

VISUALIZING KWAKWAKA'WAKW TRADITION:

The Films of William Heick, 1951-63

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FOR DOCUMENTARY FILMS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA FIRST NATIONS, the years between 1950 and 1965 constituted an important, but largely unstudied, period. On two trips at either end of this period, American photographer and cinematographer William R. Heick filmed the Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly known as the Kwakiutl), an Aboriginal people of the northern end of Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland.¹ In 1951, Heick went to Blunden Harbour as the cameraman and editor for two short films directed and written by anthropological filmmaker Robert Gardner: *Blunden Harbour* and *Dances of the Kwakiutl* (1951). The principal subject of these films was carver Willie Seaweed. In 1961, Heick worked with Samuel Barrett, an anthropologist at the University of California, Berkeley, on a major film documentation of the Native peoples of western North America. On this trip, the main subject was carver Mungo Martin, who was assisted by Henry Hunt and Martin's family. This footage yielded two edited films, *Wooden Box: Made by Steaming and Bending* (1962) and *The Totem Pole* (1963), as well as footage for a third film on dances and feasts.

This essay reviews the historical context of these two productions. Focusing on the films as visual representations of Kwakwaka'wakw tradition, it examines changing anthropological

¹ The people now known as the Kwakwaka'wakw were commonly referred to as the Kwakiutl when these films were released. While I have adopted the current terminology in my own discussion, in the interests of historical accuracy I will use the former in all direct quotations. Similarly, the current Canadian usage for Native or Aboriginal peoples is "First Nations", but "American Indians" was the term used in the United States in the period addressed here. Also at this time, the Royal British Columbia Museum was known as the British Columbia Provincial Museum. All Kwak'wala words are written in the orthography of the U'mista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, BC.

conceptions of Kwakwaka'wakw culture and concentrates on the role of reconstruction in films. More generally, it addresses the relationship of photography and ethnography to the disciplinary impulses of art and science. Heick's work will also be considered in relation to other films that focus on the Kwakwaka'wakw. Because of the strong creative roles played by William Heick's two directors, it will be necessary to treat their actions and attitudes at some length. Although united by a common cinematographer, these two bodies of work represent strikingly divergent perspectives in anthropological cinema in general and in film portraits of the Kwakwaka'wakw in particular. This study, based on a mixture of archival records and oral history, extends Douglas Cole's concerns in *Captured Heritage* (1985) to a more recent period. I also address a major theme of his work in cultural history – the interplay between anthropologists and artists in their representation of Aboriginal culture.

THE FIRST FILMS OF THE KWAKWAKA'WAKW (1915–50)

The filmic representation of First Nations peoples is part of an extended tradition of colonialist vision; it was preceded by the medium of still photographs and, before that, by drawing and painting. Some of the first photographs of Northwest Coast Natives were taken by early government surveyors (Thomas 1982; Francis 1996); among the first photographs of the Kwakwaka'wakw taken for ethnological purposes were those made by George M. Dawson in 1878 and 1885 for the Canadian Geological Survey. The first significant body of work by a trained anthropologist included the pictures taken in Fort Rupert in 1894 by Franz Boas and Oregon C. Hastings, a professional photographer from Victoria (Jacknis 1984). Other important images were recorded by anthropologist Harlan I. Smith on the Jesup Expedition in 1898; by photographer Edward S. Curtis between 1910 and 1914; and by anthropologist/curator Samuel A. Barrett, who was collecting for the Milwaukee Public Museum in early 1915.² Each of these still photographers also made early moving images of the Northwest Coast.³

² Working with George Hunt during the winter and spring, Barrett lived in Fort Rupert (Cole 1985, 247–49; Ritzenthaler and Parsons 1966). The house on the beach that he occupied had been used just months before by Curtis during his filming. Barrett also collected several masks that had been featured in *Land of the Head Hunters* (Holm and Quimby 1980, 52, 55).

³ Many Kwakwaka'wakw photos were also taken by local residents. For example, trader Benjamin W. Leeson made romanticized images portraying these people as vanishing

Although there were competing technologies, motion pictures were introduced to the public in both Europe and North America around 1895, which was also the year of the first ethnographic film.⁴ These first movies were, in essence, documentaries, but they were soon joined by fictional narratives. Both motives also characterized the first films of the American Indian, produced about the same time, but the fictional narrative films of Hollywood, with non-Natives playing roles, soon came to supplant the few documentaries, with Aboriginal actors filmed on their home ground.⁵

The first film to focus on the Kwakwaka'wakw – in fact, probably the first film made of any First Nations people in Canada – was Edward S. Curtis's *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, which premiered in 1914 (Holm and Quimby 1980; Rony 1996, 90–8; Gidley 1998, 231–55).⁶ It initiated a cluster of motion pictures on the Kwakwaka'wakw over the next fifteen years. With George Hunt (Boas's field assistant) as the local producer, Curtis collaborated with the Aboriginal community of Fort Rupert and environs, capturing many aspects of its life, both domestic and ritual, during his summer filming in 1914. Blurring genres, *Head Hunters* was fictional but was filmed with actual Native people – an approach to film making that was unprecedented at the time. Curtis structured the film around a melodramatic narrative of romance and sorcery, and, although he resorted to some costuming and recreation, much of the action was a faithful depiction of current practices. For the Kwakwaka'wakw actors, much of this dramatic illusion was an extension of their tradition of elaborate ceremonial stagecraft. *In the Land of the Head Hunters* was a silent film, to be accompanied by inter-titles and a live musical score based on Native music. The film

exotics, while Indian Agent William May Halliday recorded many potlatch scenes as part of his attempt to eradicate the practice.

⁴ In the spring of 1895, Parisian physician Félix-Louis Regnault filmed a Wolof woman making pots at the Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale (de Brigard 1995, 15). The first anthropological films shot in the field were made in 1898 by Alfred C. Haddon on Cambridge University's expedition to the Torres Straits area of New Guinea. For good reviews of the history of ethnographic film, see de Brigard 1993; Loizos 1993.

⁵ Among the earliest motion pictures of actual Native Americans filmed in their own communities were the series of short films of the Hopi Snake Dance, produced in 1901 by Thomas Edison, but no longer extant (Niver 1985). Some of the more important reviews of Native Americans in film, almost completely devoted to fictional images, include Bataille and Silet 1980; Rollins and O'Connor 1998; and Kilpatrick 1999. See Fienup-Riordan 1995 for an excellent review of the Alaska Eskimos in film, and Morris 1994 for a related study of Northwest Coast Natives in films. Despite the fundamental validity of her analysis, Morris's work is unfortunately marred by numerous errors, typographical as well as factual.

⁶ In 1974 Bill Holm and George Quimby, at the University of Washington, released a new sound version, retitled *In the Land of the War Canoes* (47 minutes).

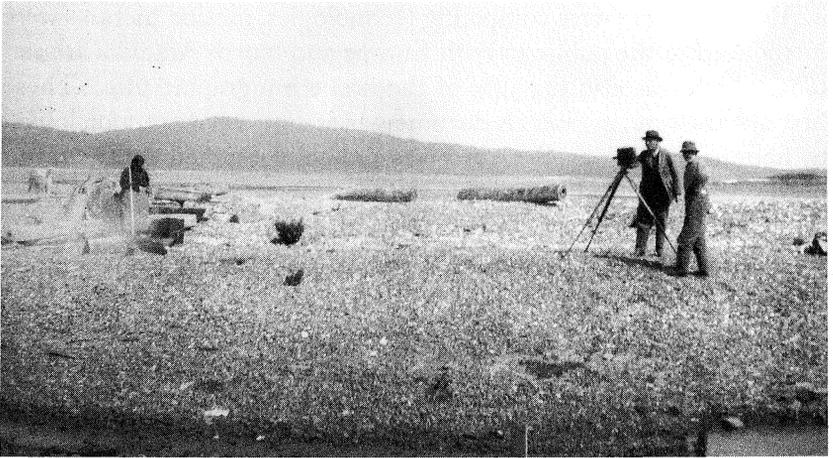


Plate 1: Pliny E. Goddard, with George Hunt, filming Francine (Tsukwani) Hunt cooking clams. Photograph by Charles F. Newcombe, Fort Rupert, BC, June 1922. Royal British Columbia Museum, PN 869.

was never the box-office hit its maker hoped for, and it quickly sank into obscurity.

Head Hunters was soon followed by four more Kwakwaka'wakw films.⁷ In each of these, George Hunt and his wife Tsukwani (Francine) demonstrated crafts as well as dances. Unfortunately two of these films, both of which were sponsored by museums, have not survived. In the summer of 1922, Pliny E. Goddard, for the American Museum of Natural History, filmed the Hunts demonstrating the use of tools and craft techniques. The next film, *Totem Land*, was one of several made, probably in 1927, by B.E. Norrish for Associated Screen News of Montreal, a newsreel company (see Morris 1994, 45–55).⁸ Shot by J.B. Scott, the somewhat sentimentalized story revolves around the visit of concert soprano Juliette Gaultier de la Vérendrye on her mission to learn Indian lore. Harlan I. Smith's *The Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia* was made for the Victoria Memorial Museum (now the Museum of Civilization) (Zimmerly 1974, 21). This short film was probably intended to illustrate public lectures.⁹

⁷ The 1920s was also a significant time for Native American films and documentaries in general. Most notable was *Nanook*, Robert Flaherty's 1922 film of the Canadian Inuit. A year later, Frederick Hodge of the Museum of the American Indian directed a series of documentary films on the Zuni Pueblo.

⁸ Copies survive in the anthropology section of the Royal British Columbia Museum and in the National Archives of Canada.

⁹ Based on the others in the series, Smith's Kwakwaka'wakw film was probably black and white, silent, in sixteen millimetre, about twelve minutes long, and made in 1928 or 1929.

The fifth production devoted to the Kwakwaka'wakw was not originally edited into a finished film. In late 1930, Franz Boas shot about an hour's worth of sixteen-millimetre film footage.¹⁰ Like all his ethnographic records, this was intended primarily for documentation. His mission being cultural salvage, Boas hoped to use film in his study of rhythm, specifically in his study of the relationship between gesture and song/dance patterns. Sequences included village scenes, wood-working, basket-weaving, games, a series of dances, and a healing ceremony. The footage is a kind of relic; although Boas made it on his last field trip, there is nothing about this film, other than his use of developing technology, that Boas would not have done had it been shot during his earlier field trips.

In attempting to understand these films, one is confronted with a subtle array of similarities and differences. First, they varied in intended audience. Curtis was making a film that he hoped would appeal to the widest possible audience. With the exception of Curtis's work, which was filmed in the professional thirty-five-millimetre format, all these other films appear to have been recorded in the more amateur sixteen-millimetre format. Although the poorer resolution meant that these films could not be profitably projected in large auditoriums, the camera used to shoot them had the advantage of being smaller and easier to use – a considerable advantage when travelling in remote regions. While Smith and Norrish had educational and commercial motives in mind, Boas shot research footage, and there is no indication that he intended it for general public viewing.

In these early films, one can see the clearly marked paradigms of art (e.g., Curtis's fictional narrative), on the one hand, and anthropology (e.g., Boas's factual description), on the other. The action in both types of film was simulated, but instead of Curtis's convincing dramatic scenes, Boas presented little sense of context or social interaction; one or two individuals simply acted out behavioural sequences, often outside during the day instead of in more natural interior or evening settings. While Boas was limited by the available technology, he also subscribed to a kind of scientific puritanism that prevented

For many years it was believed that most of the Smith films had been destroyed in a 1967 fire at the National Museum. Morris (1994, 44) claims that "with the exception of two or three films, which most likely never existed but were identified with more than one title and therefore mistaken for separate productions, prints of all the Smith films are extant in the Sound and Moving Image Division of Canada's National Archives." Nevertheless, there seems to be no record of the one on the Kwakwaka'wakw.

