



*Explores indigenous and immigrant experiences in  
the development of American Indian art*

## Painting Culture, Painting Nature

*Stephen Mopope, Oscar Jacobson, and the  
Development of Indian Art in Oklahoma*

By Gunlög Fur

In the late 1920s, a group of young Kiowa artists, pursuing their education at the University of Oklahoma, encountered Swedish-born art professor Oscar Brousse Jacobson (1882–1966). With Jacobson's instruction and friendship, the Kiowa Six, as they are now known, ignited a spectacular movement in American Indian art. Jacobson, who was himself an accomplished painter, shared a lifelong bond with group member Stephen Mopope (1898–1974), a prolific Kiowa painter, dancer, and musician. *Painting Culture, Painting Nature* explores the joint creativity of these two visionary figures and reveals how indigenous and immigrant communities of the early twentieth century traversed cultural, social, and racial divides.

*Painting Culture, Painting Nature* is a story of concurrences. For a specific period immigrants such as Jacobson and disenfranchised indigenous people such as Mopope transformed Oklahoma into the center of exciting new developments in Indian art, which quickly spread to other parts of the United States and to Europe. Jacobson and Mopope came from radically different worlds, and were on unequal footing in terms of power and equality, but they both experienced, according to author Gunlög Fur, forms of diaspora or displacement. Seeking to root themselves anew in Oklahoma, the dispossessed artists fashioned new mediums of compelling and original art.

Although their goals were compatible, Jacobson's and Mopope's subjects and styles diverged. Jacobson painted landscapes of the West, following a tradition of painting nature uninfluenced by human activity. Mopope, in contrast, strove to capture the cultural traditions of his people. The two artists shared a common nostalgia, however, for a past life that they could only re-create through their art.

Whereas other books have emphasized the promotion of Indian art by Euro-Americans, this book is the first to focus on the agency of the Kiowa artists within the context of their collaboration with Jacobson. The volume is further enhanced by full-color reproductions of the artists' works and rare historical photographs.

**Gunlög Fur** is Professor of History and Dean of Arts and Humanities at Linnaeus University, Sweden. A member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities, she is the author of *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians*.

MAY 2019

\$34.95s CLOTH 978-0-8061-6287-4

352 PAGES, 6 X 9

15 COLOR AND 22 B&W ILLUS., 3 MAPS

ART/AMERICAN INDIAN

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