



Brian D. Tripp, Woodpecker, 1982,
Colored pencil on brown paper.
Collection: Denver Art Museum

BRIAN D. TRIPP

Karuk Artist

“There is no such thing as the Twenty-First Century”



Brian Tripp (b. 1946, Eureka) is among California's most important Native American artists, recognized as the first contemporary artist to reference the geometric design of basket design and ceremonial regalia in his work. Both of his parents were Karuk, and he has been a central figure in the revitalization of ceremonial culture on the Klamath River since the 1960s which is another subject of his work. Tripp's art includes paintings and drawings, sculpture and installations, murals and poetry. It also often references the historical iconography of ledger books and contemporary issues of Native sovereignty. His work is in many collections including the Berkeley Art Museum, Crocker Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, Denver Art Museum, and his original illustrated books are held by institutions including the Getty Research Center, the Library of Congress, the Amherst College Library, and the Yale University Library. His work has been exhibited at museums including the de Young Museum in San Francisco, New Museum in New York, Museum of Art and Design in New York, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, and at galleries including American Indian Contemporary Art, American Indian Community House, and Gallery Paule Anglim. He was the recipient of the California Living Heritage Award from the Alliance for Traditional California Arts in 2018. He currently lives on the upper Klamath in Karuk Tribal housing in Orleans, California.



Brian Tripp, *Dance Design*, 1985, China Marker and paint on paper.
Private Collection.

Interest in Tripp's work is strong. A collaborative team including Brittany Britton (Hupa), Gallery Director at the Goudi'ni Native American Art Gallery at Humboldt State University; Professor of Art Mark Dean Johnson at San Francisco State University; Special Collections Librarian Mike Kelley at Amherst College, and book arts specialist Marshall Weber at Booklyn are looking for an organizing institutional partner to help develop an major exhibition and catalog-poetry anthology.

Such an exhibition might features fifty years of work including the artist's **illustrated books and drawings on stock market pages** that reference earlier American Indian ledger drawings; **basket design bottle sculpture** that pay homage to the turn-of-the-20th-century woven forms by the giants of Karuk and Washoe fine art basketry; **mixed-media paintings and sculpture** that celebrate ceremonial renewal and Native sovereignty and history; and **poetry** which has never been collected. The specific exhibition checklist could be large or small and would depend on the interest of the organizing venue, but the catalog could be more comprehensive as the artist's work has never been substantially documented.



Brian D. Tripp, *The People Are Coming*, 1988-1989, 45.75 x 115.5", mixed media including paint and aluminum foil on panel. Collection: Humboldt Arts Council, Gift of Morris Graves and Robert Yarber.

Note: iconography includes references to both men's and women's Klamath River tribal dance regalia, as well as ceremonial dance houses.

Brian Tripp, Clarion Alley Mural, San Francisco “I Know Which Way the Wind Blows”

*I am from the spawning ground
It's the one that we all know
At one time or another
we all swam from the same hole
That's when my water broke
That's when my Father spoke
He said, when I was young I was told
Know how the water tastes
Know which way it flows
Feel the wind
Know which way it blows
Learn from the animals
The birds and the bees
Say a prayer for the home ground
The rivers, rocks, mountains, oceans and trees
Always give
more than you take
Always work hard
for the people's sake
Don't tell lies
Do things right
Sing your own song
and you won't be wrong
So what I know
is what I owe
Take it
Use it
Then put it back
in the ground
Where it was
before it was found
And then give it light
and make it bright
and let it grow
With love, with respect
That way, that day
we all can grow.*



Note: this work references Native ethics and philosophy

Tripp recognizes the inspiration of the basket weavers including Elizabeth Hickox (Karuk) and Louisa Keyser/Dat-so-la-li (Washoe) in his extensive series of mixed-media on found bottles. He has said that his use of poetic titles for abstract works is explicitly inspired by one of Keyser's funerary baskets that she entitled "All My Friends Are Dead or Dying." Tripp's bottles are constructed of painted and colored duct tape and reflective tape used for signs.



Elizabeth Hickox



Louisa Keyser



Brian Tripp



Brian Tripp, mixed media on found bottles.
c. 2000. Frank LaPena Collection.

