

REFLECTING ON DUGAN AGUILAR: 1947 - 2018

At the time this exhibit and the book of the same name were created, Dugan Aguilar had just retired from his work at the Sacramento Bee and was traveling about the world with his wife, Liz. As such, the text panels speak of Dugan in the present tense. However, Dugan Aguilar passed away in 2018.

His obituary noted the following:

“He took tremendous pride in his Maidu, Pit River, and Paiute heritage, and used his skill in photography for over forty years to document the lives of Native Americans. His mission was to show the world that Natives are alive and well, and to show the beauty of Native faces. His photographs are shown in museums and galleries around the world, and in many books and magazines. He fooled people into thinking he was quiet, but in reality he was funny, smart, and passionate about life. Dugan’s life was important. His legacy will live on. He was loved and cherished, and none of us can ask for more than that.”

The Autry Museum of the American West, where his work was displayed in multiple exhibits over the years, also reflected on Dugan Aguilar. As they wrote,

“Inspired by Ansel Adams, Aguilar referred to his black-and-white images of Indigenous people and places as ‘environmental portraiture.’ He once remarked, ‘I can only say that the photographer wolf has bitten my heart and is deep within me. I have a passion for taking pictures.’”