CENTER FOR THE **ARTS**
AT SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY



DETAIL: Joe Feddersen, Echo 03, Pigment print with monotype on kozo paper, 52 3/8 x 35 inches, 2019.
Courtesy of Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR

Exhibition Statement:

This exhibition presents the work of two Northwest Indigenous artists who work across media and whose work responds, on their own terms, to historic and contemporary misrepresentations of Native Americans. **Joe Feddersen**, born in 1953, is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and has exhibited internationally since the early 1980's. As a printmaker, basket maker, ceramicist and glass artist, Feddersen combines contemporary materials with Native iconography to create powerful and evocative works that explore the interrelationships between urban symbols and Indigenous landscapes.

Wendy Red Star, born in 1981, was raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana. An avid researcher of archives and historical narratives, Red Star incorporates and recasts her research through photography, sculpture, video, fiber arts, and performance, offering new and unexpected perspectives on past, present, and future life. Her work is humorous, surreal, and often abrasive, yet deeply rooted in a celebration for Crow life.

I was delighted to be asked to work on this project that brings together the creativity of Joe Feddersen and Wendy Red Star. Feddersen and Red Star are widely exhibited outside of the Pacific Northwest, sharing their paradigm shifting artworks in galleries and museums nationwide. As a way to think more deeply about the practices of Joe Feddersen and Wendy Red Star, I asked the artist and curator **RYAN! Feddersen** to discuss with me overlaps and departures, in their process and career.

—Mack McFarland, Curator

Interview with Mack McFarland and RYAN! Elizabeth Feddersen

Mack: RYAN! as a way to begin I was thinking to set a nomenclature for our conversation, specifically around the use of Indigenous, Native, or Indian, when it comes to contemporary art.

RYAN!: I have a habit of using many different terms and sometimes it's contextual. I typically only use the term "Indian", when referring to organizations that have that as part of a name, like the Institute of American Indian Arts, for example. But some of it's regional. Indian Art is not a very popular term here. And I think without a relationship to an organizations name, that using Indian Art wouldn't be an appropriate term to use.

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: I prefer Native. Sometimes I say Indigenous.

Mack: I've not used Indian since I was a kid, but, yes, I definitely go between the two, Native and Indigenous, I don't know why.

RYAN!: I'm fine using Native or Indigenous as our nomenclature and just being natural in our conversation.

Mack: Whatever comes out.

RYAN!: Yes, I guess sometimes I use Native more for people and Indigenous more for movements.

Mack: That's interesting as well; we will see what comes from us regarding those terms. As I was thinking about Joe and Wendy's work, I started with their generational difference, Joe being born in '53 and Wendy in '81, which is about one generation. I then began looking at the overlaps within their practice, in terms of creating works that dovetail into Indigenous cultures and then how they present that work for a broader audience. They both seem concerned with the audience. Wendy, certainly, as we were talking about earlier, her project making deconstructions of museum collections that she's done with her daughter Beatrice. That work gets to the heart of audience interaction and instructional critique, in a very lively manner. With this

liveliness in mind, I think Joe sometimes wants the audience to laugh. That could be because sometimes he makes himself laugh when he's making some of the work.

RYAN!: I think there's definitely a playfulness and a sense of humor in both their works and inside jokes as well. Similar to hidden Easter eggs in films, things that people can discover within the works that are points of humor.

Mack: Yes, I too think Wendy has humor in her work, but it's more of an uncomfortable humor.

RYAN!: Yes. I would say that there's more parody, satire, and critique present in her work that are not as much a part of the type of humor that's in Joe's work. I think Joe's humor has to do more with surprise and with people seeing things that they recognize in places where they don't expect to see them. When you're talking about an audience for contemporary Native work, often times, they're in places where the audience is going to be predominantly non-Native and they're coming with specific expectations of what they think that they are going to get out of seeing this work. And when they see some of the works where Joe has used these symbols that are relating to pictographs, that are relating to cave paintings, relating to things that are sacred. And then you see a reference to Harry Potter. It's funny, but it's also a little bit of a joke, "Well, why couldn't there be?" Joe is exposed to symbols from pop culture all the time. And this expectation that it's not going to get into his work is part of the joke. Breaking that expectation encourages people to confront the stereotypes that they had placed on him.