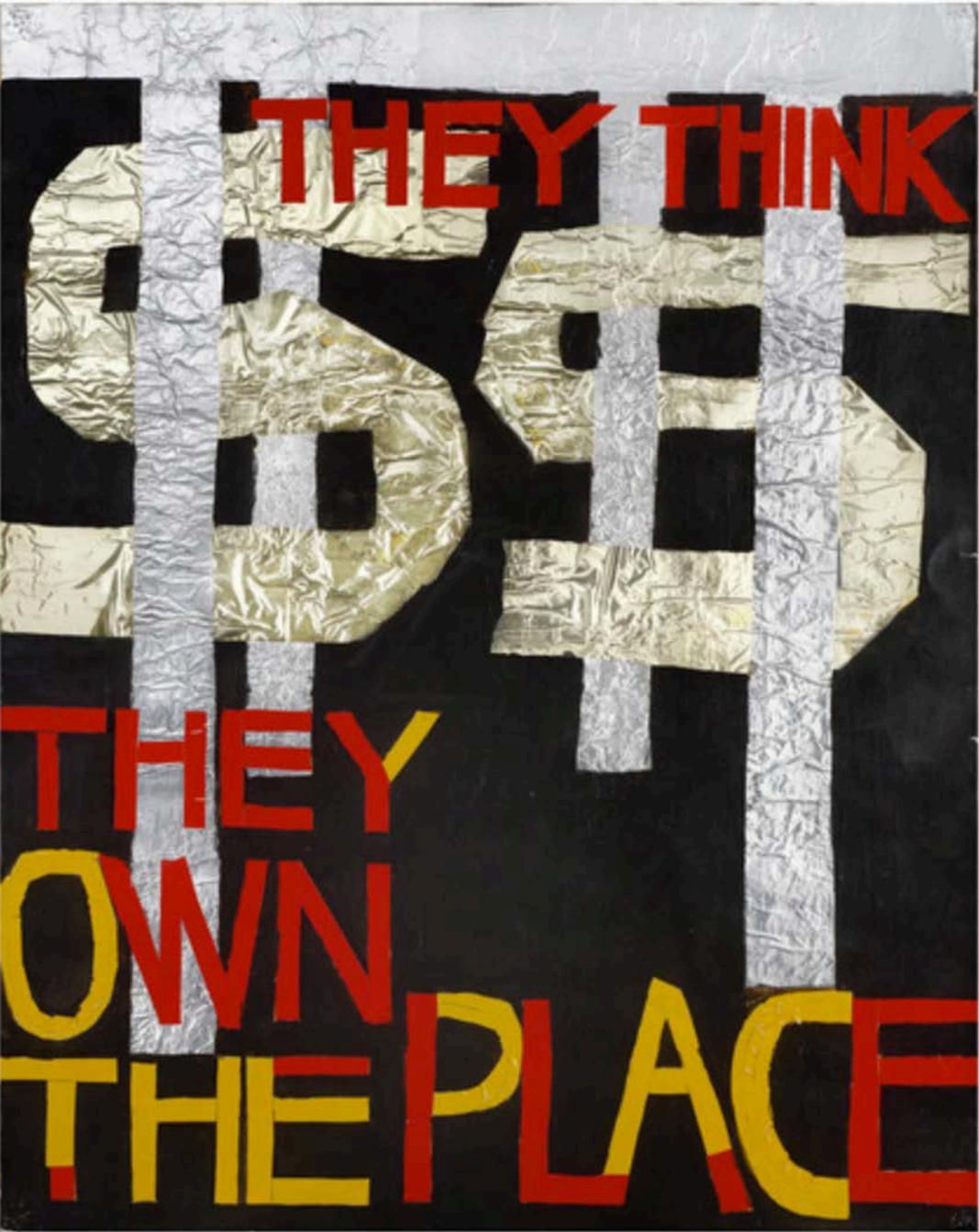
Note: these works advance the anonymous basket bottles woven a century earlier.





Brian Tripp, *When Squares Straightened Out Circles*, 1990, mixed media including a bag of coins and surveyors plumb bob. Dimensions variable. Private Collection.

