



Bishkisché Set 11 (Bear Keeps Going / Cuts The Hair Rope / Full Belly / Good Now)

Date
2023

Primary Maker
Wendy Red Star

Medium
Acrylic, graphite, kitakata paper, coated pastel paper

Description
Wendy Red Star's Bishkisché Set 11 contains four of over 200 painted designs based on original decorated bishkisché, which are utilitarian rawhide cases/bags traditionally made by Apsaalooke

(Crow) women and women of other Indigenous North American groups. Red Star was initially inspired to create the bishkisché sets in 2022, when she was working on a Public Art Fund project to decorate bus shelters in New York, Boston, and Chicago. She visited multiple archival institutions to see what objects they had obtained from her own community and, although she was familiar with bishkisché, she was inspired by just how many variations of the cases that she found. Red Star went on to create a catalog of over one thousand bishkisché from different collections and websites. Despite the fact that bishkisché were used as utilitarian objects, they were also creatively decorated and often passed down as generational keepsakes. Red Star notes, "These leather cases, painted with intricate geometric designs, hold layers of cultural significance that go beyond their functional use." Bishkisché are traditionally made using prepared hide that has been washed and treated before being stretched and staked down. The designs are then painted quickly while the hide is still wet, and they are always painted in matching pairs, many of which are now separated by time and trade. The cases that Red Star cataloged are typically listed with a tribal affiliation, but the names of the women that crafted them are mostly lost. Instead, to give titles to her bishkisché designs, Red Star went back to census data from her tribe from 1885 to the 1940s and collected the names of women. She sees this use of names (including Bear Keeps Going /Cuts the Hair Rope/Full Belly/Good Now), and the recreation of bishkisché designs, as methods of "communing" with the women who came before her.

Dimensions

Overall (Each): 20 x 28 in. (50.8 x 71.1 cm) Frame (Each): 22 1/4 x 30 1/4 x 1 1/8 in. (56.5 x 76.8 x 2.9 cm)