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: I guess in that way his humor can be a little pointed, as well.

Mack: Definitely. I wonder if the audiences are privy to the critique or not? Because I think you have to be pretty self-aware of your position and your mindset to then have that critique be read. It's always hard to read a critique that



Wendy Red Star, *Spring*, from *The Four Seasons* series, archival pigment print on museo silver rag, 35.5 x 40." Courtesy of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art



Wendy Red Star, *Summer*, from *The Four Seasons* series, archival pigment print on museo silver rag, 35.5 x 40." Courtesy of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art

is leveled upon yourself, especially in such a lovely, subtle way. Where with Wendy's work, the critique is much more historical, like the White Squaw series where it's easy to separate yourself from time period. You don't have to feel, as a White viewer, fully implicated in that work as much. With Joe's if you are then surprised to see these Harry Potter or other pop-culture references in the work, you can then start to critique yourself, if you're willing to go there with it.

RYAN!: That's an interesting perspective, that by using the historical lens, her critiques can be more pointed without necessarily being confrontational because people can separate themselves. Whereas, the other implied critique is potentially personal as an inner experience. I think that both confrontational work and work where you're getting an idea across via a new experience or feeling can be very powerful. When people know that they're being directly critiqued, it's harder to absorb that information and to change than when you let someone finish an idea in their own minds and just provide a space where people can then have that internal dialogue. I see that they're both using different methods to do that.

Mack: Yes. I was also thinking about how Joe and Wendy both, and Wendy still, use self-portraiture. It was a big part of the early works for both of these artists from these different generations, Joe hasn't used the approach since the late '80s, as far as I can tell. We have a work here at SOU, Surface Self Portrait from 1988, which incorporates staples and pins into the image. I was really taken by this, that both were using this format.

RYAN!: I think that there is an expectation, or maybe an onus even, placed on Native artists especially, to very explicitly represent identity within the work. This is, in part, because there is a gap in getting to see ourselves in artistic and cultural depictions on a mainstream level. There are a lot of studies about visibility and how Native people and cultures are negatively affected by relative invisibility. Self-portraiture and family portraiture is a very direct way to create images about identity. And one thing that I definitely noticed as a mutual path in both Wendy and Joe's work is

exploration and experimentation. They are working in a lot of different mediums and subjects. There seems to be a constant drive to try new things and to explore different methodologies. There's probably going to be a lot of overlaps because of the large ground they have covered.

Mack: Yes, I am not sure people often think about Wendy as being an artist who experiments in different materiality, as I am not sure how clear it is that Wendy creates much of what we see in the images. Where Joe has shown several ways of working for years, prints, painting, weaving, and glass, and more. Whereas with Wendy, it's almost always done in this photographic or printmaking form, which is a materiality that both artists engage in. With Wendy's work, the other forms of making, beading, regalia making, it's normally depicted in the photographs only. There are works, and a couple included here, where the regalia is the work coupled with images connected to Indigenous futurism.

RYAN!: I can see that the photography is a consistent method of her producing and exhibiting work. But there's also veins of sculpture both physically, like the coyotes as well as sculpture documented through photography, but also print making, collage, installation, performance. And even though photography becomes the way we see a lot of these different things, her practice is still using a variety of methodologies.

Mack: Yeah, absolutely. I agree completely. When you look at the Four Seasons pieces, you see all those processes.

Mack: I was thinking other contemporary Native artists who are also working with photography, such as Merritt Johnson....

RYAN!: I'm familiar with her work, more with her sculptural assemblages with fabric and some of her painting work and print.

Mack: I've only recently discovered the artist Matika Wilbur and her representations of contemporary Native life through the means of beautiful black and white photographs. At times they are straight ahead photography, but also have their own constructiveness about them, mixing color and

black and white, and at times a confused, in a good way, figure to background relationship.

RYAN!: She has a background in fashion photography.

Mack: Ah, yes.