¹⁰ Edited by Bill Holm as *The Kwakiutl of British Columbia* (fifty-five minutes, 1973). Basic sources on Boas's film include Ruby 1983; Jacknis 1984; and Morris 1994, 55–66.

him from taking an active role in producing what he was documenting, despite the fact that he often did play such an active role.¹¹

Ultimately, however, all these projects were dedicated, in their own way, to salvage (i.e., to cultural preservation). Also common to most was a museum orientation, which is to say that they focused on visual surfaces and objects (Morris 1994, 85). One is furthermore struck by the limitation of sources. All were shot in and around Fort Rupert, and three of them were connected with Boas and his close associates, Smith and Goddard. Curtis and Norrish were independent, motivated by more commercial concerns, but all the filmmakers were undoubtedly familiar with each other's work.¹² Moreover, in each film, George Hunt played a critical role. Hunt, the son of an English Hudson's Bay Company merchant and a Tlingit noblewoman, was raised as a bilingual English/Kwak'waka speaker in Fort Rupert and was married, successively, to two Kwakwaka'wakw women. Although widely known for his contribution to Boas's Kwakwaka'wakw ethnography, he was also critical to the work of Curtis, Barrett, and many others (Jacknis 1991b, 1992; Berman 1996). The active Native role in many of these productions blurs simplistic notions of the imperialist gaze. Hunt himself was a photographer with a distinct Aboriginal style (Jacknis 1992), and his wife and several of his children and grandchildren were among the actors in the Curtis film (Holm and Quimby 1980, 61). In addition to their acting roles, the Kwakwaka'wakw went to great efforts to produce sets and props for the film, and they probably contributed many details of plot (see, for example, Holm and Quimby 1980, 89). When interviewed about the project many years later, several of the participants remembered the experience with pleasure. In the end, however, because of the lack of natural sound during this period, a Native voice was literally silenced.

Following Boas's work, there was a pronounced gap in the production of Northwest Coast films. Declining resources due to the Depression and the Second World War were coupled with a common anthropological perception that Aboriginal culture had been radically transformed, especially in its visual aspects. An indication, perhaps, of the moribund state of Kwakwaka'wakw ethnography, the films by Curtis and Boas, the two most important early productions devoted to these people, were essentially unknown when William Heick began

¹¹ See Jacknis 1996 for further discussion of the epistemology of Boas's fieldwork documentation.

¹² For example, Pliny Goddard showed the Curtis film to Boas in late 1923 or early 1924 (Gidley 1998, 243).

his work in 1951.¹³ In fact, when the crew members of Orbit Films first set out for northern Vancouver Island, they may have believed that they were making the first movies of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

BEFORE BRITISH COLUMBIA:

WILLIAM HEICK'S TRAINING AND INFLUENCES

Born in Kentucky in 1917, William Heick spent his early years in the Louisville area before moving to Florida, Pittsburgh, and, finally, to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he attended the University of Cincinnati (1940-1). The son of an engineer, he had a youthful desire to be a photographer, but he did not have the opportunity to take up the craft until enlisting in the US navy. During the American war years (1942-5), he served as a naval intelligence photographer, stationed in Washington, DC, and outside Honolulu, where his pictures were used to interpret Japanese codes.

Continuing his education, between 1946 and 1949 Heick took classes at San Francisco State College and the California School of Fine Arts.¹⁴ He had the good fortune to study during the directorship of Douglas MacAgy. From 1945 to 1950 MacAgy made the school a centre for abstract expressionist painting and other cutting-edge developments (Albright 1985; Smith 1995, 90-5). Among those he hired were photographers Ansel Adams and Minor White, both of whom taught Heick. Adams stressed the importance of technique, while White emphasized the creative and expressive role of photography (Katzman 1984, 15-26).¹⁵ One of Heick's most important teachers was Sidney Peterson (1905-2000), an "experimental" filmmaker whose diverse jobs had included sculptor, seaman, medical student, naval draftsman, and journalist. The four surrealist films that Peterson made with his class were important early examples of American avant-garde cinema (Sitney 1979, 47-81).¹⁶

¹³ After its premiere, Curtis's film disappeared from public view until it came to the Field Museum in 1947. Although Boas's footage was studied by his students, it remained unedited in his family's possession until his daughter donated it to the Burke Museum at the University of Washington in 1961. Only after Burke curator Bill Holm edited both films in the 1970s did these two critical works become widely known and studied.

¹⁴ Since 1961 the California School of Fine Arts has been known as the San Francisco Art Institute.

¹⁵ Heick also studied painting with Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, and David Park.

¹⁶ In addition to *The Potted Psalm* (1946), a film made with James Broughton, the four films Peterson made at his art school workshop were: *The Cage*, *The Petrified Dog*, *Mr. Frenhofer and the Minotaur*, and *The Lead Shoes* (1947-9). In 1948 Heick acted in *The Petrified Dog* (Peterson 1980, 171).

Although Heick learned important formal and technical skills from these teachers, his own work was more directly inspired by photo-journalists and documentarians Henri Cartier-Bresson and Dorothea Lange – especially the latter, with whom he became friendly in the 1950s. Like Lange, he has specialized in portraits, intimate images of people’s daily lives, and he often focuses on other cultures. He learned from his mentor to discover a place and its people by what he could see for himself, for while Heick and Lange often worked with social scientists as part of a team, both rejected the role of scholar. Beyond Peterson, Heick cites Robert Flaherty (maker of *Nanook, Moana, and Man of Aran*) and Willard van Dyke (maker of government documentaries in the 1930s) as among his influences in filmmaking. After graduation, William Heick began a succession of jobs as a cinematographer, supporting himself largely with industrial and other commissioned documentaries.¹⁷

ORBIT FILMS

In 1951, through personal contacts in San Francisco, William Heick was employed by Orbit Films, a Seattle-based documentary film company run by Robert Gardner.¹⁸ The formation of the company the previous year represented a fusion of artistic and anthropological impulses. MacAgy had just left the School of Fine Arts because of disagreements with the board of trustees. Peterson, feeling the loss of creative support at the school, was excited by the possibility of what he had been denied in San Francisco: “money and equipment” (1980, 107). While the company produced a number of short industrial films, it was particularly attracted to Seattle’s proximity to Indians: “We wanted to make a film about Natives” (109-10).¹⁹ In its search for suitable subjects, Orbit Films made small expeditions to the Yakima and Makah reservations in Washington State.²⁰ In the words of a friend

¹⁷ Throughout Heick’s career, however, he has continued to make important still photographs.

¹⁸ This account of Orbit Films and the making of the Blunden Harbour film is based primarily on my interviews with William Heick (1996-9); James Blue’s unpublished interview with Robert Gardner (1973), which has been edited slightly for grammar; and a letter to the author from Gardner, dated 15 August 1999. Here, and elsewhere, otherwise unattributed statements of fact concerning Heick are derived from my interviews with him.

¹⁹ Before Heick arrived at Orbit Films, the company had produced three short films, all shot by William F. Quandt, an assistant in photography at the San Francisco School of Fine Arts, and released in March 1951: *Chocolate Factory* (20 minutes), about a Tacoma candy factory; *Doll Hospital* (20 minutes); and *Vein Stripping* (25 minutes), a surgical procedure shot in a hospital.

²⁰ Although Heick went to the Neah Bay reservation to film the Makah canoe races on July 4th, the US Independence holiday, the footage was never edited.

of Peterson's, avant-garde filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1983, 36): "The company was making documentaries and anthropological films and trying to do them on a high caliber level. They thought they would make an art of the anthropological film." In this mission, these San Francisco artists found a congenial match in Robert Gardner.

Descended from an old and affluent New England family, Gardner (b. 1925) grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts. After graduating from Harvard, with a concentration in art history, he spent much of 1948 in Istanbul, restoring Byzantine mosaics and frescoes. In 1949–50 he was an instructor in medieval history at the College of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. At the same time, a reading of Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934) attracted him to anthropology in general and to Northwest Coast cultures in particular: "And there I was in the midst of all of this Kwakiutl theater that she wrote about in this book ... But what I was interested in was immersing myself in kind of living contexts, a culture which was expressive and which was organized" (Gardner 1973, sec. 1, p. 53). Enrolling in some graduate courses in the subject at the University of Washington, he found himself, at the same time, becoming excited about film. Among the early influences he cites are his father's home movies, Maya Deren's experimental shorts (not unrelated to Sidney Peterson's work), and Basil Wright's 1934 poetic documentary, *Song of Ceylon* (Gardner 1996, 169–71).

The linking of Gardner and Heick came through a fortuitous chain of acquaintances. Sidney Peterson's brother-in-law happened to be Gardner's psychotherapist (Gardner was seeking relief from his severe migraines) (Gardner 1973, sec. 1, p. 58). Peterson's film work impressed him, and together they formed Orbit Films (Heider 1976, 31; Loizos 1993, 142–3). Although all were familiar with the documentary tradition of Robert Flaherty, Peterson and Gardner (and Heick, for that matter) were also deeply involved in the world of art films, explaining their desire to "make an art of the anthropological film."

Living in Seattle, they did not have far to look for a suitable subject. Both Peterson and Gardner were reading Benedict and Boas on the Kwakiutl. From time spent with anthropology students in Berkeley, Peterson was familiar with Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* as well as with Boas's 1897 Kwakwaka'wakw monograph (Peterson 1980, 112).²¹

²¹ "As a youth [Peterson was born in Oakland, California] I had spent some years fraternizing with a group of anthropologists in Berkeley known as the Hill Tribe, suffering my rites of passage with academicians who were in many ways stranger than their subjects" (Peterson 1980, 112). The Hill Tribe was a group of anthropologists in 1920s Berkeley who met for

Benedict's portrayal of Kwakwaka'wakw ritual "cannibalism" and Dionysian rites appealed to this surrealist artist, as did the theatricality of Kwakwaka'wakw dances. Although Peterson was responding more to the literary and dramatic aspect of Kwakwaka'wakw culture, Benedict's characterization was also responsible for stimulating a similar passion for the art of Northwest Coast First Nations among New York avant-garde painters (Rushing 1995). According to Gardner (1973, sec. 1, p. 61): "We decided to collaborate at that particular moment of time on a film project, which would be a poetic lyric documentary of the Kwakiutl nation, which I was then reading about in Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict and others."²² Soon, however, the project grew much grander: "Like all projects of this kind ... it got out of control completely because I began being much more ambitious than I should [have] been. I think this happens to every filmmaker who starts his first adventure. It always seems to be that more is bitten off than could ever possibly be chewed ... For example, I was thinking of turning it into a feature documentary using actors" (ibid.). So the Orbit Films team set out to make a fictional feature film, a mystery entitled *Souvenir of Murder*. The story was a triangle about a man with two wives, one of whom was to be played by Gardner's sister, an actress and a poet (Gardner 1973, sec. 1, p. 62).

Their contact with the Kwakwaka'wakw community was again fortuitous. In Vancouver Peterson had met Ellen Neel and her family. The granddaughter of carver Charlie James and the niece of Mungo Martin, Neel was then selling small carvings in a shop in Stanley Park (Peterson 1980, 111-2).²³ Reportedly, Neel wanted to give a

parties and conversation. A prominent member was the writer and linguist Jaime de Angulo (de Angulo 1995).

²² Clues to the nature of the initial film are supplied by a contemporary newspaper account. The "documentary film" was to depict "Indian life as it was fifty years ago through the various ceremonials. The story will trace the lives of four generations of carvers, the central characters being the late Charlie James, Mungo Martin, Mrs. Ellen Neel and her son, David. It will depict the ceremonials of everyday living from the birth of one individual, through his lifetime, and his death, covering ceremonials of the preparation of food, taking of game, catching fish and other seafood" (*Pioneer Journal* [Alert Bay], 23 May 1950, 9).

²³ With regard to the Kwakwaka'wakw family that was selling small carvings in a shop in Vancouver's Stanley Park, Peterson (1980, 111-2) claims that the wife was a high-ranking Kwakiutl woman married to a Mormon salesman. This detail exactly matched the situation of Ellen Newman Neel (1916-66), who had married Ted Neel in 1939. Neel's husband was a Mormon who had worked at many trades, including that of salesman (Nuytten 1982, 44). The boy to whom Peterson refers could have been any of Neel's three sons: David Neel (b. 1937), Ted Neel, Jr., or Robert (both born in 1939). This would have made them thirteen and eleven, respectively, in 1950. In 1942 the family moved from Alert Bay to Vancouver. The Neel family began carving in a small shed in Stanley Park around 1947 (certainly by

potlatch to celebrate “the name-day” of her son. Since potlatches were still illegal, filming one would be a way of justifying holding one. At the same time, argued Peterson, it would serve as an opportunity to preserve Kwakwaka'wakw culture (ibid.). Peterson went north to Fort Rupert with Ted Neel to shoot some footage and to discuss film prospects with a local group.²⁴ It was decided that the village of Blunden Harbour would also participate, as Fort Rupert did not have a suitable big house (*gukwdzi*). The local community would arrange all the details; in fact, Mungo Martin apparently served, as had George Hunt before him, as the local talent manager and producer.²⁵

The Orbit group filmed for several weeks in late May and early June of 1950.²⁶ The details of the filming situation are somewhat unclear, but the team reportedly sponsored a large potlatch (Peterson 1980, 123). Neither Peterson nor Gardner had any experience with much of the professional equipment, and when the thirty-five-millimetre black and white footage came back from the lab, they found that it was poorly lit and almost completely scratched.²⁷ Gardner remembers feeling an “enormous sense of responsibility for the money that had been spent ... transporting this group up there and staying there a long time and shooting all this film. And so I said, I've got to go back” (1973, sec. 1, pp. 64-5). Realizing that they needed something to substitute for what they had already heavily promoted, Peterson and MacAgy called in their former student, William Heick.²⁸

1948). In 1952 they stopped carving in the park, using it only for summer sales (Nuytten 1982, 48-9, 51, 54).

