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Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe. Edited by Kathleen Ash-Milby and Bill Anthes. Washington, DC: National Museum of the American Indian, 2022. 200 pages. $50 hardcover.

Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe, the first comprehensive monograph dedicated to Yanktonai Dakota artist Oscar Howe (1915–1983), contextualizes his artistic practice within modern art while conveying the unique complexity of Howe's biography. Coedited by Kathleen Ash-Milby and Bill Anthes, the monograph includes additional contributions by Janet Catherine Berlo, Christina Burke, Philip J. Deloria, Erika Doss, Emil Her Many Horses, John Lukavic, Inge Dawn Howe Maresh, Anya Montiel, Denise Neil, and Joyce Szabo. Underscoring the significance of the monograph, *Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe* was published in coordination with a similarly titled exhibition held at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in 2022. The volume examines Howe's oeuvre holistically, from his early, conventionally adherent paintings completed at the Santa Fe Indian School through his later work characterized by abstraction and an increasingly individualized vocabulary of symbols.

Organized into three main sections, "Part One: Understanding the Art of Oscar Howe," introduces the analysis of Howe's oeuvre, followed by "Part Two: Oscar Howe, A Life" and "Part Three: Oscar Howe's Legacy." Initially, the organization of the monograph seems unusual, if not somewhat awkward. To commence the volume with an analysis of Oscar Howe's artwork rather than with biographical notes or contextual significance, perhaps, complicates the text for a reader unfamiliar with Howe and his work. Due to the artist's repeated omission from the global histories of modern art, this unfamiliarity seems an unfortunate but probable circumstance. Though initially somewhat burdensome, the wisdom of this editorial choice is illuminated in the second part of the volume. As the essayists describe, Oscar Howe's career was perpetually overshadowed by the misrepresentation of his biography during his lifetime. Positioned as an aspirational tale of assimilation, Howe was celebrated not for his impressive body of work, but for the novelty of his identity as a Native American artist working outside of tribal aesthetic convention during the middle of the twentieth century. Confronting this misrepresentation, the organization of the monograph addresses this historical imbalance of narrative, emphasizing oeuvre rather than characterizing his work through a dominant biographical lens. Notably, the monograph prominently features richly detailed images printed in saturated color throughout, conveying the vibrancy of Howe's dynamic artwork.

In the first section, the essayists provide insightful analyses of Howe's work, beginning with his early artistic practice and extending to the uniquely individual aesthetic associated with his later career. In the first of these analytic essays, "Očhéthi Šakówiŋ

Traditions and Multiple Modernisms," Bill Anthes explains that, although Howe's work drew upon Western sources through his extensive study of art history and pursuit of a master of fine arts degree, his oeuvre remained grounded in Dakota ontology and artistic practice. Notably, as evidenced in his later work, Howe's artistic practice drew inspiration from the conventional aesthetic of art forms traditionally associated with Sioux women—beading, quill embroidery, and abstract hide painting. Throughout his oeuvre, Howe synthesized a diverse range of forms, patterns, and symbols, employing artistic processes from European and Dakota sources in combination, creating a singular vision that was distinctly his own and one unbound by gender or cultural norms. From form to medium, Howe's artistic process deviated from that espoused by an overwhelmingly Anglo art world, employing casein and tempera rather than the oil paint more typically privileged in modern art.

In "Origin Story," the first of the essays within the second section of the monograph, Kathleen Ash-Milby details Howe's entry into national media attention, a tale of heartbreaking cruelty further described in Anya Montiel's essay "Dakota Primetime: This is Your Life." As the essayists describe, Howe received a letter from Vincent Price, then current chair of the American Indian Arts and Crafts Board, in 1960. In the letter, Price invited Howe and his family to Los Angeles under the guise that he and his work would be included in an NBC program featuring prominent American artists. However, once on the air, this was revealed to be a ruse. Howe had instead been invited to the studio to be featured in an episode of *This Is Your Life* (1952–61), a television program known for surprising guests with significant people and events from their lives, revealed for their dramatic potential. Presented as a cultural oddity, Howe's biography was positioned as a triumph of assimilation policies, the rags-to-riches tale of a modern Dakota man who had left the reservation after childhood, fought in the military overseas, and then returned to the United States to eventually become a professor, a narrative reification of the myth of American meritocracy. Little attention was paid to his artwork or life as a working artist. Reacting in his characteristically dignified manner, Howe presented himself with humility, an elegant and neatly dressed man with a measured demeanor. However, this reductive version of his biography would continue to dominate the discourse surrounding his life and art.

The last of the three main sections explores Howe's personal and artistic legacy, including an essay written by his daughter in addition to those by art historians. As the essayists conclude, Howe's influence permeates contemporary Native art, an artist whose work, in the words of Sicangu Lakota artist Dyani White Hawk, exemplified "an unwavering understanding of self and cultural authority, combined with a leadership style that mirrored Dakota tribal values" (137). In his work, Oscar Howe synthesized a diverse range of both Native and European influences, creating a distinctive, dynamic aesthetic and artistic vision that was uniquely his own. Deviating from the cultural norms of Western and Dakota ontologies, Howe's work was received somewhat ambivalently, criticized as overly "cartoonish" for modern art, yet excessively modern in its dramatic departure from Dakota aesthetic tradition. Despite the rigid limitations of the art market, Howe achieved success as both a practicing artist and a university professor.

Dakota Modern: The Art of Oscar Howe will appeal to those interested in modern art and those seeking alternatives to the Eurocentric narratives more typical of the period. In 1958, Howe wrote a letter in response to the rejection of his work due to its absence of "Indian style," stating, "Indian art can compete with any art in the world, but not as a suppressed art" (126). To that end, the monograph succeeds in countering the linearity of the well-established hegemonic tales of industrial and cultural progress that have characterized the modernist myth, offering us instead a nuanced analysis of a man who was not merely of his time but, perhaps more accurately, in many ways ahead of it.

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