

Vancouver Canada

Transformation Dreams

Kwakwaka'wakw Territory

Queen
Charlotte
Islands

Vancouver
Island

Vancouver, B.C.

Neah Bay

Seattle



Kwakwaka'wakw

Kwakwaka'wakw spirituality is transmitted at potlaches, mostly during the winter season. They are designed for the transference, justification, and reaffirmation of family and spiritual status inherited from primeval ancestors who contacted the spirit world and were given privileges from beings of a supernatural nature. These beings prefer honor, power, and magic through the gift of [Tlugwe](#), which are supernatural treasures, often taking the physical form of masks and regalia, but also comprising stories, songs, recitations, dances.

Kwakwaka'wakw spirits, like those of other Northwest Coast peoples, can be divided into four separate spirit realms, including sky spirits, sea spirits, earth spirits, and otherworldly spirits. All four realms interact with one another, and human beings attempt to contact all four worlds and often channel their spirits at sacred ceremonies wherein dancers go into trances while wearing masks and other regalia associated with the spirit world.

<https://umistapotlatch.ca/intro-eng.php>

Hamat'sa

Of particular importance in Kwakwaka'wakw culture is the secret society called [Hamatsa](#). During the winter, there is a four-day, complex dance that serves to initiate new members of Hamatsa. The Hamatsa dancer represents the spirit of Baxbaxwalanuksiwe ("Man-Eater at the North End of the World"; who can transform into various man-eating birds and has mouths all over his body. Hamatsa initiates are possessed by Baxwbakwalanuksiwe'. On the first day of the Hamatsa ceremonies the initiate is lured out of the woods and brought into the Big House to be tamed. When the initiate returns, he enacts his cannibalistic possession symbolically. Gwaxwggwakwalanuksiwe' is the most prestigious role in the Supernatural Man-Eater Birds ceremony; he is a man-eating raven. Galuxwadzuwus ("Crooked-Beak of Heaven") and Huxhukw (supernatural Crane-Like Bird who cracks skulls of men to suck out their brains) are other participants.

Ceremonial Masks













Trickster--Shapeshifter

Many myths relate moments of transformation often involving trickster supernaturals (a trickster is a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphic animal who exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behavior). Raven, for instance, is known as a consummate trickster—he often changes into other creatures, and helps humans by providing them with a variety of useful things such as the sun, moon, fire, and salmon. Thunderbird (*Kwankwanxwalige'*), who was a mythical ancestor of the Kwakwaka'wakw, also figures prominently in mythology. He is believed to cause thunder when he beats his wings, and lightning comes from his eyes. He lives in the celestial realm, and he can remove his bird skin to assume human form.

Transformation Masks

Transformation masks manifest transformation, usually an animal changing into a mythical being or one animal becoming another. Masks are worn by dancers during ceremonies, they pull strings to open and move the mask—in effect, animating it. In the Eagle mask shown below, you can see the wooden frame and netting that held the mask on the dancer's head. When the cords are pulled, the eagle's face and beak split down the center, and the bottom of the beak opens downwards, giving the impression of a bird spreading its wing. Transformed, the mask reveals the face of an ancestor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8WREmWxggU&list=PLoAgj1OfSJXMEIG4mKifqwfnz0TrISinA&index=2>







































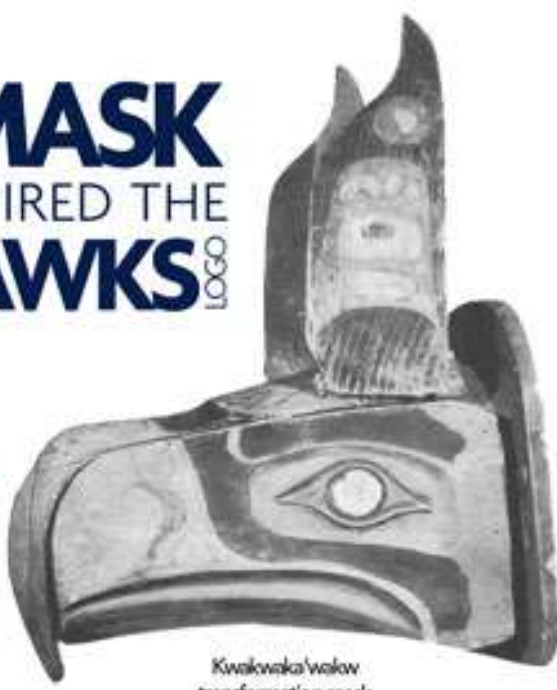




THE MASK THAT INSPIRED THE SEAHAWKS^{LOGO}



Seattle Seahawks Logo
1976-2001



Kwakwaka'wakw
transformation mask

 **Burke**
MUSEUM

<https://www.burkemuseum.org/news/mask-inspired-seahawks-logo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zxJkpBnOUU>