²⁴ See *Pioneer Journal*, 26 April 1950.

²⁵ According to Bill Holm: “Mungo told me that he had been hired by Gardner to organize the action” (personal communication, 31 July 1999).

²⁶ See 23 May and 14 June 1950, *Pioneer Journal*.

²⁷ William Quandt was the cinematographer for *Souvenir of Murder*; Morris Dowd was the sound recordist.

²⁸ Apparently, the Orbit company edited some of its Fort Rupert footage into a finished film, although I have been unable to locate a copy. According to Peterson (1980, 123), “The 16 mm. was alright and was cut into something called *Potlatch*.” Peterson “did shoot a small amount of color film at Fort Rupert. He considered the footage as a form of note taking to be viewed as visuals to suggest the possibilities in constructing the 35 mm. feature *Souvenir of Murder*. When the feature film bombed, there was no longer any use for this footage at Orbit Films” (Peterson to Heick, personal communication to Jacknis, 25 August 1999). Bill Holm and Peter Macnair remember seeing an Orbit film called *Fort Rupert* (copies available in the Seattle Public Library in the 1950s and the Victoria Library and office of the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s, respectively). “The film was color, not black and white, and included many views of the village, various activities such as Abayah Martin making string figures, kids playing in the little creek that flows through the village, etc. Finally there is a big potlatch (or at least an implication of one) including the arrival of a big canoe (actually Tom Johnson's big seine skiff adorned with false and spectacular bow and stern, the greeting by the hosts on shore, the movement into the big house, and

BLUNDEN HARBOUR AND
DANCES OF THE KWAKIUTL (1951)

Reverting to his earlier idea of a “poetic lyric documentary of the Kwakiutl,” Robert Gardner (1973, sec. 1, p. 66) decided to film in Blunden Harbour, a “village that we had visited at while I was up there before. Because I didn’t even want to show my face at Fort Rupert ... And sort of say to these nice people [who had] done all these things for me that there was nothing to show for all their and my efforts.” Gardner, however, did not return to Blunden Harbour in 1951;²⁹ instead, he sent Heick and Pierre Jacquemin, a French exchange student at the University of Washington. The pair, who stayed with carver and chief Charlie George, spent about ten days, probably in June, recording both everyday life as well as masked dances. Before shooting, Heick and Jacquemin spent about a day surveying likely subjects. Generally, they shot the kinds of domestic scenes that would have occurred naturally. The principal exception was their arrangement and payment (\$300) for the dancing, which, otherwise, would not have been performed at the time. The dances were shot in the last surviving big house in the community. In order to get enough light, some of the roof planks had to be pushed aside, just as Edward Curtis had done nearly forty years before in Fort Rupert (Holm and Quimby 1980, 47). They used a sixteen-millimetre camera but recorded no sound; the singing on the edited soundtrack was recycled from *Souvenir of Murder*.³⁰ Heick prepared an edited work print for Gardner, who wrote the narration.³¹

dances, including a great Hamatsa by Charley George, hamsamala, etc.” (Holm, personal communication, 31 July 1999). As there was no big house at Fort Rupert then, its presence was suggested by Tom Johnson’s boathouse. Another clue is that the sound for this film was recorded by Morris Dowd; there was no sound recording in Blunden Harbour in 1951. *Potlatch* and *Fort Rupert* were probably the same film under different names, produced before Heick came to Orbit. Given Peterson’s comments about visual notes and the different film stock, this may have been the footage he shot on his first, exploratory visit to Fort Rupert with Ted Neel.

²⁹ In his interview with James Blue, Gardner (1973, sec. 1, p. 65) said (somewhat ambiguously): “And so we went back and stayed a very short time [about “two weeks time”], but we did do a little filming ... which I called my first film.” He has since clarified his participation by writing that he “was clearly confused in saying I was one of three who went back to make amends.”

³⁰ In fact, *Blunden Harbour* included a love song composed by Mungo Martin and sung by his wife (Holm, personal communication, 1999).

³¹ Robert Gardner often works collaboratively, and commentators have frequently noted that it is not always evident who did what in his productions (Ruby 1991, 11; Loizos 1993, 142; Cooper 1995, 52). According to Gardner, “Heick had little to do with the completion of *Blunden Harbour* or *Dances of the Kwakiutl*. That was my responsibility though I am sure I must have consulted

Their primary Native contact was Chief Willie Seaweed, who arranged the dancing and appeared in scenes pertaining to carving and fishing. Seaweed (c. 1873-1967) was one of the most important Kwakwaka'wakw artists of the twentieth century (Holm 1983). Then seventy-eight, he was coming to the end of an active career as a professional artist (and fisherman). Throughout the twentieth century, when potlatching was illegal, Seaweed continued to create art – totem poles, masks, rattles, drums, and screens – for ceremonial use. Over the decades, his style, while remaining careful and precise, became increasingly elaborate and flamboyant. With his son, Joe, and his colleague, Charlie George, Seaweed was one of the creators of a distinctive Blunden Harbour-Smith Inlet style of Kwakwaka'wakw art (Holm 1983, 29).

Blunden Harbour has a lyrical, allusive quality, moving quickly with little narration from scene to scene and shot to shot (see Morris 1994, 102-3). Appropriately, the film opens with an origin myth that accounts for the founding of Blunden Harbour. The narrative is recited while Heick's camera, on a boat, moves parallel to the shore. It then moves to women clamming with an iron pitchfork, putting the clams into metal pails and open-work fibre baskets. Women make seaweed cakes, cook clams, and remove the meat. The comment, "from water, food; from wood, a way of life," serves as a transition to the next section, in which a man uses a metal saw to cut a log. A carver (Charlie George?) makes a toy boat with a curved knife, and this scene is intercut with shots of children. A boy plays with the boat, then we see groups of children and women. Heick's camera pans from a boat at the shore to the boardwalk, where we see people walking and a woman carrying a basket. Next comes a relatively lengthy scene in a commercial fishing boat, with shots of the fish and birds caught in the net. We return to the village, with shots of the houses and a family entering a house. Inside is a *sisiyuth* panel and a guitar (or mandolin) hanging on the wall. A family eats a meal, with canned milk and buttered bread, and this is followed by a shot of bread baking in the stove.

with him as the work was being done ... In the end, I did the editing, writing and sound work ... indeed, the film's shape, tone and continuity were all my invention" (personal communication, 1999). However, Heick claims that Gardner did not go with him to Blunden Harbour. "For these two films he [Gardner] was the script writer and listed in the credits as director even though he did not participate in the on-the-scene filming of either of these films" (personal communication, 1999). Furthermore, he claims, "I shot the footage and did the editing for what ultimately became the film 'Blunden Harbour'" (personal communication, 1998). There seems to be no dispute that, whatever his other talents, Gardner had no experience with a movie camera during his Seattle years (Gardner, personal communication, 1999).



William Heick paying Willie Seaweed for participation in the film *Blunden Harbour*. Photograph by Pierre Jacquemin, Blunden Harbour, BC; June 1951. Courtesy of William Heick.

Gradually, with the phrase, “a way of life, and a way of death,” the film shifts to scenes of dancing. We see mortuary boxes in the trees, then children on a swing inside the big house, and then families outside. A man (Willie Seaweed) is in a skiff catching crabs with a pole and then taking them out of the boat. The next scene is the most extended sequence of Seaweed at work. We see him adzing a block of wood and painting an eagle headdress with his son, Joe. Throughout the film there is no identification of Willie Seaweed; nor is there any explanation of what he is doing.

Finally, with the repeated phrase, “a way of life, a way of death; a way of dreams, and a way to remember,” the film shifts to the dances. We see Willie Seaweed in the dance house, accompanied by Kwakwaka'wakw music. Seaweed is wearing a button blanket and cedar-bark neck ring. The first dancer is a woman; she is wearing a frontlet, and her back is covered with ermine skins. There is a shot of the drummers, a round rattle, ritual copper shields on the dock, and, finally, we see a sequence of masked dancers, generally shot in close-ups: a frontlet, sun, owl (with the camera moving in dramatically), eagle (or thunderbird), another frontlet, and a bukwas (wild man of the woods). Scenes of dancing are intercut with shots of people watching. The film ends with a series of short, recapitulating fragments: Willie Seaweed talking, the dance screen, the house's smokehole, the welcome figure, Seaweed painting, children on the swing, women at the shore, the village, and Seaweed in a crab skiff. *Blunden Harbour* ends on an ambiguous note, with an image of a dipper and a barrel of water.



Hamatsa dance; Willie Seaweed seated in center. Photograph by William Heick, Blunden Harbour, BC; June 1951. This mask, carved by Willie Seaweed about 1915, is now in the collection of the UBC Museum of Anthropology (A7992). Courtesy of the photographer.

In addition to this black and white footage, Heick shot some colour film of the dances, which was edited into *Dances of the Kwakiutl*. In the end, there was little out-take footage from the project. Orbit included most of what had been shot in one or the other of the two films. Depicting winter ceremonial dances, the film includes many of the same dances, with Joe Seaweed wearing many of the masks – owl, hawk, double cannibal bird (raven and crooked beak), bukwus, sun frontlet with eagle down, thunderbird headdress – and a shot of Willie Seaweed drumming.³²

³² Of the seven films listed in an Orbit Films prospectus – dated 15 March 1951 – three were devoted to the Kwakwaka'wakw: *Souvenir of Murder* (35 mm., b/w, 90 min., scheduled for release in late summer, 1951), *Hamatsa* (16 mm., col., 20 min., for release in late summer, 1951), and *Indian Wood Carving* (16 mm., b/w., 20 min., for release in early fall, 1951). *Hamatsa* was described as “Indian cannibal dances, shot on location at north Vancouver Island, British Columbia.” *Indian Wood Carving* was listed as “Examples and carving techniques – Kwakiutl dance masks. Shot at Fort Rupert and Victoria, B.C.” *Hamatsa* is probably the film produced by Peterson, which he calls *Potlatch*. Either or both are probably what Bill Holm remembers as *Fort Rupert*. See “Orbit Films: General Information,” p. 10.

By 1952, after making several more short films, the participants in Orbit Films began to go their separate ways.³³ Sidney Peterson went to New York, where he worked as a television director and writer at the Museum of Modern Art before becoming a script writer for Hollywood cartoons and, later, an author of essays, novels, and criticism.³⁴ In the fall of 1952, Robert Gardner enrolled in the doctoral program in anthropology at Harvard, and in 1956 he became the first director of the Film Study Center at the university's Peabody Museum. There he worked with John Marshall on *The Hunters* (1956), a film about the Kalahari "Bushmen," before going on to make his first feature-length (and still most famous) film *Dead Birds* (1964) (about the Dani of Western New Guinea). Gardner continued to be associated with Harvard for the rest of his professional career.³⁵ Beginning in 1953, William Heick worked as a filmmaker for the Bechtel Corporation, an engineering and construction firm specializing in large projects outside the United States. With this sponsorship, he made industrial films about projects in Australia, Indonesia, India, Africa, Europe, and South America. With an interest in other cultures generated by his Kwakwaka'wakw work, Heick was able to include many scenes of cultural interest in these nominally corporate presentations.³⁶

THE AMERICAN INDIAN FILM PROJECT

In the summer of 1961, William Heick was hired as the principal cinematographer for the American Indian Films Project (AIFP). Sponsored by the University of California, the project was directed by Samuel A. Barrett (1879–1965). As a youth, Barrett had become interested in the culture of the Pomo Indians, whom he encountered

³³ After his trip to Blunden Harbour, Heick shot Orbit's other most successful production, *Mark Tobey*, a portrait of the Seattle painter (19 minutes, 1952). He also made two short films about Japanese art and dance.