RYAN!: She's also an educator and part of that project was inspired by working with Native school children and struggling to find mainstream depictions of contemporary Native people that were not conforming to stereotypes to talk about identity. With her background in photography, she was inspired to fill that gap, to make images specifically for young people that did not reinforce stereotypes. She works with the subject in the creation of the images. So, her work makes us think about the kind of history of ethnographic photography of Native people and the lack of agency and how one might be depicted in that and the lack of accuracy and authenticity in most of those images. Working directly with each subject to determine their depiction is a powerful aspect of that project. She is also making a valuable record, photographing activists, educators, leaders, artists, important people who may not have otherwise been professionally photographed. Having these images of these figures is going to be of great historic value.

Mack: Yes, definitely. That process you describe of owning those depictions seems so important. Which, is what Wendy's work is also often delving into and really is at the heart of, a lot of the photographic practice that she engages in, that self-representation and then dealing with those stereotypes, especially within the historical pop cultural depictions.

RYAN!: Yes, I think that while there has been a lot of discussion of artists like Matika and Wendy, as well as many other Native artists, making work as a reaction to historic depictions of Native people. I think that it's very important to talk about these artists' work not only as reactions to what was depicted in the past, because what they are making has a profound place and power entirely on its own.

Mack: Yes, and, you can't divorce it from the past, right?

RYAN!: Right. But, I think we've had enough conversations framing young Native women's work in conversation with old dead white guys work.

Mack: Yes. Totally. Yes. This is making me think about our conversation around influences and where artists are drawing from.

RYAN!: Yes, it's very important to understand how past depictions influence and construct our visions of culture, ourselves, etc. But, that we also need to move past them.

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: Understanding where we get our ideas is step one and then the next level is being able to break down what ideas are not true and are not productive. And, then to have agency in building new ones.

Mack: Yes, to me this is connected to Joe's work, with his observations of contemporary landscapes, the repeated forms you see in a contemporary landscape and then bringing those into the print making and the baskets and the glass. That practice seems connected to that idea of looking beyond.

RYAN!: Yes. It's also interesting thinking about it in conjunction with identity in the self-portrait because it's a shift. If the self-portrait is looking back at you, his work is now looking through his eyes. The work becomes a portrait of how Joe sees the world, images through his lens.

Mack: Yes, it also fits right into our idea of the western art canon. The way we are taught about the history of Western Art movements like minimalism and hard edge. Joe's work can be read in those forms, though the work has all these other types of meanings that go much beyond these movements.

RYAN!: He's definitely skilled at applying many different methodologies at the same time. He is looking at abstraction, symbolism, and pattern through both Indigenous and western art lenses. He looks to the landscape to inspire design elements, using the same strategies that we've always used for basketry and other

designs. He is bringing that traditional methodology forward into his practice now.

Mack: Yes!

RYAN!: Sometimes people have these conversations about Native artists “adopting” western modes of art creation. But, we don’t live in a vacuum.

Mack: Right.

RYAN!: We live in this culture.

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: For a lot of people, that means living in multiple cross sections of culture. So, there are these influences from traditional lines of cultural production within our communities, within Native American Art as a field, through its contemporary history, and then the next lens is American culture. Because we are also existing within American culture, of course our work integrates and adapts western art historical cannon.

RYAN!: Do you still want to have the conversation you had proposed about modernism and postmodernism?

Mack: Ah yes. As I was saying earlier, I don’t think I would state Joe’s work fitting solely within the frame of Modernism, yet the many hard edge and minimal works he has created does let one have that perspective, formally, even with the imagery coming from plateau, glyph, and urban iconography. Wendy, on the other hand, is more fully rooted in postmodern, perhaps with a closer tie to the Pictures Generation. Cindy Sherman comes to mind, but like Joe, she too has shifted her focus over the years, incorporating more historical and less the futurist work. I think there’s something really fascinating about thinking through Joe and Wendy’s works within the Western canon terminology. It also feels a little funny to have that conversation now because of what we just spoke about, yet maybe there is still value to trying to understand an artist’s work based on the history’s that we have, in the movements that have been presented.

RYAN!: I think that’s an interesting part of a problem as well. There are these terms that have been codified in art history and you can talk about art in those contexts. Most are coming from a Western canon, because those have been the terms, as you said, that’ve been put forward. This is the terminology we’ve been given to use in art historical conversation, which can limit us in talking about things that are outside of the established terminology, such as contemporary Indigenous work. We’ve got this box (Native American Art) and there’s a lot of different stuff in it, and now we want to use a smaller box, but there’s not enough codified boxes already that are specific to Native practice.