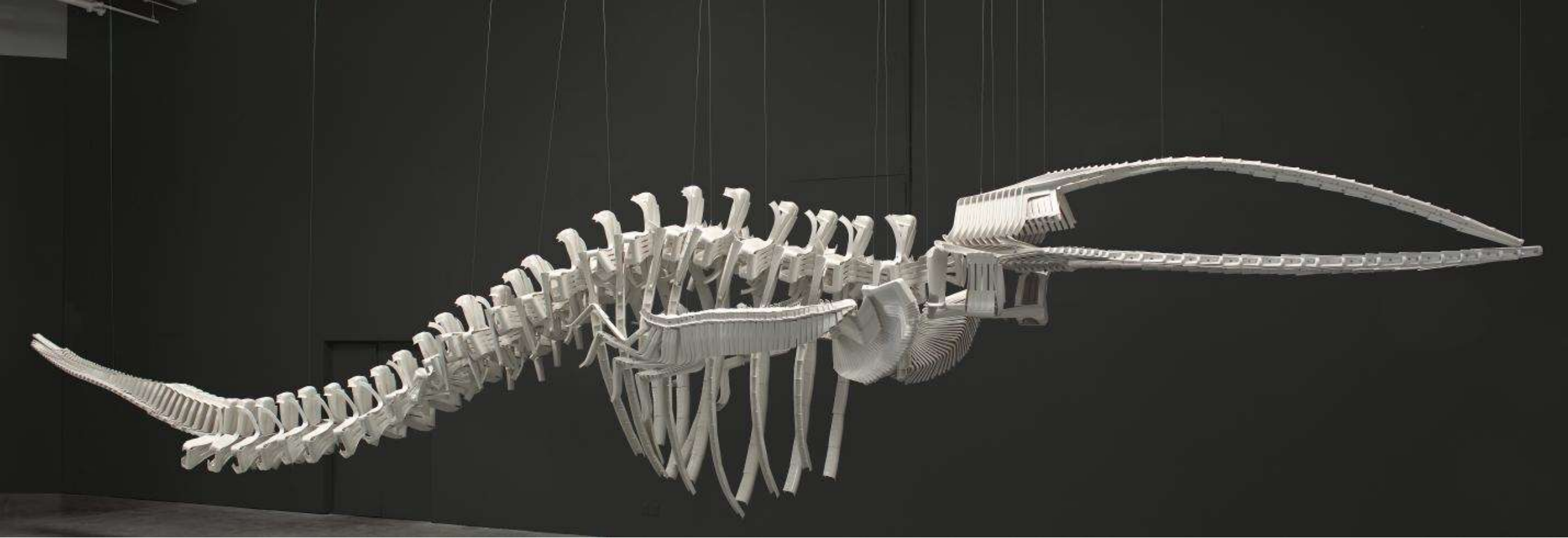


Brian Jungen (1970-

Brian Jungen was born in Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada in 1970. He draws from his family's ranching and hunting background, as well as his Dane-zaa heritage, when disassembling and recombining consumer goods into whimsical sculptures. Jungen transforms plastic chairs into whale skeletons, garbage bins into a giant turtle carapace, sewing tables into a basketball court, golf bags into towering totem poles, and collectible Nike Air Jordan shoes into objects resembling both the ceremonial masks of British Columbian coastal tribes and abstract modernist sculptures.

<https://art21.org/artist/brian-jungen/>

<https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s8/brian-jungen-in-vancouver-segment/>







BRIAN JUNGEN

























Jungen first built *Crux* for the 2008 Biennale of Sydney. For two months leading up to the contemporary art festival, he camped on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbor. The night sky, and its constellations, and the steady traffic of airplanes going into and out of Sydney International Airport inspired the piece. This sea eagle also hangs from the mobile. (NMAI, SI)





Assignment Suggestions

- Use common objects in an unintended way to create a work of art
- Create an artwork within an artwork--something only partially revealed (an underpainting peeking through an overpainting, for example)
- Create an artwork that appears to open out revealing something else inside
- Create an artwork that “transforms” depending on how you look at it (for example, shapes morphing into other shapes)
- Create an artwork inspired by the graphic designs and colors of the Kwakwaka'wakw