



SHORT STORIES

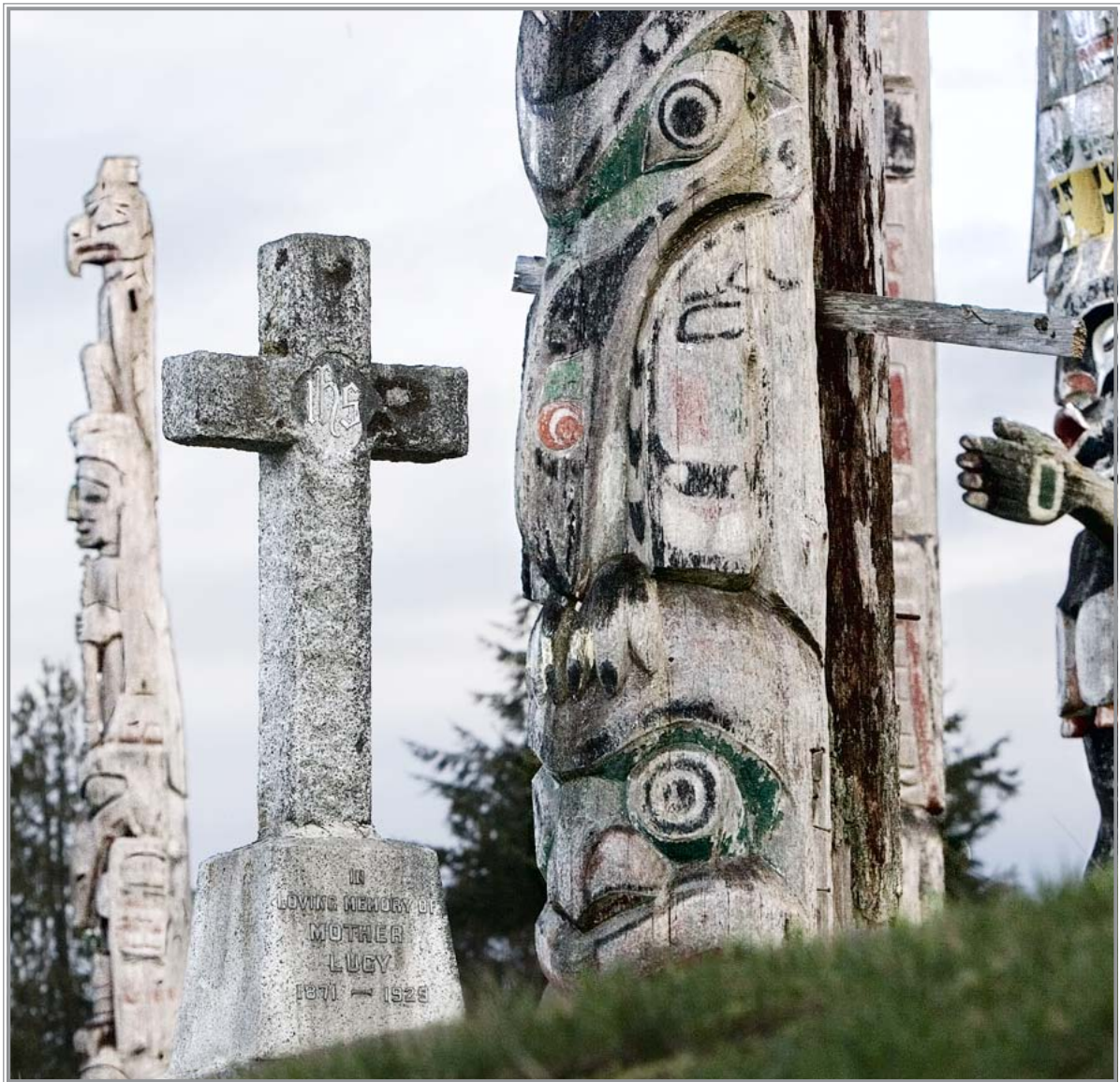
*A Monograph Series by
George Klass*



Kwakwaka'wakw

George Klass





In March of 2005 I had the amazing opportunity to spend a couple of weeks in the village of Alert Bay. Having just acquired a new digital camera and this was a special opportunity to practice by wandering around photographing the wonderful art and other aspects of this vibrant and very culturally aware community.

This is an area of great natural beauty abounding with artefacts and customs representing the First Nations culture. The village of Alert Bay is located on Cormorant Island in the Broughton Strait at the North end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, almost opposite Port McNeil. Population is around 556 people. The settlement was named c.1860 after the Royal Navy ship HMS Alert, which conducted survey operations in the area and anchored in the bay.



The Kwakwaka'wakw (also known as the Kwakiutl) are an Indigenous group of First Nations peoples, numbering about 5,500, who live in British Columbia on northern Vancouver Island and the adjoining mainland and islands. Kwakwaka'wakw translates as "Those who speak Kwak'wala", describing the collective nations within the area that speak the language. The 'Namgis are a part of the Kwakwaka'wakw, in central British Columbia, on northern Vancouver Island. Their main village is now Yalis, on Cormorant Island adjacent to Alert Bay. This is where these images were captured.









Having lived closely, as a boy, with the indigenous peoples of Malaysia I have always felt an affinity and had a fascination for native peoples and their customs. All of us have roots. Our ancestors were a native people at their own point of origin. The sadness for me is that we are quickly losing our sense of identity and the culture of our forefathers. My stay at Alert Bay brought back to me the need for us all to try, as far as we are able, to preserve our cultural inheritance on the one side whilst at the same time adapting to the new world we all live in. My lesson from Alert Bay was to be non-judgemental as the people there do things differently and on a different time line to what I have been used to. One morning, a year ago, there was a brand new child's bicycle laying between the high and low water area on the beach. No one ever touched it and it simply stayed there rusting away in the daily tides. I learnt at that time to be non judgemental.





This wonderful painting was on the door of a disused fish plant. It was the first time I had seen a depiction of an octopus in any of the art of the west coast First Nations.

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This edition is numbered of which this is

This monograph is also available as a hand made 10 page artist Chap Book.

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Not made in China, hand made in Malagash, Nova Scotia!



to have fun, laugh a lot, and capture images that enrich the lives of others