

Born of the Bear Dance

DUGAN AGUILAR'S PHOTOGRAPHS
OF NATIVE CALIFORNIA

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CA.

STUDENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

“The Bear Dance has always been in my life...I look at the Bear Dance two ways. First as a place where people gather together for spiritual renewal and secondly as a time to celebrate each other.”

—Dugan Aguilar

The Artist and His World

“My work is to show Natives alive and well.”

—Dugan Aguilar



How does seeing yourself positively or negatively represented in the world influence your own understanding of yourself? Choose a photograph that creates a positive representation, or a positive response to negative stereotypes, and share why you chose it.

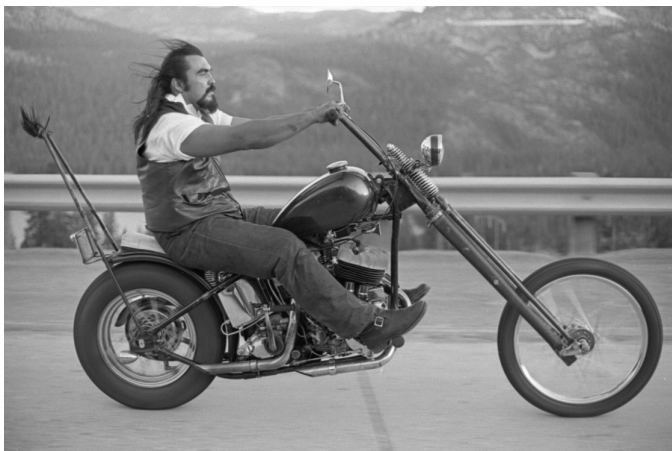


PHOTO: Dugan Aguilar, *Cousin Fred, Truckee*, 1982. Gift of the family of Dugan Aguilar.

Celebrating Tradition

“Ceremonies and dances provide me with a connection. I am sure the dancers have a feeling of connection to the earth every time that they go in the roundhouse. So a part of my photography is sharing that connection.”

—Dugan Aguilar

Ceremonies and rituals can also be everyday activities you do regularly, that carry special meaning or feel important.



What are some of your own ceremonies, family or cultural traditions? How does honoring traditions shape your sense of self, your connection to others, and your role in the world? Choose a photograph that represents your answer and share why.

Regalia is a collection of clothing and items worn during traditional ceremonies and events to represent community traditions, spirituality, and the person wearing them.



What materials do you notice in the regalia worn in these photographs? Look closely. What do you wonder about the materials chosen?

Celebrating Tradition: Basket Weavers

Native baskets can represent relationships to the land. Materials used for daily life, basket weaving, and other traditional cultural lifeways are found on ancestral lands.

As a result of colonization and land theft, Native people often lost their right to gather materials in these places. Native groups across the country are involved in land reclamation, to return stolen land and restore relationships between Indigenous people and ancestral lands.



How can traditional cultural lifeways like basket weaving and ceremonies represent Native sovereignty, or the freedom to self-govern over land and ways of life?



PHOTO: Dugan Aguilar, *Elsie Allen (Pomo) Holding a Basket by her Mother, Annie Burke*, circa 1985. Gift of the family of Dugan Aguilar.

Deep Time

“...to me the people in my photographs are really a grounded part of the Earth.”

—Dugan Aguilar



How might someone’s connection to land influence their identity or values? Choose a landscape with a person or evidence of people. What’s a message you think Dugan Aguilar might be sharing?

“...I live in two worlds—the Indian world and today’s society—and I’m pretty much in harmony with both.”

—Dugan Aguilar



What are some of the different worlds or social settings you or your peers navigate? How do you think navigating these worlds shapes identity and how we see ourselves?



Why is it important to learn about and from contemporary Native people? How does it deepen our understanding of where we live and our visions for the future of our community?



PHOTO: Dugan Aguilar, *Meyo Marrufo (Eastern Pomo- citizen of the Robinson Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians), Tower Bridge, Sacramento River, detail*, 1999. Gift of the family of Dugan Aguilar.