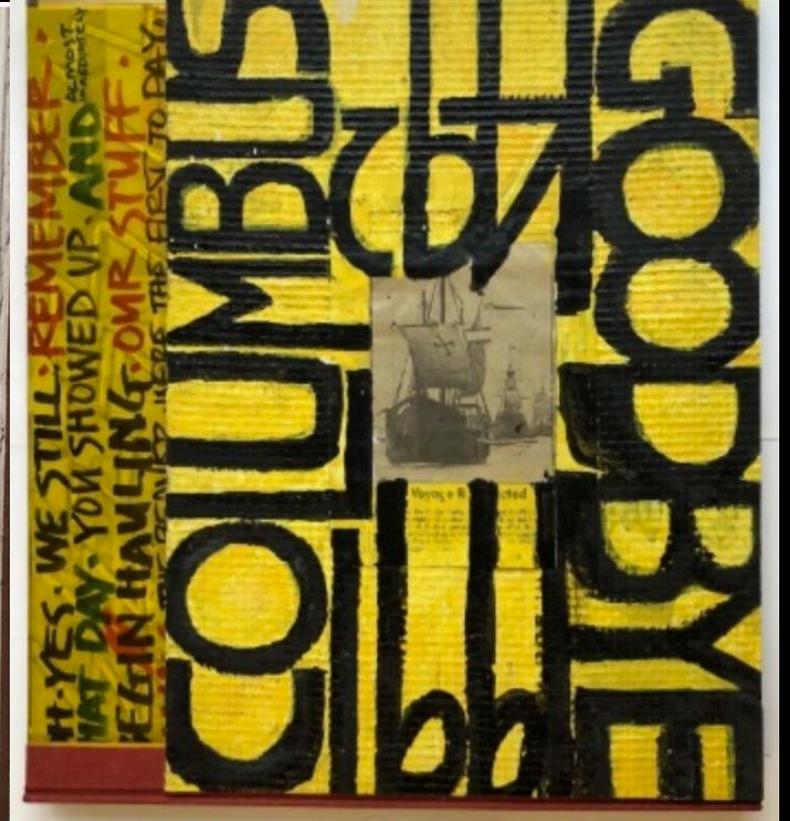
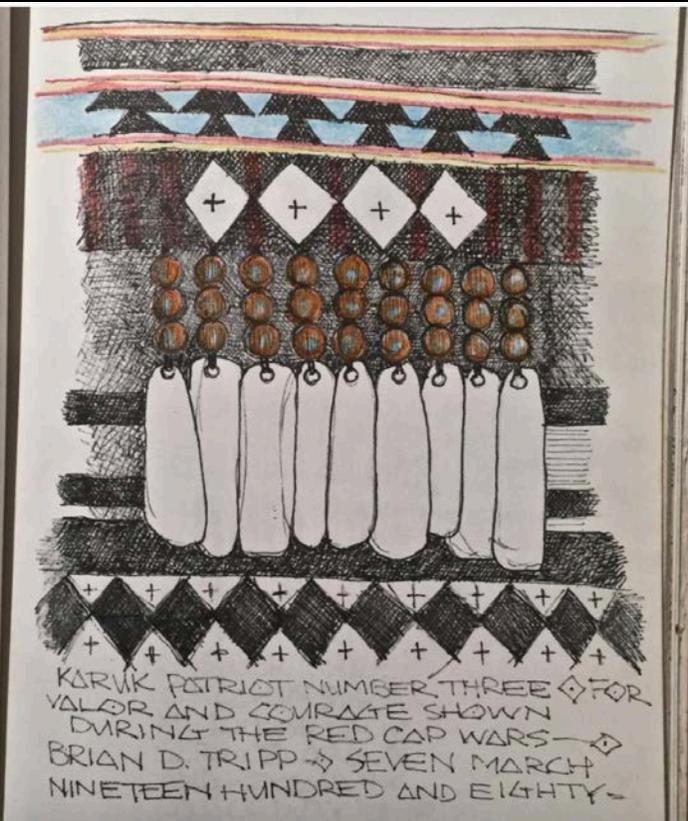
Note: this work refers to the 1852 surveying of California from atop Mount Diablo that enabled the sale of previously sacred lands.



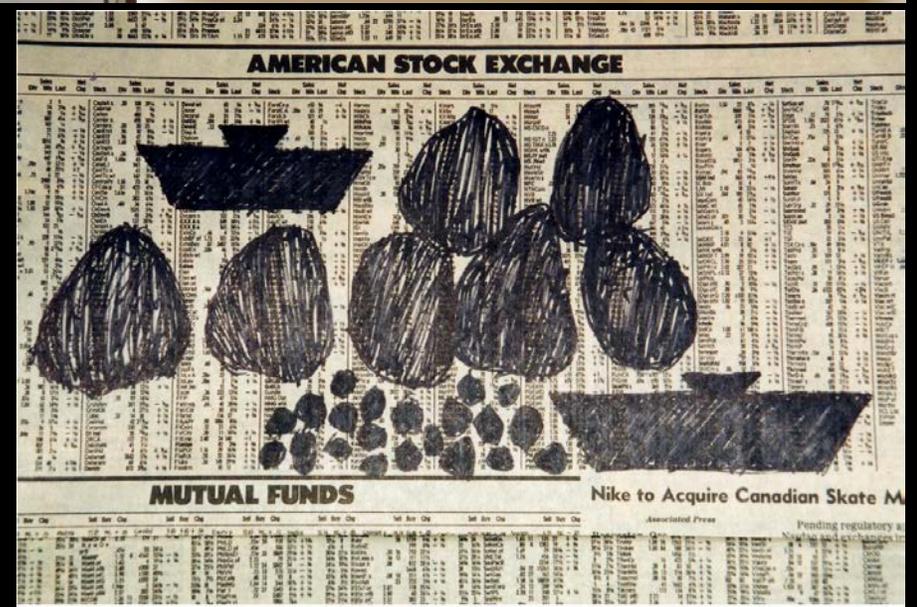
Brian D. Tripp, *They Think They Own the Place*, 1992, (left) mixed media on paper, including traffic reflective tape. 29 x 22". Collection: Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

Brian D. Tripp, *I Want to Gripe*, 2015, (right) mixed media on found map including painted, sharpened sticks, 48 x 60", collection of the artist.

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YOU ^{THE} CAME IN DESIRE.
WITH THAT LOST LOOK IN YOUR EYES
IN DESIRE OF WHAT MY PEOPLE HAD



Brian Tripp, selected illustrated ledger drawings and sketchbooks, multiple institutional collections.



Note: these works reference historical ledger book drawings by Native American people



Brian Tripp, *You Should Know My Place* (left) and *Cross* (center left), mixed media painted sculpture, c. 1985, Collection Frank LaPena and Carla Hills; *Untitled* (center right), 2000, mixed media painted sculpture, private collection; *Dance Sticks* (right), 2010, Collection Kadist Foundation.



Brian Tripp, *The Best Things in Life Are Not Free*, 1989, mixed media collage with tin foil and abalone shells. 96 x 180"
Collection Humboldt State University