³⁴ Peterson and MacAgy had actually left the company around May 1951. Peterson came away with several Kwakwaka'wakw masks, including a huxwhukw mask, which he used to decorate his home and office (Peterson 1980:125; Brakhage 1983:40). These might be the masks that he and Gardner wear in a photograph taken in Seattle in 1951 (Cooper 1995: back cover, no. 14).

³⁵ Although Gardner earned a masters degree in 1958, he decided not to complete his doctorate. In addition to the directorship of Harvard's Film Study Center, he taught in the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, of which he was its director for eleven years, and from which he has recently retired. He has also filmed in Africa, South America, and India (Cooper 1995; Tomicek 1991).

³⁶ As a kind of coda, in 1966, Heick and Sidney Peterson went back to Blunden Harbour, shortly after the village had been abandoned. They shot about 400 feet of film and suggested to Gardner that they make a short epilogue film, but Gardner was not interested.

at his father's store in Ukiah, California. In 1908, he earned the first doctorate in anthropology from the University of California.³⁷ Barrett soon joined the staff of the Milwaukee Public Museum, serving as curator (1909-20) and then as director (1920-40). During his tenure, he vastly expanded the museum's collections and was especially known for his innovations in exhibit style. A dedicated ethnographic photographer, Barrett also encouraged the use of motion picture cameras at the museum. About 1920 he acquired a thirty-five-millimetre movie camera, which he used to record the medicine lodge ceremonies of the Menominee of Wisconsin and to document an expedition to East Africa in 1928-9. His sixteen-millimetre camera also saw a good deal of use in the 1930s (McKern 1965, 36; Barrett 1961, 155). After a period of exposition, government work, and travel, he returned to his alma mater in 1953 to take up a position as research associate in the museum of anthropology. He began by assisting Alfred Kroeber with the publication of his teacher's Yurok ethnography (Peri and Wharton 1965).

Like all anthropologists trained at the turn of the century, Barrett believed that Native American peoples were destined to lose their traditional cultures. Accordingly, he and his colleagues made it their mission to salvage as much of it as they could. As Barrett travelled among Native communities in northern California in the 1950s, he expected to find substantially altered cultures; instead, he was surprised to discover many people still practising the "old ways" (1961, 155). With his photographic background, Barrett decided to film these skills. First with his own funding in 1955, supplemented by small university grants in January 1957, Barrett started preliminary work. This resulted in a pilot film on the Pomo canoe: *The Tule Balsa*. Under a program for developing undergraduate courses, the National Science Foundation funded the project from August 1960 through 1965, allowing the hiring of professional personnel.³⁸

Although the project's goals were phrased differently at different times, they revolved around the two principal aims that Barrett announced in 1961: "(1) The securing of a series of *record films* and sound recordings to be used for detailed study and analysis, (2) The production

³⁷ Barrett also studied with Boas at Columbia University, 1907-8.

³⁸ In his search for a suitable candidate for a cinematographer, Barrett actually consulted with Robert Gardner, then at Harvard's Peabody Museum. In August of 1960, he asked for suggestions for a good cameraman, one who could also handle editing, had some knowledge of ethnology, and could work with Indians (Barrett to Gardner, 10 August 1960; Gardner to Barrett, 30 August 1960; AIFP, S.A. Barrett Papers [hereafter BP], Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley). The first cinematographer on the project was Al Fiering.

from these of a series of *teaching films* for use in the classroom” (1961, 156). A third aim, soon added, was the training of students in the application of film to ethnography (Peri and Wharton 1965, 25). With scientific funding in mind, Barrett argued that this recording “must be done by the motion picture camera and the tape recorder because only by these exact devices can the technical processes of arts and crafts, the cadences of primitive music, and the full significance of rituals be recorded, preserved, and made available to students and research workers.”³⁹

Following Boas and Kroeber (1925, v), Barrett viewed “authentic culture” as rooted in the pre-contact period: “Through the dominance of our modern life and the resultant acculturation of the Indians, very many of their old ways have become little more than a memory. However, many cultural phases do still persist in certain places, but only among the older people. A few years more and these few older tribesmen will be gone. With them will disappear the last vestiges of the ancient arts, crafts, customs, and beliefs.”⁴⁰ With this impetus he travelled to British Columbia to film Mungo Martin, who was seventy-five (this was just ten months before his death).⁴¹

Sometimes, however, Barrett found it necessary to resort to reconstructing,

from the memories of the older tribesmen[,] ... such arts, crafts and procedures as even they had only seen practiced by their elders ... By careful re-enactment of these cultural features in full before our camera we could bring to him [the student] in the classroom at the University the full story of one after another of these cultural features – we could, with good fortune, relive for him the whole primitive life of an area, as it existed before white contact – an ambitious program to be sure, but one with great possibilities. In

³⁹ Grant application for the National Science Foundation, 1964-5, p. 16, accession 1994, Hearst Museum of Anthropology (hereafter HMA), University of California, Berkeley.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ There has been a great deal of confusion over Mungo Martin’s birth year. Most sources acknowledge the lack of a definite date and use c. 1881. Nuytten gives “around 1880 or 1881,” noting that “Mungo used an ‘official’ date of April, 1884, although he believed himself to be several years older” (1982, 75). Discussing Martin’s own dating of his birth from his witnessing of the Seattle fire of 1889, “which he saw as a boy of nine or ten,” de Laguna estimates his natal year to be 1879 (1963, 895). However, he told Bill Holm that “he was nine when Boas visited [Fort Rupert] in 1894, and the Hastings photos seem to confirm that; that would make his birthday about 1885” (personal communication, 1998). Oregon C. Hastings, a professional Victoria photographer, took at least two photos of Martin on that trip, and in them he does look more like a boy than a teenager (see Nuytten 1982, 76; Jacknis 1984, 12).

other words, we saw not a system of *how to do it* films, but a system of *how it was done in olden times* films (1961, 156).

The film project was conducted jointly with the university's Extension Media Center, which was responsible for the "cinematography, sound recording, script writing, editing and completion of the films" (Bascom 1966, 6). Different personnel worked with the project over time. Clyde B. Smith, head of the Extension Media Center, acted as executive producer of the series, and C. Cameron Macauley did much of the production and script work on individual films. William Heick, the principal cameraman between 1961 and 1964, also did most of the editing during this period. Barrett felt that this cooperation between anthropologists and professional filmmakers was vital to the success of the project (1961, 160).

Barrett chose the subjects and guided the anthropological research. First, he would make a preliminary reconnaissance of the field situation, consulting with anthropologists for prospects, sources, and subjects. After discussing the action to be filmed with tribal elders, Barrett made a preliminary outline of the procedures: "The native demonstrator can not be fenced in by such a script if he is really to demonstrate his ancient craft or procedure uninhibited. He is always told to do whatever would be done *in the old-fashioned way*, just as his grandfather would have done before the white man came. He is to omit nothing, no matter how trivial in any sense, but is to adhere strictly to all the aboriginal features" (Barrett 1961, 16).⁴² The film and sound recording was as complete as possible. Colour and 16-millimetre stock was used throughout; although some sound was recorded, little of it was truly synchronous, as sound technology was just coming into documentary production.⁴³ In addition, relevant artefacts were collected for the museum.

William Heick liked working with Barrett, who refrained from offering detailed instructions about how to carry out the job. Barrett arranged the shooting situation with the Native actors, and then Heick filmed it as he wanted. He generally followed the action, as the project

⁴² Barrett (1961, 16) acknowledged that "now and then a demonstrator will get off the track and will do something which is not strictly according to the old-fashioned way. When this happens he usually calls attention to it himself and stands ready to make the necessary correction. Otherwise a little judicious questioning brings out just how the thing should have been done. We then get him to repeat so that we can make the correction."

⁴³ The British Columbia filming in October 1961 came very soon after the introduction of synchronous sound. Among the important pioneering efforts were two films made in 1960: the American *Primary*, by Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, and D.A. Pennebaker; and the French *Chronicle of a Summer*, by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (Barbash and Taylor 1997, 27-9).

almost always consisted of documenting some technical or ceremonial sequence that had its own logical structure. Team members did not film continuously; rather, they shot some sequences for a while, then stopped and changed positions and angles; thus, changing film magazines was rarely a problem.⁴⁴ They also took establishing landscape shots and close-ups of objects, which could later be edited into the final cut.

After the filming and the production of a rough edit, Barrett would write a draft of the script, ensuring that anthropological accuracy was respected. Then either Smith or Macauley would help to edit it for style. While, as principle investigator, Barrett was the ultimate authority, there was sometimes tension between the two camps. After matching the narration to the film, the final editing and narration was executed. The Extension Media Center acted as distributor. One feature that the National Science Foundation insisted upon was that admission not be charged. This was also important to Barrett, who often had to respond to Native concerns that people would be profiting from their participation (1961, 159).

In all, the AIFP produced fifteen films on western North America, released between 1961 and 1964.⁴⁵ The first phase focused on documenting Native Californian subjects, Barrett's special interest, but the Northwest Coast was the first of the other regions to be filmed. Like the rest (Plains and Southwest), it had already been the subject of Barrett's research at the Milwaukee museum.⁴⁶ With Barrett's death in 1965, the work came to an end. The project had produced one of the largest archives of Native American film: 362,569 feet of original

⁴⁴ Heick usually used a film magazine of 100 feet (about three minutes); sometimes he used one of 400 feet (eleven minutes).

⁴⁵ The American Indian Film Project included eight Pomo films: three on *Basketry of the Pomo* (Introductory Film, Forms and Ornamentation, Techniques, 1962), *Game of Staves* (1962), *Acorns: Staple Food of California Indians* (1962), *Kashia Men's Dances: Southwestern Pomo Indians* (1963), *Dream Dances of the Kashia Pomo* (1964), and *Beautiful Tree: Chiskale* (1965). There were three other Californian films: *Buckeyes: Food of California Indians* (Nisenan, 1961), *Sinew-Backed Bow and Its Arrows* (Yurok, 1961), and *Obsidian Point Making* (Tolowa, 1964). One film, *Pine Nuts* (1961), was shot among the Paiute of nearby Nevada. There was a single Plains film, *Calumet, Pipe of Peace* (Sioux, 1964), and the two Northwest Coast films: *Wooden Box: Made by Steaming and Bending* (Kwakwaka'wakw, 1962) and *The Totem Pole* (Kwakwaka'wakw and others, 1963).

⁴⁶ During the summer of 1962, the team travelled to the Plains, where they shot the Santee and Brulé Sioux in Minnesota and South Dakota, and the Blackfoot around Browning, Montana. Expanding their coverage to the Southwest in 1963, the AIFP documented the Navajo of eastern Arizona and several Pueblo cultures (Taos, Santa Clara, San Juan) of New Mexico. None of this extensive Southwestern footage was ever edited into a finished film. (The AIFP also did some filming in the Great Basin and Plateau.)

and work print films, and 139,200 feet of sound tape, representing twenty tribal groups (Peri and Wharton 1965, 27). These were accessioned into the collections of the Lowie (now Hearst) Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley.

WOODEN BOX (1962)

AND *THE TOTEM POLE* (1963)

Appropriately, William Heick's first major trip for the University of California returned him to the Northwest Coast; this was also Samuel Barrett's second trip to the region. Following his practice of consulting local experts, Barrett first contacted anthropologist Verne Ray of the University of Washington, who sent him to Audrey Hawthorn, curator of the anthropology museum at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and Wilson Duff, curator at the British Columbia Provincial Museum.⁴⁷ Besides his personal interests, Barrett was eager to film the Northwest Coast because of its distinctive cultural patterns. Defining the region as a "wood culture," he wanted to focus on totem poles and carving (Bascom 1966, 7). He explained his basic motivations in a letter to Hawthorn:

I would like to ask if you think that there is any chance that either [Bill Reid] or someone else could be found who knows how to do the box making ... We are interested in all of these ancient arts, crafts and practices and would like to get as many as possible of them. For instance, basket making, weaving of any sort, food gathering and processing, all of the arts, crafts, industries and if possible, any ceremonies that might be held. In fact, as I have remarked upon various occasions when someone asked me here, where we go to get Indian pictures is any place where anyone can show me an Indian doing anything authentic and interesting.⁴⁸

The person Barrett found to make his box, and the main subject for his Northwest Coast filming, was Kwakwaka'wakw carver Mungo Martin, whom he had first met on his 1915 trip.⁴⁹ Originally from Fort Rupert, Mungo Martin (c. 1885–1962) was trained as a carver by

⁴⁷ Samuel A. Barrett to Verne Ray, 19 June 1960, BP Audrey Hawthorn (b. 1917), a student of Ruth Benedict and Ralph Linton at Columbia University, spent her entire career at the UBC Museum, from 1949 to 1974. Duff (1925–76), who had studied at UBC for his undergraduate degree and at Washington for his masters degree, served as curator at the British Columbia Provincial Museum from 1950 until 1965.