Mack: Right.

RYAN!: So, we’ve got to take this other box and ask, how can we apply it?

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: I found that actually very interesting. But, I can see some of what you’re talking about. I think that they both fall a bit more towards postmodernism, but one could argue that in Joe’s case especially, that there’s a progression through modernism. Both of their practices involve symbolism, play, and deconstruction.

Mack: Definitely. I think Joe is one of those amazing artists who was coming up in a time where postmodernism was just sort of getting its legs. So, his teachers and the people he was working with were all modernists. So, the work has that kind of frame to it, but then, as he matures as an artist his work starts to take on a definite postmodern kind of flavor or approach. His process of looking into the contemporary urban landscape and then translating that into then the prints or the weaving or the glass, often looks modernist, but the sensibility is very postmodern. It might be possible, that through a conversation like this or through thinking about both of Joe and Wendy’s works, to try to then develop the smaller boxes within cotemporary Native practice that pull on these ideas from the western art history, but that are actually-

RYAN!: Universal.

Mack: Right. And codified within contemporary Native practice. That seems pretty interesting.

RYAN!: Yes.

Mack: Maybe new words have to be invented. I'm all for neologisms. But there is something to me about Joe's work that it does fit in both, the modern and the postmodern, that he has one foot in each area.

RYAN!: Maybe a part of that comes from the way that he practices. I think there is a modernist trait for artists to find a thing and then do it forever. Where someone finds their methodology, their logic and formal structure, and then they just produce within that. Moving towards postmodern, there's more growth, change, experimentation and a kind of throwing out those structures. And, Joe is a person who continuously creates. He's continuously curious, growing, and learning. So, you see evolutions through his work and in this case, evolutions through the structural box that he was taught in and is now looking in and beyond.

Mack: That makes sense. There are certainly modernists who are coming out of art school today, but, I think it's much harder for somebody to come out of art school today a strict modernist. Wendy's art school education would have been deeply rooted within the postmodern and you see that in her work, breaking down the presented histories for example. Also, with Joe and Wendy, there's such a rich experiential quality to both of their works, to both of their

practices. Their artworks are very easy to fall into, start looking and thinking. I find some artist's works have barriers and don't actually offer a viewer a way in. With Joe and Wendy, there is a real accessibility to their processes. Some of that is I think is tied to them being great crafts people in their respective areas, which are broad. So, there's a material quality I find that you can really get into with the works and ideas.

RYAN!: One thing Joe has talked about in his process, and hopefully I won't butcher, is to think about the head, the heart, and the hands. The head being, intellectually, are the ideas getting across? Does it have conceptual legs to stand on? The heart is getting across the values and sentiments that you feel passionate about. And of course, the hands have to do with the craft. Is it exhibiting hand skill? And, all of those things are very important to how art is received, but also to the process of making it as well.

Mack: Yes.

RYAN!: That comes across in both of their practices. If that's a lens through which to look at Joe's work, to look for the concepts, the values and the craftsmanship, you can see in Wendy's work how those are also pillars of her practice and that are very well exemplified in the work she's doing.

Mack: Well, I don't want to take up any more time and that is great place to end. Thank you so much for doing this.

RYAN!: You're welcome.



RYAN! Elizabeth Feddersen Biography

b.1984 Confederated Tribes of the Colville (Okanogan / Arrow Lakes /German /English) is a mixed-media installation artist who specializes in interactive and immersive artworks that invite audience engagement, and a curator focusing on contemporary Native American art. Feddersen received a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Cornish College of the Arts in 2009. Her approach emphasizes humor, play, and creative engagement to create opportunities for personal introspection and discovery. Cultivating engagement with the contemporary indigenous art world has been a transformative way that Feddersen has connected with her cultural heritage and dismantled her American cultural indoctrination. She has curated exhibitions for the New Burke Museum, Museum of Northwest Art, and Center for Contemporary Native Art at the Portland Art Museum, and created large-scale interactive installations and site-specific pieces throughout North America, working with Seattle Office of Arts and Culture, the Museum of Art & History Santa Cruz, Seattle Art Museum, City of Tacoma, Alternator Centre, Missoula Art Museum, the College of New Jersey, and Northeastern University.



