

## Isaiah Wilner

### Transformation Masks: Recollecting the Indigenous Origins of Modern Knowledge



Masks long viewed as objects of collection may be seen anew as subjects of recollection, mnemonic devices that archive the propagation of knowledge. This talk reunites a set of masks with the narratives they encode: stories invented as a survival strategy by the Kwakwaka'wakw, a network of peoples who made use of the anthropologist Franz Boas as a host body to enter and alter the world that came to colonize them. The efforts of the Native intellectual George Hunt to disseminate the masks—and, with the masks, his message of transformation—directly resulted in the modern concept of culture. Hunt's work points to a profound yet unacknowledged Indigenous influence on modern thought. Isaiah is a North American historian who researches at the intersections of culture, creativity, and human knowledge. He received his PhD in History from Yale University.

**Wednesday February 22, 2017 at 3:00-4:30 pm**

**Social Sciences Building Conference Room 107**

**Reception to follow**