⁴⁸ Samuel A. Barrett to Audrey Hawthorn, 6 September 1961, BP.

⁴⁹ Samuel A. Barrett to Wilson Duff, 9 September 1962, BP.



Samuel A. Barrett (left) talking with Mungo Martin (center) and Henry Hunt (right). Photograph by William Heick, Thunderbird Park, Victoria, BC; October 1961. Courtesy of the photographer.

his stepfather Charlie James (Nuytten 1982, 75–125). After a few decades as an active carver, in the early 1920s Martin turned more to fishing to support himself, although he continued to create some pieces. His life, and the history of Kwakwaka'wakw art, changed dramatically in 1949 when he was asked to come to the UBC Museum of Anthropology to help repair some totem poles. He moved to Vancouver, where he went on to create new totem poles. In 1952 he was hired by the provincial museum to conduct a similar program of totem pole restoration and, later, creation. His single most important project during these years was the construction, in 1953, of a traditional-style community house in Thunderbird Park, the totem pole display area on the museum grounds (Jacknis 1990). Also taking active roles in the filming were Martin's wife, Abayah; his apprentice, Henry Hunt; and Hunt's wife, Helen, who had been raised by the Martins. After his mentor's death, Henry Hunt went on to serve as the museum's master carver.

Barrett relied on the institutional assistance of the museums in Vancouver and Victoria as well as the Milwaukee museum, where he filmed displays and specimens. As he had done in California, where

he used Lowie Museum artefacts for his field filming, in British Columbia Barrett borrowed museum objects (masks and tools) as props (Barrett 1960-2, 200).⁵⁰ Wilson Duff also acted as a prime consultant, reviewing the scripts along with a rough cut of the films.

Samuel Barrett and his crew spent about a month on the Northwest Coast, from 25 September to 23 October 1961. The crew consisted of Barrett, Heick, and David W. Peri (a Coast Miwok anthropology student who worked as a production assistant), and the principal filming location was the British Columbia Provincial Museum. Before the crew members arrived in Victoria, they worked for a few days in Vancouver, shooting Haida carver Bill Reid and his Kwakwaka'wakw ('Namgis) assistant Douglas Cranmer working on a totem pole at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. In addition to these two key sites, Heick filmed at Stanley Park and the Maritime Museum in Vancouver, and Beacon Hill Park in Victoria. The crew made a trip to a forest near Sooke, about twenty miles north of Victoria, to record the felling of a cedar tree. Finally, it travelled up to the Kwakwaka'wakw homeland, proceeding to Campbell River to catch the ferry to Alert Bay. Team members boarded a trawler that took them to Kingcome village, and they stopped at Gilford Island on their way back before filming in Alert Bay. The entire trip up the island and back to Victoria took five days (19 to 24 October).⁵¹ Accordingly, there was very little in the way of research; the trip was primarily for filming totem poles and scenery. On the return trip to Berkeley, Heick also filmed some Salish basket-weaving, string figures, and a fish trap in Washington State.

Of the two finished films, the more important was the one on box making, for it portrayed a leading artist making a box from beginning to end, using the distinctive Northwest Coast technique of "kerfing," in which the four sides are formed from a single plank of bent wood. After a brief introduction (illustrated with inlet scenery), we see Mungo Martin and Henry Hunt in a forest, selecting a cedar tree. They employ traditional-style tools to chop it down, but to split off

⁵⁰ Writing to the Lowie Museum's director, Barrett noted: "In all this filming the project worked closely with the Museum. Many objects which are no longer to be found in actual use among the Indians are needed as props in our films. It is a privilege of inestimable value to be able to draw upon the vast collections of the Museum for such specimens. On the other hand we always, whenever possible, bring in to the Museum as donations from the project, specimens resulting from the work before the cameras" (Samuel Barrett to William Bascom, 14 August 1963; Annual Reports, 1957-66, BP).

⁵¹ On Gilford Island they filmed Kwakwaka'wakw carver Charlie George dancing in his house. Heick had filmed him earlier for the Blunden Harbour film.

a slab they use a modern chisel along with a stone maul and rows of wooden wedges. (On the soundtrack, we hear Martin singing.) The comment “Mungo Martin fashioned these tools after ancient forms” leads to a demonstration of, and discussion about, the various tools – the elbow adz, chisels, and so on. This also offers the opportunity for general information on carving and the role of the carver.

Next Martin splits off a flat plank from a larger slab, again using the wedges and maul. He cuts, trims, thins, and smoothes the plank, with some adzing assistance from Hunt. After measuring and marking the kerfs, Martin cuts the plank in three places, producing a right-angled V. For the steaming and bending, he uses a bailer to pour water into a pit. Lifting rocks out of the fire with tongs, Martin places them in the water-filled pit. He then sets the board over the steaming pit and covers it with soaked shredded cedar bark, turning the board for each kerf. After pouring hot water over the board, Martin slowly and carefully bends it with his hands into a rectangle (on the soundtrack this is accompanied by his singing).

Before finishing the box with a top and bottom, Martin binds it with a cedar-bark cord. He then splits a board from another plank, saving a thicker one for the top. After measuring the plank against the box, he trims it and drills holes for the wooden pegs, using a hand drill with a metal point. The narration notes that in former times carvers used wooden pegs but that now cedar or spruce withes are common (Martin uses yellow cedar pegs). Martin then drives in the pegs with a stone maul and trims off the ends. The rough edges of the box are trimmed, and some adze marks are purposely left as decoration. The cover is treated similarly, with holes drilled for the cover tie, which is threaded and tied across the top. The film concludes with a discussion of the uses for this box (which include carrying food and hunting gear in a canoe) and a review of the many functions of Northwest Coast boxes (which are illustrated with shots of museum specimens).⁵²

According to William Heick, Barrett did not direct the box film but let Martin “do his thing,” with Heick following the action. They did not film continuously – just enough to get the basic steps. It took Mungo Martin about four days to make the box (13 to 16 October), generally working all day each day. “Binding 4 sides alone took from 8 to 2, i.e., 6 hours continuous work” (Barrett 1960-2, 203). They

⁵² Barrett donated the box that Martin made for the film to the Hearst Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley (cat. no. 2-30858).

recorded Martin explaining in Kwak'wala how, and for what, the box was used. Like many viewers, reviewer John Adair (1974, 729-30) thought that the two most dramatic sequences in the film involved splitting off the cedar plank and bending the steamed plank.

After producing the box film, Barrett's team turned to *The Totem Pole*. The introduction covers a great deal of territory, offering a discussion of subsistence, woodcarving, and totem poles. A tribal map indicates that the film will highlight the Haida and the Kwakiutl. The first major section illustrates seven types of totem poles: house posts, mortuary poles, memorial poles, house frontal poles, heraldic poles, potlatch poles, and ridicule poles. Next comes a discussion of the social system, potlatches, prestige, and class. There is a brief review of historical trends as they pertain to totem poles among the Haida (who ceased erecting poles by 1880) and the Kwakwaka'wakw (who raised most of theirs after that date). These scenes are illustrated by shots of totem poles at the Vancouver and Victoria museums, the village and cemetery in Alert Bay, some scenery, a miniature Kwakwaka'wakw diorama at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and historic photographs.

The film then covers the stages involved in carving a totem pole, starting with Martin and Hunt selecting and cutting a cedar tree. As in the box film, they remove the bark from the downed tree with stone mauls and wooden wedges, which they carry in a basketry case. A section on tools explains the pre-contact forms and their modern, iron-tipped versions. Scenes of carving a pole in the workshop introduce Martin (Chief Nakap'ankam) and his work at the provincial museum. Martin and Hunt are shown cutting-in the pole's design, already far along (accompanied by the sound of songs and drumming), and adding a beak projection. Henry Hunt is introduced. We see him in a dramatic shot, filmed from above, painting a pole, as the narrator discusses traditional paints. The process of raising a pole is shown in three animated scenes. Next we see what was then the tallest pole in the world, Martin's Beacon Hill Park pole, as its story is recounted.

The following section reviews the nature of the art styles, noting the combination of realistic animals and symbolism (illustrated with details). The film then explains the system of crest figures, derived from myths and identified by conventional beaks and ears. This leads to a section on iconography, a side note on mechanized poles, and a treatment of the distinctive eye motif. The narration notes here, and elsewhere, that it is hard for outsiders to fully understand the meaning



Mungo Martin and his wife Abayah, posing during film of dances. Photograph by William Heick, Thunderbird Park, Victoria, BC; October 1961. Courtesy of the photographer.

of totem poles. After a brief review of the present state of totem poles (due to rotting, very few were left) comes a discussion of museum collections and their replica programs. The film ends with a discussion of the potlatch, illustrated with scenes of Martin and his family dancing inside his Thunderbird Park house. As the dancing proceeds to the end, the narration recounts the story of the ancestral chief *Nakap'ankam* and his acquisition of the *huxwhukw* (cannibal crane) crest, which is represented in the mask and house posts.

These were the only two Northwest Coast films completed by Barrett and Heick, although there were plans for others. The one that was closest to production was *Kwakiutl Dances and Feasts*. Shot over two evenings in Martin's Thunderbird Park big house, this footage included scenes of Helen Hunt cooking salmon as well as five dance sequences: three women dancing in button blankets (with Mungo and Abayah Martin singing), Henry Hunt dancing alone in a *hamatsa* (*huxwhukw*) mask, Helen Hunt dancing alone with a woman's *hamatsa* mask and button blanket, Mungo Martin dancing, and three women dancing with button blankets. The filming ended with a speech and

song by Mungo Martin and then a feast. Some footage had synchronous sound. The AIFP team prepared a complete script in December 1962, but, as Barrett commented to Duff, this footage was somewhat partial: "A third film ... will give at least some idea of what the dances are, though, of course, if we had an opportunity to take the full fledged [sic] dance such as I used to see when I was up there in 1914, that would be much better."⁵³

Barrett and Heick tended to shoot the carving and dancing scenes on rainy days when they could not film outdoors. Not counting the brief sessions of dancing and salmon cooking, the box-making sequences were the only ones that were complete. On the whole, the totem pole filming was much more fragmentary, if for no other reason that it takes much longer to make a totem pole than it does to make a box. So they shot short sequences of Martin and Hunt carving, fitting, and painting a pole; Henry Hunt carving a killer whale mask; Reid and Cranmer beginning work on a pole; many poles; and scenery.

Barrett continued to harbour plans for future Northwest Coast films. From the footage he already had he was planning a film on carving masks and totem poles, and in the summer of 1962 he discussed with Wilson Duff his plans to film a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch that was to be held in Comox with the active participation of Mungo Martin.⁵⁴ Other subjects included collecting dentalium shells (for a film on Aboriginal wealth and money), halibut fishing, and oolichan fishing and grease preparation.⁵⁵ In 1964, at the advanced age of eighty-five and with an acknowledged backlog of film footage, Barrett was still thinking about possible films on whale hunting and dugout canoe carving.⁵⁶

After filming ended in 1963, Heick remained with the project during another year of post-production work, which was carried out at the university's Extension Media Center. Although he went on to engage in many more years of active filmmaking all over the world, the Northwest Coast, and the Kwakwaka'wakw in particular, remained William Heick's favourite subject when it came to Native American photography.⁵⁷

⁵³ Barrett to Duff, 30 November 1962, BP.

⁵⁴ Barrett to Duff, 30 November 1962; Duff to Barrett, 7 June 1962, ff., BP.

⁵⁵ Barrett to Duff, 2 April; Duff to Barrett, 19 April 1963, BP.

⁵⁶ Barrett to Duff, 11 March 1964, BP.