Mack McFarland Biography

Mack McFarland is a cultural producer and has worked as Curator for Pacific Northwest College of Art since 2006. Currently McFarland is the Director of the Center for Contemporary Art & Culture at PNCA. His exhibitions at PNCA have included commissioned projects of new works from tactical media practitioners Critical Art Ensemble, Eva and Franco Mattes, and Disorientationism. He has also curated a review of Luc Tuymans's printed works, a group exhibit marking the centennial of John Cage's birth, and a comprehensive look at the process of the comic journalist Joe Sacco. McFarland's current question is how exhibitions and artworks can meaningfully link to our shared experience of existing together within the ongoing process of history.



Joe Feddersen, *Charmed*, fused glass, dimensions variable, 2012 – 2018. Courtesy of Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR



Joe Feddersen, *Echo 03*, Pigment print with monotype on kozo paper, 52 3/8 x 35 inches, 2019. Courtesy of Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR



Joe Feddersen, *Blue Deer*, glass, 11 x 8 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches, 2016. Courtesy of Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR



Joe Feddersen, *Parking Lot with Stars*, Hand engraved blown glass, 8.75 x 6.75 x 6.75 inches, 2013. Courtesy of Froelick Gallery, Portland, OR



Joe Feddersen Biography

Joe Feddersen, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, lives and works in Omak, WA and was a faculty member at Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA from 1989 until his retirement in 2009. His work was included in *Weaving Past into Present: Experiments in Contemporary Native American Printmaking* at the International Print Center, New York, Autumn 2015. He has been featured in numerous national exhibitions, including *Continuum 12 Artists: Joe Feddersen*, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution at the George Gustav Heye Center, New York, NY, curated by Truman Lowe; *Land Mark*, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, Spokane, WA; and was the subject of a major retrospective exhibition and monograph, *Vital Signs*, organized in conjunction with Froelick Gallery and the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University in Salem, OR.



Wendy Red Star Biography

Artist Wendy Red Star works across disciplines to explore the intersections of Native American ideologies and colonialist structures, both historically and in contemporary society. Raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana, Red Star's work is informed both by her cultural heritage and her engagement with many forms of creative expression, including photography, sculpture, video, fiber arts, and performance. An avid researcher of archives and historical narratives, Red Star seeks to incorporate and recast her research, offering new and unexpected perspectives in work that is at once inquisitive, witty and unsettling. Intergenerational collaborative work is integral to her practice, along with creating a forum for the expression of Native women's voices in contemporary art.

Red Star has exhibited in the United States and abroad at venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fondation Cartier pour l' Art Contemporain, Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Portland Art Museum, Hood Art Museum, St. Louis Art Museum, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, among others. She served a visiting lecturer at institutions including Yale University, the Figge Art Museum, the Banff Centre, National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Dartmouth College, CalArts, Flagler College, and I.D.E.A. Space in Colorado Springs. In 2017, Red Star was awarded the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award and in 2018 she received a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. In 2019 Red Star will have her first career survey exhibition at the Newark Museum in Newark New Jersey.

Red Star holds a BFA from Montana State University, Bozeman, and an MFA in sculpture from University of California, Los Angeles. She lives and works in Portland, OR.



Photo by Jonathon Sadler

WINTER EXHIBITION

**Two Generations: Joe Feddersen & Wendy Red Star
Curated by Mack McFarland**

Opening Reception Thursday, January 16

4 – 5 pm VIP Members and Volunteers, 5 – 7 pm General Public.

Irvine & Roberts Vineyards is generously pouring wine at the opening.

Complimentary parking evening of reception.

FRONT (DETAIL): Wendy Red Star, *Winter*, from *The Four Seasons* series, archival pigment print on museo silver rag, 35.5 x 40." Courtesy of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art



PARKING: From Indiana Street, turn left into the metered lot between Frances Lane and Indiana Street. There is also limited parking behind the Museum.

MUSEUM HOURS

Monday – Saturday, 10 am – 4 pm

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