FRANZ BOAS, GEORGE HUNT AND THE MAKING OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The Story Box

The Bard Graduate Center's Focus Project explores the hidden histories and complex legacies of some of the most influential objects in the field of Social Anthropology. The Focus on Boas and Hunt's Kwakwaka'wakw work with his Indigenous co-author George Hunt (1854–1933) among the Kwakwaka'wakw by Aaron Glass, associate professor at Bard Graduate Center, features designs by artist Corrine Hunt.

Among the books that inspired me was one by Franz Boas, an early work on Kwakwaka’wakw topics, which I have always given me an additional sense of connection to the material culture.

But I wonder what it is about us as a people that kept all these other people coming? You know, that gives us a sense of revolutionary spirit to keep oneself intact while the colonial powers were attacking.

And it's really a wonder for me to imagine that—to see how much work he did in his life. I wish I had a chance to meet him and hang out with him. But in this New York City, I know that he had a lot of stories.

And how much more—and what is the potential in this? That was really a concern for me. Do I have a feeling that he is very present right now? That’s an important part of the work, that he’s very present right now. He’s a presence. He is a presence.

Our team's goal for the Critical Edition project, which the exhibit is a kind of introduction to, is to acknowledge the contributions of the Kwakwaka'wakw community, and on the other hand it’s a project about contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw life, and finding ways to bring those two into direct relationships with one another. The larger Critical Edition aims to do nothing less than rewrite our institutions and rewrite our stories.

In the 1990s Critical Edition project, known as the Kwakwaka'wakw project, a number of researchers set out to investigate the old documentation and interview the community members. They wanted to learn about the history of anthropology and the Kwakwaka'wakw people.

In 1990, I began working with the Kwakwaka'wakw community to create a database of their knowledge and stories. I'm also interested in the way in which Kwakwaka’wakw people have been able to keep their traditions alive and pass them on to future generations.

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cannot have that sort of activity. This is a real problem...what is the relationship of the book, a book that has been
written, a book that has been published, a book that is now avail-
able to educators, to the influence that the book has on your work...