⁵⁷ With the project over, Heick returned to his film production at Bechtel, retiring in 1974. Then he worked with his long-time partner, photographer and editor Gordon Mueller, until Mueller's death in early 1998. Perhaps the most important production of this period was *Traditional Dances of Indonesia*, a series of twelve films shot in 1975-6 and released in

GENERIC COMPARISONS

Perhaps surprisingly, these two bodies of film, shot among the same people by the same cameraman within a decade of one another, seem, on the surface, to be quite different from one another. It is as though they were made by a different person. And, in a sense, they were. For each project, William Heick worked with a different director as well as with a different artist and within a different ethnohistorical context. As a collaborative medium, film is very much the result of social interaction, involving, in a complex manner, conceptualizing, shooting, editing, scripting, and acting. Heick, who had a good working relationship with both of his directors, was given a great deal of freedom in his filming.⁵⁸ The respective differences may be explained by the fundamental orientation that each director brought to the project. While Loizos (1993, 143) attributes the “non-literal” or “experimental” qualities of the Orbit films to Gardner, these features also characterized the work of Peterson and Heick. For the independently produced Orbit project, everybody was dedicated to an artistic approach with (secondarily) an anthropological perspective – a “lyrical documentary,” in Gardner’s terms. While all were inspired by their reading of Boas and Benedict, none of the participants was a trained anthropologist. William Heick may have been a Dorothea Lange-inspired documentarian (an influence that actually developed later in the 1950s), but he was trained as an artist. For his part, Gardner had been trained in art history. For the AIFP, sponsored by a science foundation, the direction was very much anthropological and even old-fashioned. Tellingly, Samuel Barrett did not like the Blunden Harbour film. When Heick screened it for him (when being considered for the position), the anthropologist asked, “what can one learn from it?” The implication was that, because of its poetic shooting and editing style, it was not as much of a documentary record as Barrett wanted his own films to be.⁵⁹

1990. Presently living in Mill Valley, California, Heick is still an active filmmaker and has a small production company.

⁵⁸ Although Barrett had done his own filming before working with Heick, and Gardner did his own camerawork afterwards, for these two projects Heick made the basic visual record. (Heick was actually older than Gardner, but Barrett was senior to him by over a generation. Barrett was roughly the same age as Martin and Seaweed, all of them having been born in the late nineteenth century.) Given their disciplinary identities, and despite a sensitivity to the other perspective, Gardner clearly excelled with film while Barrett’s forte was anthropology (though perhaps of an anachronistic or old-fashioned variety.)

⁵⁹ An interesting indication of Heick’s style can be seen in two films on Pomo curing that he and his colleagues made in 1963 as a kind of spin-off from the AIFP (but without Barrett’s

These disciplinary inspirations were reflected in distinctive film forms. Invoking Barbash and Taylor's categorization of documentary styles, the two Orbit films may be called impressionistic while the two Barrett films may be called expository (1991, 15-33).⁶⁰ Ironically, in light of the National Science Foundation funding for the purpose of producing educational films, Gardner has said: "I have never had the slightest wish to make instructional films" (1996, 173).⁶¹ Significantly enough, neither the Gardner project nor the Barrett project adopted the two styles that have become most popular in the past thirty years – the observational and the reflexive. To some extent, their respective approaches are signalled by the style of their titles. As Loizos (1993, 142) points out: "In the main, Gardner's films are identified with short, enigmatic titles, more like those of poems than of ethnological texts." Barrett's titles, on the other hand, are quite explicit and didactic. *Wooden Box: Made by Steaming and Bending* is about all one sees in this film. He carries forth this explicitness to the subtitles we see with the opening credits, which give "Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia" in parentheses as well as the places, dates, and subjects.

The photography and, especially, the editing bear out these generic distinctions. The camera generally moves more in *Blunden Harbour* (passing the village in a boat, quickly moving in close to the masked dancers), but it is firmly on a tripod in Barrett's films, with only some modest panning and discrete zooming. In *Blunden Harbour*, Heick's visual style, stimulated by Gardner, was free and poetic. Composed of short fragments, it moves by an associative logic, for example, from shots of mortuary boxes to children playing, to families on the boardwalk, to a man fishing, to the imagistic memories that are invoked at the conclusion. The films directed by the literal-minded Barrett, on the other hand, are careful depictions of objects and behaviour. As Heick correctly noted when sending Wilson Duff a copy of the completed box film: "It is what we believe to be a straight-

direction): *Sucking Doctor* (1964) and its condensed version, *Pomo Shaman* (1963). In some ways, they are closer in style to the Orbit series. Also in black and white, they have minimal narration (they were also able to use synchronous sound). Like the Barrett series, however, the takes are fairly long, and the editing follows the ritual action more or less in real time.

⁶⁰ According to Barbash and Taylor, "Expository documentaries typically address the spectators directly, either through an on-screen commentator or a voice-over track ... The meaning and point of view of expository films is thus elaborated more through the sound track than the images ... Impressionistic films tend to be lyrical rather than didactic, poetic rather than argumentative. They imply more than they inform, and evoke more than they assert" (1991, 17, 20).

⁶¹ As Loizos notes of *Blunden Harbour*, unlike Barrett's works, "the film betrayed no desire to tell us about how people worked; it was not teaching or instructing" (1993, 142).

forward presentation of the old process.”⁶² Although fundamentally expository, *Wooden Box* is more observational than are any of the other films considered here, presenting, as it does, a condensation of a complete action sequence. *The Totem Pole* does include a bit of pole construction, but it is more analytic than *Wooden Box* and more analytic than any of the other films considered here.⁶³ One exception to its expository structure is its use of several short interludes, during which the narration tapers off against shots of island scenery.

Narration plays different roles in each production. In both it was made technologically necessary by the lack of synchronous sound (although the AIFP did record some). Both use Kwakwaka'wakw singing, which usually bears little relation to the filmed action, serving more to set a mood.⁶⁴ *Blunden Harbour* is striking for its relative absence of narration (Gardner tried to make his points visually whenever possible). What narration there is comes mostly at the beginning and is presented in what has since become Gardner's well-known poetic style (Cooper 1995, 54). Barrett, on the other hand, depended on narration, especially in the more analytic totem pole film. It is these narrations – a male voice employing the orotund tones common in period documentaries – that are problematic for many audiences today. Reviewer John Adair, an anthropologist and filmmaker, complained: “The narrator, through his tone and cadence, indicates that he is reading a script; the voice is not that of the good teacher in the classroom, for it is detached, mechanical, and flat, without empathy for the artist. One wanted to turn the narrator off, and wished he could listen to the craftsmen themselves speak and reveal their feelings for their arts” (1974, 730). The same critique, though in a different sense, can be made of Gardner's films. Because of the narrator and the otherwise silent footage, a viewer has a sense of being distant from the actors.

Beyond these formal features, the two groups of films differ in content. Setting aside *Kwakiutl Dances* and *Wooden Box*, which are focused on those subjects, *Blunden Harbour* and *The Totem Pole* both include scenes of carving and conclude with scenes of dancing. The most obvious difference between them concerns the greater variety of

⁶² William Heick to Wilson Duff, 11 January 1963, BP.

⁶³ In its heavy use of explanation, *Totem Pole* is much more like Barrett's trilogy of Pomo basketry films.

⁶⁴ One exchange between Barrett and Duff suggests that Barrett was trying to find a “work song” sung by Martin. Duff replied that he did not know any such recordings: “In fact I am not sure that Mungo sings special ‘work songs’ as he carves; perhaps he is just humming miscellaneous items from his repertoire. If you have any other songs sung by himself alone I would say they could be appropriately used” (Duff to Barrett, 7 June 1962, BP).

activities in the Gardner film. There are even more kinds of masks and dances in *Blunden Harbour*, perhaps because of more available resources. In addition to these and the shots of carving, we see scenes of everyday life: fishing, gathering clams, preparing seaweed cakes, cooking, eating, and children playing. Accordingly, this broader scope is reflected in the films' spatial coverage. Filmed in a natural Native community, *Blunden Harbour* oscillates between many successive scenes: the strait in front of the village, the beach, food preparation and crafts outside the houses, a family house interior, and dances in the big house. In *Wooden Box*, a more observational film, we see the forest outside of Victoria where they the carvers, Martin and Hunt cut down a tree, and the rest of the action takes place inside Martin's house at the museum. *Totem Pole* repeats these scenes but adds the nearby "totem pole workshop," with all the dance footage shot in Thunderbird Park.

These two bodies of film resonate with the larger tradition of Kwakwaka'wakw films, of which they are a part. In fact, they correspond to two basic modalities that have characterized the past century of ethnographic cinema: the "positivist mode of the scientific research film," represented by Regnault and Boas, and the "taxidermic mode of the lyrical ethnographic film," represented by Flaherty and Curtis (Rony 1996, 13).⁶⁵ Barrett's film work fundamentally resembles Boas's style of straightforward documentation.⁶⁶ In both, the camera is generally static and remains at mid-distance. More important, the action is discrete and created for the camera; there is no attempt at recreating the verisimilitude of daily life. Like Boas, Barrett created his documents primarily for research, but, unlike Boas, his larger professional film crew enabled him to do so with far greater elaboration. While he did make edited films for distribution, they were meant for university teaching. In *Blunden Harbour*, Gardner was very much in the Curtis tradition, attempting to aesthetically move a general audience. He also resembled the pioneer photographer in his complex merging of documentary and artistic purposes. Although the film depicts some object making and use, it focuses on domestic activities as well as on ceremonial dancing, set within a suggested narrative. Despite its brevity, it aspires to the kind of comprehensive community portrait attempted in the feature films of Curtis and Flaherty.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Rony's third category is the "postmodern mode of the commercial entertainment." This refers to films such as *King Kong*.

⁶⁶ Probably through Erna Gunther at the University of Washington, Barrett obtained a copy of Boas's unedited footage.

⁶⁷ Alluding to Flaherty's depictions of a heroic struggle against nature (see Rony 1996, 99-126), Gardner's narration in *Blunden Harbour* claims a much more benign mode of

All documentaries, especially those with cross-cultural subjects, must address the issue of individual agency. Adair's complaint about the narration in the Barrett films had to do with more than his annoyance with the narrator's voice: "These films with their overriding interest in technology exclude the human dimensions of these arts, and hence their deeper cultural significance ... Because of the way these films have been made, the artisans become simply the instruments for demonstrating technology, rather than central to the whole process whereby the arts reveal deeply laden human values" (1974, 730). By the time Adair wrote his review, scholars of Northwest Coast Indian art had begun to pay attention to the role of individual, named artists. This is expressed most notably in Bill Holm's studies of Willie Seaweed (1974, 1983).⁶⁸

The films differ markedly in how they acknowledge the role of named artists. Although Willie Seaweed would become a famous artist after the publication of Holm's studies, in 1951 he was known primarily to his own community. In *Blunden Harbour* there is no mention of him, for no one is named in that film, either in the narration or screen credits. And, in fact, that film has no principal subject. On the other hand, because of his close cooperation with both the UBC museum and the provincial museum, Mungo Martin was celebrated in the White art and museum world. Following in the tradition of George Hunt, his relative by marriage, Martin filled a similar position for anthropologists in the 1950s. Of the four short Kwakwaka'wakw films that Wilson Duff made for the provincial museum, at least three include Mungo Martin.⁶⁹ Shot between 1952 and 1955, they were devoted to

subsistence: "A forest and a sea kept apart by a thin line of houses and people. Here is a friendly arrangement where nature toils for the reasonable human. No struggle for survival, no encroaching jungle, no men against the sea. These ones have an ancient formula for success, ancient and simple." In a reference to the opening origin myth, he wrote: "This sliver of humanity has done well by the judgment of a whale."

⁶⁸ For changing views of Kwakwaka'wakw art history, see Macnair et al. 1980; Jonaitis 1991; Duffek 1993; Macnair 1993; and Brown 1998.

