

John Corbin

Curated by Lynn Crawford

November 18th, 2010– January 15th, 2011

(Opening reception Thursday, November 18th, 6:00 – 8:00pm)

“I try to imagine this; what it is to have a clear line to French blood, or blood from Argentina or Zanzibar or Greece or Ireland. But cannot. If anyone suggests this explains my interest in maps I would not disagree. Everything interests me. I do not understand why certain boundaries, limitations, get set into place.”

—Lynn Crawford



Hazel, 2010
Collaged map, acrylic medium, 12 3/4" x 10"

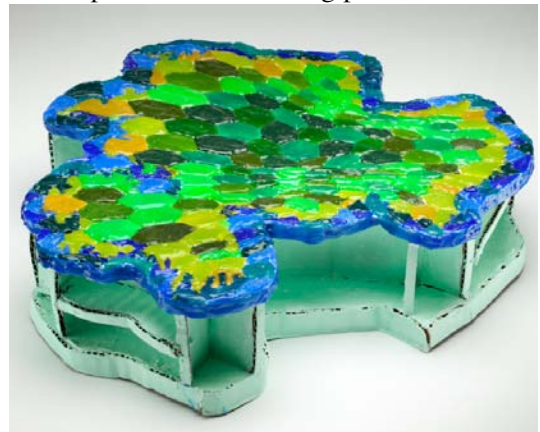
What are you? Not only is this a question Detroit-based artist John Corbin asks participants in his multi-media work, it is also the theme around which much of his art travels. More specifically, Corbin seeks to investigate notions of cultural and national identities, ethnicity, and how geography ties us to all of these. Growing up, Corbin’s family had no ties to any cultural heritage or lineage. They had traveled to Michigan from the South, but that is as far as their knowledge of their ancestry went. Corbin became increasingly interested in the idea of how nationalities, dictated by seemingly arbitrary boundaries and borders, correspond with ethnicity and the combination of both which, then muddled by globalization, provide a basis for one’s understanding of self. The works, often comprised of re-appropriated pieces of maps, atlases and puzzles, denote what the artist calls “geographic ethnicities,” or a sum of nations that make up one’s background, as told to them by their parents and elder relatives.

Corbin’s “portraiture,” like *Hazel* (2010, left), serve as visual representations of geographic ethnicities. The artist takes the geographic boundaries of the countries which the subjects’ relatives have told them

they “are” (from), and paints or molds them together with semi-transparent acrylic media, creating a new nation or ethnicity which reflects the person’s understood background. These personalized melting pots float in the center of the picture, surround by vast oceans of blue, cut from atlases or churning waters built from bits of maps.

Drift, Corbin’s exhibition on view at CUE Art Foundation and his first solo show in New York, is comprised of 13 of these portraits, as well as “Gierlmandy,” the artist’s attempt to map his own geographic ethnicity. Gierlmandy is a combination of Germany and Ireland, the only two countries from which his family vaguely believe they have some descendency. In addition to these tactile, rich geographic portraits of friends and acquaintances, *Drift* includes a book created by the artist titled *The Sorrows of the Artist as a Young Man*. This is a combination of two great novels from those nations with which he wishes to identify:

German Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werter*, with Irishman James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. In the center of the exhibition is a large structure fabricated in the shape of Corbin’s *Gierlmandy* (right). The size of a queen-size bed, it includes shelves along its sides or “borders” which house, as Corbin states, “paraphernalia of cultural history” related to Gierlmandy: busts of famous countrymen, famous books, inventions, etc. The exhibition skillfully brings into question the boundaries we all accept as definitive, both in the world in which we live and our own identities we aim to create.



Gierlmandy: Bed (Model), 2010
Cardboard, acrylic paint, 12" x 12"

(More, over)

For additional information, please contact Ryan Thomas, Programs Coordinator, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email ryan.thomas@cueartfoundation.org

Free catalogues available.

ARTIST'S BIO:

Detroit-based artist John Corbin received a BFA from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, and a MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. On Tuesday, September 21, 2010, the first day of Autumn he woke up to find himself living exactly one mile from the hospital of his birth, an unexpected but pleasant surprise. Searching for a place to call home has been a challenge and an inspiration for Corbin, in his work as an artist as well as his personal life. He has stayed many places during the last few decades and has found a comfortable home between the pages of literary artists works, they have offered a puzzling and exciting place to reside. As Corbin has said, "A writer's work can be a journey to uncover aspects about the world we live in, I like to go on those journeys but to best understand where I have been I need to give what is weightless, physical mass." This statement is best explained in the few sentences that follow. George Perec writes in the preamble for *Life: A User's Manual*: "Despite appearances, puzzling is not a solitary game: every move the puzzler makes, the puzzle maker has made before; every piece the puzzler picks up, and picks up again, and studies and strokes, every combination he tries, and tries a second time, every blunder and every insight, each hope and each discouragement have all been designed, calculated, and decided by the other."

About CUE:

CUE Art Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit forum for contemporary art and cultural exchange that provides opportunities and resources for under-recognized artists. We value the astonishing diversity of creativity that artists provide and the importance of their activity in the social context of the city.

CUE provides artists, students, scholars and art professionals resources at many stages of their careers and creative lives. Our programs include exhibitions, studio residencies, publications, professional development seminars, educational outreach, symposia, readings, concerts and performances. Since 2002, we have operated from our 4,500 square foot storefront venue in the heart of New York's Chelsea Arts District.

CUE exhibiting artists are chosen by their peers who are themselves selected by a rotating advisory council from across the country. This pluralistic process ensures that CUE consistently offers diverse viewpoints from multiple disciplines of artistic practice.

Simply put, we give artists their CUE to take center stage in the challenging world of art.

CUE Art Foundation is a non-profit arts organization dedicated to promoting culture by supporting the creativity of under-recognized visual artists.

Major program support is provided by Accademia Foundation, The Viking Foundation, Agnes Gund, The Fifth Floor Foundation, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Inc., The Greenwall Foundation, The Jacques & Natasha Gelman Trust, The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, The Joan Mitchell Foundation, Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation, The Koret Foundation, The Hyde and Watson Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, William Talbott Hillman Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and New York State Council on the Arts (a State Agency).

