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| Kiowa 5 |
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| The Kiowa 5 were a group of Kiowa artists born in Indian Territory (in what is now known as Oklahoma) during the first decade of the twentieth century. Stephen Mopope (1898-1974), Jack Hokeah (c. 1900/2-1969), Monroe Tsatoke (1904-1937), James Auchiah (1906-1974), and Spencer Asah (1905/10-1954) were encouraged to paint by relatives, schoolteachers, and Indian Services personnel. In 1926, Oscar Jacobson, head of the University of Oklahoma art department, created a special program for Kiowa artists. Through Jacobson’s influence, from 1928 to 1932, the Kiowa 5 exhibited their paintings at the First International Art Exposition in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and at the 1932 Venice Biennale. These exhibitions, along with a portfolio of the artists’ work titled *Kiowa Indian Art*, brought the group critical acclaim in America and Europe. Stylistically, their watercolour paintings featured outlined fields of flat colour, with little or no indication of perspective or the third dimension. This flat, linear, decorative style was derived in part from Plains ledger drawings and hide paintings. Their subjects were auto-ethnographic representations of everyday, historically traditional Kiowa life. Their art provided a bridge between Plains ledger art of the late nineteenth century and the flat Studio Style taught to Indian students by Dorothy Dunn in Santa Fe in the 1930s. |
| The Kiowa 5 were a group of Kiowa artists born in Indian Territory (in what is now known as Oklahoma) during the first decade of the twentieth century. Stephen Mopope (1898-1974), Jack Hokeah (c. 1900/2-1969), Monroe Tsatoke (1904-1937), James Auchiah (1906-1974), and Spencer Asah (1905/10-1954) were encouraged to paint by relatives, schoolteachers, and Indian Services personnel. In 1926, Oscar Jacobson, head of the University of Oklahoma art department, created a special program for Kiowa artists. Through Jacobson’s influence, from 1928 to 1932, the Kiowa 5 exhibited their paintings at the First International Art Exposition in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and at the 1932 Venice Biennale. These exhibitions, along with a portfolio of the artists’ work titled *Kiowa Indian Art*, brought the group critical acclaim in America and Europe. Stylistically, their watercolour paintings featured outlined fields of flat colour, with little or no indication of perspective or the third dimension. This flat, linear, decorative style was derived in part from Plains ledger drawings and hide paintings. Their subjects were auto-ethnographic representations of everyday, historically traditional Kiowa life. Their art provided a bridge between Plains ledger art of the late nineteenth century and the flat Studio Style taught to Indian students by Dorothy Dunn in Santa Fe in the 1930s.  To American and European audiences the works of the Kiowa 5 epitomised primitivism, which brought the group national and international recognition. Like so-called primitive art, the paintings of the Kiowa 5 were non-illusionistic representations of pre-industrial society. The Kiowa 5 did not come to their perceived primitivist modern style on their own, but were instead repeatedly encouraged to paint in a recognisably Indian ‘style.’ Mentors encouraged them to look to Plains ledger art and animal hide paintings as influences, as well as to the stories of Kiowa tribal elders. Jacobson tried to keep the Kiowa students from Western influence, going so far as separating them from other students and faculty. The art of the Kiowa 5 was thus shaped by non-Natives, whose Romantic ideas about what Indian painting should look like created a feedback loop: patrons wanted Primitive art, and the Kiowa 5 largely gave them what they wanted. Even so, the art produced by the Kiowa 5 is much more than a reaction to demands for primitive art, and reflects modernist ideals in two important ways. First, their lack of linear perspective, three dimensional modelling, and choice of apparently primitive subjects reflected a modernist approach to style and content. Secondly, the Kiowa 5 represent what Chana Kronfeld has identified as a ‘marginal’ modernism. From the margins of mainstream society, the Kiowa 5 successfully negotiated non-Native expectations and retained their Kiowa cultural identity, all while challenging artistic conventions. These five artists, who grew up in poverty in rural Indian Territory were, by 1932, supporting themselves and their families as artists, and as Kiowa. By negotiating two worlds, the Kiowa 5 became trailblazers, setting an indelible example of success for future American Indian artists to follow.  Image: scapdance.jpg  Figure Stephen Mopope  Kiowa Scalp Dance, c. 1930  Watercolour on paper, 22.5 × 37 cm.  The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma  [http://www.nieuwekerk.nl/static/media/img/objecten/indianen-kunst\_en\_cultuur\_tussen\_mythe\_en\_realiteit/dnka-indianen-kunst\_en\_cultuur\_tussen\_mythe\_en\_realiteit-28.jpg] |
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