⁶⁹ Wilson Duff's Kwakwaka'wakw films in the Royal British Columbia Museum include: *Totem Poles: Thunderbird Park* (David Martin painting a *tsonoqua* pole, Mungo Martin painting a face on an old house front, 1952); *Cedar Bark* (Mungo Martin and David Martin stripping cedar bark for dance costumes, 1953); *Mungo Martin and Tony Hunt* (Mungo Martin adzing a pole, Mungo Martin and Tony Hunt with a bee mask, September 1955); and *Totem Heritage* (part of a series, 1955). Other Royal British Columbia Museum Kwakwaka'wakw films shot during Martin's time were: *Eulachon Fishing: Nature's Candles* (Mrs. Peter Smith of Kalugwis, Mrs. Margaret Glendale, and others, by Clifford Carl, Knights Inlet, 1948); *Mungo Martin Makes a Mask* (a bee mask, by Clifford Carl and C. Ellis, 1953); *Thunderbird Park* (the construction and opening of Mungo Martin's Big House, by the British Columbia Government Photo Service, 1953); *Totem Carving* (Henry Hunt and Tony Hunt, by Clifford Carl, c. 1960); *Canoe Building* (Henry Hunt and David Martin adzing, by the BCPM Education

masks, stripping cedar bark, painting totem poles, and adzing totem poles. In 1951-2 Audrey Hawthorn supervised the filming of Martin carving totem poles at the UBC museum – footage she later edited into a short film.⁷⁰ Whereas Duff did his own camera work, Hawthorn worked with a professional from the university's extension division, much as Barrett would do later. The museum setting explains their focus on material culture and technology and, to a degree, their preservationist motivations.

The two Barrett films, in both the opening credits as well as the narration, prominently highlight the role of Martin and, to a lesser extent, the role of Henry Hunt. In the box film the narrator notes: "Of the great carvers, only a few are left. One of these is Mungo Martin, Nekapenkim, a high ranking Chief, now in his eighties." Barrett had gone even further in his original script for the film: "Mungo Martin, now in his eighties, is the last remaining Chief of the Kwakiutl. He is also their most famous carver."⁷¹ (While he may well have been "their most famous carver," he was certainly not their last remaining chief.) Throughout *Wooden Box* there are references to Martin's great patience and attention to detail while making a watertight box from a single plank of wood.⁷² When Henry Hunt is introduced in *The Totem Pole*, the narration stresses his relation to his grandfather George Hunt, thus placing him in a definite historical perspective. Because of Martin's and the Hunts' access to the Hawthorns and to Duff, their style was, initially, more prominent in the anthropological literature than was that of anyone else. It was only with Holm's later research on Willie Seaweed that the latter's distinctive Blunden Harbour-Smith Inlet style became known. As one can imagine, such issues of agency are inseparable from views of tradition and cultural change, to which we now turn.

Department, 1962); *Totem Poles: Alert Bay* (by Joanna Wright, 1953); *Totem Poles: Thunderbird Park* (erecting Knight Inlet [Kwakwaka'wakw], Haida, Tsimshian poles; David Martin and Henry Hunt securing poles to metal supports; by Clifford Carl, May 1955).

⁷⁰ *Making a Totem Pole*, a twenty-five-minute film, was filmed by Ben Hill Tout of the UBC Extension Services and "edited and put into sequence by Audrey Hawthorn." The original colour print is in the archives of the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Hawthorn 1979, 6, note).

⁷¹ Samuel A. Barrett, script for Kwakiutl box making, 1962, BP.

⁷² Watching the rough edit, Wilson Duff remarked: "I had a vague uneasy feeling that Mungo was a bit nervous and hurried, and as a result the commentary was talking up a better box than the one he was making" (Duff to Barrett, 15 February 1963, BP). With Martin's death in 1962, there was frequent reference to the films as a memorial. "Mungo's passing means that your movies and tapes are the last obtained of him, and adds to their importance" (Duff to Barrett, 10 September 1962, BP). For Barrett's personal feelings of loss at the death of Martin, see Samuel A. Barrett to Clifford Carl, 11 March 1964, BP.

OF TIME AND TRADITION

When recommending to Samuel Barrett the proper conditions for film storage, William Heick wrote: "We all know that these Indian film materials are going to be more valuable to people 30-40 or more years from now than they are even to us."⁷³ Despite his other criticisms, reviewer John Adair appreciated this: "We are in debt to Dr. Barrett and his team for preserving on film that which would be impossible to obtain at a later date; with the passing of years these films will, without doubt, be highly valued" (1974, 730). Yet the Orbit Films participants also believed in "the impulse to preserve," a characterization of his mission that Robert Gardner (1996, 170) adopted from the poet Philip Larkin: "The impulse to preserve is at the bottom of all art." A fundamental attraction of film for Gardner was its ability to "preserve time." Film, he argued, is "a screen which becomes a replica of life and therefore is never going to be destroyed. It's a way of capturing it, and time can't be captured any other way." He went further: "It's a way of putting it into a form which can be then manipulated and changed and restructured and put back together again the way you want it to be put back together" (Gardner 1973, sec. 1, p. 45). Peterson also gave preservation as a reason for his making the Kwakwaka'wakw films.

Like all preservationists, of course, Barrett and his colleagues were making a choice about what to save.⁷⁴ For them, cultural authenticity, and perhaps aesthetic quality, lay in the past. Contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw art had little appeal for Barrett. As he explained to Bill Holm: "We are not interested in the modern things that are being turned out but rather in the old type of object in every case."⁷⁵ One wonders to what, exactly, Barrett was referring, for the "old type of object" was something of a chimera. Kwakwaka'wakw art had developed continually throughout the preceding century. Masks, totem poles, rattles, and the like were still being made in styles that had emerged directly from earlier examples. Ironically, the kerfed box was one of the few "old object types" that was no longer in active production.

Nor was Barrett interested in the latest varieties of anthropology: "The modern training that ethnologists get is too often slanted very decidedly toward culture change and all that sort of thing without

⁷³ William Heick to Samuel A. Barrett, 11 February 1963, BP.

⁷⁴ For two excellent reviews of changing conceptions of tradition in Northwest Coast culture, see Laforet 1993 and Harkin 1996. An important example of the more recent temporal perspective can be seen in Cole's treatment of Native resistance to the anti-potlatch legislation (Cole and Chaikin 1990).

⁷⁵ Samuel A. Barrett to Bill Holm, 5 July 1961, BP.

regard to the ancient cultures, which is our particular province and our particular concern" (1960-2, 220). The anthropology of these two film projects was quite anachronistic, though in different ways. Neither production was responding particularly to the trends of the discipline at the time because neither was made by an anthropologist in his or her prime. Whereas Barrett was trained during a much earlier period, Gardner and Heick were not professional anthropologists, only amateur readers of the subject. *Blunden Harbour*, in fact, represents some advance into the next generation, with Gardner's and Peterson's interest in Benedict's psychological approach (seen in the narration's mention of "a way of life," a delineation of "patterns of culture" in subsistence, and a focus on dance and ceremonialism). Heick's shooting, in fact, was even more advanced in its documentation of acculturation. As in Lange's Depression-era photos, he unself-consciously showed how people happened to be living.

American anthropology had developed considerably since Barrett had obtained his doctorate. Scholars were now examining modernizing complex societies outside of North America. Even in Northwest Coast studies, anthropologists were beginning to address historical issues. By 1950, almost all the major collector/photographers active at the turn of the century – Franz Boas, Charles Newcombe, Harlan Smith, Edward Curtis – were dead (see Suttles and Jonaitis 1990). Barrett joined the last of Boas's students interested in the region – Erna Gunther, Viola Garfield, Frederica de Laguna. These people were soon to be succeeded by students such as Harry and Audrey Hawthorn, Wilson Duff, Helen Codere, and Bill Holm. During the 1950s, Duff and the Hawthorns were extending a Boasian tradition. Duff (1964), concerned with museum collections, was conducting basic ethnographic research, but he combined this with a temporal perspective in his history of culture contact in British Columbia; and Harry Hawthorn (1958) was interested in even more recent cultural change. A little younger than Barrett, Gunther was a key link with the next generation, as she began a historical study of the collecting of Northwest Coast artefacts (1972), anticipating the work of Douglas Cole.⁷⁶ In the next generation, Helen Codere also addressed issues of Kwakwaka'wakw cultural change (1950, 1961).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ In the 1950s and early 1960s, Bill Holm, a protégé of Gunther, was extending the more formalist analyses of Boas; his historical research came later.

⁷⁷ Another, more institutional, trend of Northwest Coast studies in the 1950s was the shift to local museums and universities. The large eastern museums, which had amassed such huge Coastal collections at the turn of the century, had lost interest in the region. Their place

At the same time, almost all contemporary anthropologists firmly believed that Kwakwaka'wakw tradition was near death. Around 1954, Gunther said: "Northwest Coast Indian art is today as much a matter of the past as the art of the Renaissance"; "The culture which [the Indian] had is gone. We can't bring it back. We've taken the heart out of it, and once that has happened it is almost impossible to restore it to its own old form."⁷⁸ Mungo Martin was seen as the last of his kind. According to Harry Hawthorn, he seemed "an awfully frail old thread for this terrific tradition to depend on."⁷⁹

With his preservationist mission, Samuel Barrett faced special problems when he was not able to film particular forms of Aboriginal behaviour. In these cases, he resorted to reconstruction, which he had used when creating museum dioramas.⁸⁰ In fact, he was also following a long tradition of reconstruction in documentary film – one that goes back at least to Curtis and Flaherty and that continues in the present (Balicki 1995). For his American Indian films, Barrett employed reconstruction in several ways. In *The Totem Pole*, he wanted to show the use of stone tools, although artists were then carving with metal blades and power saws. As we have seen, he had Martin and Hunt borrow old-style tools from the museum. Yet because it would have taken too long to cut down a tree with the traditional tools, Barrett had his assistant, David Peri, use a metal axe.⁸¹ The totem pole film is cleverly edited to disguise this fact. When we first see the tree in the forest it already has two large v-shaped notches cut into it, which the carvers deepen with traditional-style (but metal-tipped) adzes. In the subsequent shot the pole falls over, with all the intervening cutting omitted.⁸² At UBC, Heck did shoot Bill Reid and Douglas

was taken by institutions in Seattle, Vancouver, and Victoria. This is seen in the founding of the UBC museum in 1949 and, with the appointment of Duff, in the professionalization of the anthropology department at the provincial museum the following year. The personnel of Heck's two film projects, despite some eastern ties, represented more of a West Coast effort, with Gardner and Peterson and even Barrett.

⁷⁸ Erna Gunther (c. 1954), "Northwest Coast," lecture number six of a televised course, "Primitive Art"; Erna Gunther 1954, "The Indian Today," lecture number thirteen of a televised course, "Indian Cultures of the Pacific Northwest"; copies at Audio-Visual Center, University of Washington.

⁷⁹ Harry Hawthorn to Wilson Duff, 17 March 1953; Totem Pole File, UBC Museum of Anthropology.

⁸⁰ Despite his frequent use of reconstruction, Barrett often impressed upon his film colleagues that he wanted "no theatricals" (Heick, personal communication, 1999).

⁸¹ This episode was shared with me by William Heck, who took a picture of Peri using the ax. Heck recounts other examples of Barrett's reconstructions, such as getting fish from a fish hatchery and then beating the water to herd them into a Pomo fish trap or, for a Pomo cooking scene, substituting a cow carcass for an elk carcass that was too rotten to use.

⁸² This scene also has one of Barrett's few attempts to recreate natural sound. As the tree falls over we hear Mungo Martin calling out something in Kwak'wala (the equivalent of

Cranmer using a power saw, but they chose not to use this footage.⁸³ Similarly, in order to have enough boiling water on hand for the box steaming, Barrett supplemented the hot rocks with a kettle of hot water.⁸⁴

When he could not fully reconstruct the past, Barrett was willing to document cultural practices as he found them. Perhaps noting the somewhat forced juxtapositions in the totem pole film, Wilson Duff prompted Barrett to “explain why these obviously modern Indians are using hammer, chisel, and wedges rather than a power saw.”⁸⁵ In response to Barrett’s initial request for old ways, Audrey Hawthorn explained the cultural conservatism at work: “Incidentally, Mr. Reid uses many tools which are in aboriginal form, which he has had copied from old North West Coast tools, on the grounds that they do many operations best. Of course, power saws, etc. are used in places, but the handcraft work is with ‘D’ and ‘Elbow’ adzes, curved knives, etc.”⁸⁶

In response to this information and Duff’s direct comments, Barrett modified his scripts. For the section on “tree felling” he wrote: “In olden times, this cutting would have been done with a blade of stone, or shell, or it might have been managed with the aid of fire. Today the white man’s metal chisel is employed. However, as of old, the primitive stone maul provides the power for driving the wedge.”⁸⁷ Repeating some of this information in *The Totem Pole*, he added that these iron blades were hafted into traditional forms and that Martin had adopted the lipped elbow adz only five years earlier (as Duff had pointed out).⁸⁸ During the wood-working scenes the AIFP team did depict the range of tools that Martin was actually using. As Barrett acknowledged: “We do have to make some concessions to modernism in the matter of clothing and various things of that sort. These are not only per-

“timber”?), followed by the sound of a crash. Moreover, this same tree-cutting scene was used as an initial step in both the box and totem pole films, perhaps implying that there were two different trees. In *Totem Pole*, however, only brief portions of the carving process were shown, so one could not draw any definitive conclusions.

