



CHALLENGING THINGS, ADVANCING INQUIRY

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For Immediate Release

BARD GRADUATE CENTER BOAS PROJECT RECEIVES ADDITIONAL NEH FUNDING

New York, August 20, 2018— Bard Graduate Center is proud to announce that it has received National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding totaling \$132,340 to support transcription, translation, and interpretation of a large portion of Franz Boas’s field notes relating to the Kwakw̓a̓k̓a̓’wakw (Kwakiutl), a Pacific Northwest Coast Indigenous people. The notes will form a key part of a critical edition of Boas’s 1897 monograph, *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, which is considered the first systematic attempt to document all sociocultural, spiritual, and aesthetic aspects of an Indigenous North American ceremonial system.

The field notes, which were recorded by Boas in an idiosyncratic German shorthand, were recently deciphered by Rainer Hatoum, a member of the critical edition project team, co-directed by Professor Aaron Glass of Bard Graduate Center, New York City, and Judith Berman of the University of Victoria, Canada. “This grant addresses the field data that Boas incorporated into the book, as well as his later efforts to correct and revise it,” said Professor Glass. “A primary goal is to determine how much of a groundbreaking ‘eye-witness’ narrative of ceremony actually developed out of Boas’s field notes, and how much was drafted by Boas’s Indigenous collaborator, George Hunt. It will allow unprecedented examination of Boas’s fieldwork methods, primary access to the original sources of his data, and a new analysis of the role of this seminal book in Boas’s larger vision for anthropology and the human sciences.”

Initiated in 2012 with an NEH Digital Humanities startup grant, the project received a 2014 NEH Scholarly Editions and Translations grant supporting the preparation of an annotated print edition of the monograph, which was produced by Boas collaboratively with George Hunt. In April 2018, the project received additional NEH funding to support digitization and description of the relevant Boas-Hunt corpus, especially of the cultural relationships among ethnographic materials in different media (texts, photos, material culture, and sound recordings) now held by various institutions worldwide. Guided by a print edition, to be published by the University of British Columbia Press, the project will ultimately culminate in a digital repository of the annotated 1897

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work—an interactive, open-access website synthesizing and providing structured access to the various archival media (bgc.bard.edu/research/projects-and-collaborations/projects/the-distributed.html).

The Story Box: Franz Boas, George Hunt and the Making of Anthropology, a Focus Project exhibition curated by Glass, will be on view in the Bard Graduate Center Gallery from February 15 through July 7, 2019. Focusing on Boas’s work with Hunt, the exhibition—designed by artist Corrine Hunt, George Hunt’s great-granddaughter—will feature ceremonial objects as well as rare archival photographs, manuscripts, and drawings that shed new light on the book and advance understanding of the ongoing cultural traditions it documents. For more information, visit bgc.bard.edu/gallery.

About the NEH

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.



About Bard Graduate Center

Director and Founder Dr. Susan Weber established Bard Graduate Center in New York City in 1993. Through a robust academic program that awards MA and PhD degrees in decorative arts, design history, and material culture, Bard Graduate Center has created a network of more than 400 alumni who now work in leading museums, colleges and universities, and institutions around the world. Additionally, the institution has produced over 200 path-breaking publications and an eclectic variety of more than 70 exhibitions presented at Bard Graduate Center Gallery.

Neighboring BGC’s academic building in Manhattan’s Upper West Side—Central Park West Historic District, Bard Graduate Center Gallery offers intimate and profound engagement with great works of art and design as well as everyday objects. Bard Graduate Center collaborates with major institutions around the world, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, to develop exhibitions that bring the world’s treasures and expertise to New York City, and share Bard Graduate Center’s research with audiences around the world.

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