⁸³ Archaeologist Robert F. Heizer, Barrett’s Berkeley colleague, noted that sometimes these reconstructions were just plain wrong: “In every case [of the films that Heizer examined] it is obvious to anyone who has conducted or read Californian ethnography, or who knows this in some detail, that these films are *not* accurate depictions of aboriginal practices, but are those with native Californian ‘actors’ who were doing the best they could at this degree of remove from aboriginal times” (1974, 29). According to Heizer, Barrett admitted these errors to him.

⁸⁴ According to Henry Hunt (Peter Macnair, personal communication, 1999).

⁸⁵ Duff to Barrett, 29 March 1963, BP.

⁸⁶ Hawthorn to Barrett, 1 September 1961, BP.

⁸⁷ Samuel A. Barrett, script for “tree felling,” BP.

⁸⁸ Duff to Barrett, 15 February, 29 March 1963, BP.

missible, but mandatory" (1961, 16). However, while *The Totem Pole* discusses the use of traditional paints, there is no mention of the new, commercially produced pigments that carvers were using at the time.

A more substantial instance of reconstruction involved Martin's box making. When he was learning his craft at the turn of the century, the fashioning of bent boxes was rapidly going out of style. We do not know whether he had made them in his youth, but he had probably not constructed one in many years when, in 1951, the UBC museum asked him to produce a series of storage boxes showing the stages of construction (Hawthorn 1979, 14-5). Apparently Martin relied on his own knowledge of the technique and did not consult Boasian ethnographies and museum collections, as did some later carvers. Since Martin's box construction for Barrett, there has been a great revival in kerfed box making on the Northwest Coast. While there has been some independent study and experimentation, most of the leading contemporary box makers can trace their learning of the craft either to Martin or to one of his students.⁸⁹

In their films, Robert Gardner and his colleagues took a very different approach to the Kwakwaka'wakw past. Somewhat paradoxically, although Blunden Harbour was one of the more conservative Kwakwaka'wakw villages at the time, the filmmakers readily included signs of acculturation. In a naturalistic fashion, with no reconstruction, they filmed things as they found them: the recent houses of milled lumber, the unself-conscious combination of a metal fork and cedar basket for gathering clams, and the commercial fishing boat. In the house, we see a stove, a guitar on the wall, a woman baking bread, the family drinking canned milk and using modern utensils at the dinner table, as well as manufactured clothing. In his narration, Gardner seems to find a place for both the past and the present. On the one hand, he says, "Each day a little different from the next: gathering, saving, cooking, eating, sleeping. There is a time and place for everyone, the old, the young, the dead, the quick." This is tempered by his statement, heard over a shot of the metal digging fork, that "there is as much to look back upon as there is ahead ... Old methods with new tools, old tools with new methods." Although there is a refreshing depiction of contemporaneous Kwakwaka'wakw life in Blunden Harbour, the viewer gets the feeling that the great art seen in the

⁸⁹ Briefly, the principal artists responsible for the revival were Kwakwaka'wakw carvers Douglas Cranmer and Tony Hunt, both students of Martin, who, in turn, taught many others. For further details, see Jacknis 1989; Davidson 1980.

dances is a remnant of a once flourishing tradition. As the narration in *Dances of the Kwakiutl* claims (unjustly), although the dances are no longer significant within a ceremonial complex, they have meaning through individual efforts. This retrospective romanticism was underscored at the beginning of *Blunden Harbour* by a recitation of the village's origin myth and Gardner's reference to "an ancient formula for success."

Life in Blunden Harbour changed dramatically soon after the film was made. Within a few years many of the masks worn by the dancers were in museum storerooms in Vancouver, Seattle, and New York.⁹⁰ The big house used for the dances collapsed in the late 1950s, and the village itself was abandoned around 1966 (Holm and Quimby 1980, 39). As a result of federal policies, the Kwakwaka'wakw were pressured to resettle in "more accessible" towns on Vancouver Island.

These two film projects, shot in two very different locations, display a geographical patterning that implies a temporal patterning. By the 1950s, Blunden Harbour was an isolated and conservative village compared to Martin's former homes of Fort Rupert and Alert Bay, never mind to his new residence of Victoria. Although, at least since the mid-nineteenth century, the Kwakwaka'wakw had a tradition of travelling to and living in Victoria and, later, Vancouver, these cities were predominantly non-Native. Like Boas's Kwakwaka'wakw photographs taken at the Chicago World's Fair (Jacknis 1991a, 106-9), the box film was shot in a displaced setting (matching its displaced time). This contrast is echoed in the kinds of big houses present in each film. The structure in *Blunden Harbour* was the last surviving traditional-style house in the village; it was built around 1900 and was once used for family living. The house in the Barrett films was less than a decade old at the time of filming and was constructed as a museum display.

⁹⁰ The thunderbird headdress on which Seaweed is working in *Blunden Harbour* was purchased from the artist in 1951 and is now in the UBC Museum of Anthropology; his double *hamatsa* mask, carved about 1915, is also at UBC; his *kulus* mask, purchased in 1952, is now in the Burke Museum, and his own killer whale and ravens headdress is now in the National Museum of the American Indian (Holm 1983, 174, 92, 124-5, 173). The owl mask, carved by George Walkus of Smith Inlet around 1920, was collected the year after filming; in 1969 it and the two crooked beak masks were donated by the widow of Seattle collector Sidney Gerber to the Burke Museum, University of Washington (Holm 1972, 42, 14-6). A circular frontlet, acquired by Norman Feder around 1966, is in the Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York (Vincent et al. 2000, 361). The account of this collecting probably tells us more about the actions of museums in the 1950s than it does about the viability of Kwakwaka'wakw artistic creation. Many museums in the Northwest, particularly the UBC Museum of Anthropology, were experiencing a major bout of expansion during the decade (Hawthorn 1967). On the other hand, many Kwakwaka'wakw remember this as a time of rapid acculturation (e.g., Spradley 1969).

In both, however, these structures are essentially backgrounds to the filmed action.⁹¹

The 1950s marked the beginning of a period of substantial change for the Kwakwaka'wakw (Macnair 1986; Cranmer 1990). In 1951, the Canadian government abandoned the anti-potlatch legislation and instituted a form of local governance, with community-elected band councils. Throughout this decade the First Nations of British Columbia were drawn into increasingly mechanized commercial fishing and logging. With the removal of active and official cultural oppression, the Kwakwaka'wakw began to assert their ethnic identity in a series of linked cultural programs. In 1951, the extended Kwakwaka'wakw community located at Alert Bay, their largest population centre, presented dance performances for non-Native audiences in an attempt to raise funds for the local hospital. In 1958, to mark the centennial of British Columbia as a Crown colony and the British discovery of the town, the Native community organized the first of what became annual "June Sports" games and dances; that was also the year they renovated totem poles in the local cemetery.

Few of these changes are reflected in Gardner's work, and none is reflected in Barrett's. Partly this was due to Heick's brief and superficial visits to British Columbia. Although the Orbit group had spent some time in Fort Rupert the year before, Heick's 1951 trip lasted about ten days, and his 1961 stay was about a month (all but five days of which were spent in Vancouver and Victoria). Ultimately, however, it was because of their theoretical and conceptual orientations that neither Gardner nor Barrett depicted cultural change.

A TIME OF TRANSITION

The extended decade in which William Heick worked on the Northwest Coast was a period of transition for the anthropology of the Kwakwaka'wakw. Of course, every historical moment may be regarded as a period of transition from some perspective, but, in this case, the transition marked the ending of the period of Boasian salvage and the beginning of a new paradigm focused on cultural resistance and revival. Since the production of these films, there has been a dramatic shift in scholarly attitudes concerning the viability of Native cultural

⁹¹ Yet, over time, Martin's house in Thunderbird Park and, in fact, the growing Victoria community of Kwakwaka'wakw artists have steadily become "authentic." As the museum's carving program continued for over thirty years, it has become a "real" setting for the conduct of Kwakwaka'wakw art and culture.

traditions – from Barrett's belief in the need to salvage dying traditions (inherited from Boas at the turn of the century), to Hawthorn's and Duff's concern to establish revival/replication programs (in the 1950s), to the recent attention to artistic continuity and even innovation (post-1967).⁹²

Heick's last filming in British Columbia came on the verge of a host of related developments that suggested a new sense of cultural viability: In anthropology, Ronald Rohner's 1962–3 research marked the first extended period of Kwakwaka'wakw fieldwork in decades (Rohner 1967).⁹³ The year 1965 was especially momentous: Bill Holm published his influential book on Northwest Coast art styles, and Wilson Duff began a second career at UBC, radically shifting his scholarly concerns to questions of symbolism and structuralism. Peter Macnair (1986, 517), his successor at the provincial museum, instituted substantial changes in the carving program, including object loans for potlatches. In the art world, a turning point came two years later with the influential *Arts of the Raven* exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery (Duff et al. 1967). The 1960s also witnessed the opening of the first commercial galleries focusing on Northwest Coast fine art (Duffek 1993).

Yet, as historian James Clifford (1988) maintains, art and anthropology, associated here with Gardner and Barrett, respectively, are ultimately alternate and mutually accommodating Western discourses. What they ignore, and what can no longer be ignored, is a Native voice or, perhaps in this case, a Native eye/vision. After 1965 or so, the Kwakwaka'wakw began to take control of the presentation of their arts and ceremony, the principal subjects of both film projects. In Victoria Tony Hunt opened his successful Arts of the Raven Gallery and Studio in 1970; in Alert Bay, over a decade of cultural activity culminated in the opening of the big house in 1965, ushering in a great period of potlatching. Also beginning about this time were the repatriation efforts that would lead to the opening of the two Kwakwaka'wakw museums in Cape Mudge and Alert Bay in 1979 and 1980, respectively. Filmmaking was not excluded from this ferment.⁹⁴ While it is much harder to briefly summarize all the films

⁹² These issues are far too complex to be adequately treated in this context; they are documented and explored in greater depth in the forthcoming revision of Jacknis 1989.

⁹³ The principal published anthropological fieldwork on the Kwakwaka'wakw between Rohner and Philip Drucker's 1936 trip was Helen Codere's two visits in 1951 and 1955, and an additional visit by Drucker in 1953.

⁹⁴ Barrett, with the assistance of Wilson Duff, was somewhat of a forerunner in Native collaboration. One feature characteristic of later films was that they were screened for

and videos of the Kwakwaka'wakw that came after Heick than it is to summarize those that came before him (see Morris 1994), prominent among them are the Native productions (e.g., the two films produced by the U'mista Cultural Society [with non-Native filmmakers] and the on-going work of 'Namgis filmmaker Barb Cranmer).⁹⁵

With the passage of time, we can see what unites these two bodies of film shot by William Heick. As Robert Gardner and Samuel Barrett both realized, though perhaps in different ways, film is a valuable tool for preserving the past. Their documentation of Willie Seaweed, Mungo Martin, and their respective communities remains an important resource for our understanding of Kwakwaka'wakw art and culture as it existed in the mid-twentieth century. Perhaps just as important, these films are also contemporary documents of anthropological attitudes towards the Kwakwaka'wakw during a decade of disciplinary and representational change.

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their subjects. Duff "viewed [the box film] twice with various members of the local Kwakiutl community in attendance ... The reaction has uniformly been excellent ... One feature which received a lot of favourable comment was the backgrounds, both of the carving and the bending sequences." Duff to Barrett, 15 February 1963, BP. While the Orbit group did not show any of its footage to the local Kwakwaka'wakw community, more recently Robert Gardner has returned to New Guinea to show *Dead Birds* to the original participants (1996).

⁹⁵ *Potlatch ... A Strict Law Bids Us Dance*, Dennis Wheeler, director (1975); and *Box of Treasures*, Chuck Olin, director (1983), both produced by the U'mista Cultural Society. Two recent films directed by Barb Cranmer are *Laxwesa Wa: Strength of the River* (1995) and *Qatuwas: People Gathering Together* (1997).

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