Finch & Co



NATIVE AMERICAN SOUTHWESTERN ZUNI SACRED CLOWN 'MUDHEAD' MASK

A NATIVE AMERICAN SOUTHWESTERN ZUNI SACRED CLOWN 'MUDHEAD' MASK OF STITCHED HIDE DECORATED WITH AN ABSTRACT DESIGN OF PINK CLAY AND SOOT THE PROTRUDING MOUTH PAINTED WITH RED PIGMENT
THE HOLES TO THE EDGE ONCE ATTACHED WITH FEATHERS
OLD ENCRUSTED PATINA THE REVERSE WORN SMOOTH FROM WEAR
CIRCA 1900
SIZE: 16CM HIGH, 20CM WIDE 6¼ INS HIGH, 8 INS WIDE / 27.5CM HIGH - 10¾ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

LITERATURE

'KOYEMSHIS' OR 'MUDHEADS' ARE ZUNI AND HOPI CLOWNS WHO WEAR MASKS AND CONSPICUOUS BODY PAINTINGS OF CLAY AND SOOT. THE CLOWNS ARE THE ANTITHESIS OF THE HARMONIOUSLY DANCING KACHINAS. BOTH WISE MEN AND JESTERS AT THE SAME TIME, THEIR SPECIAL DUTY IS TO ACT AS THE SERVANTS AND SPEAKERS OF THE MUTE KACHINAS. THEIR MYTHICAL ANCESTORS, CLOWN BOY AND CLOWN GIRL, HAD TO MAKE AMENDS FOR AN INCESTUOUS INDISCRETION BY MAKING A PUBLIC CONFESSION, AND SO THE PRIMARY TASK OF THEIR INCARNATION CONTINUED TO BE THE DEMONSTRATION OF HUMAN WEAKNESSES AND FAILINGS. DURING THEIR PERFORMANCE THEY ACT OUT A FIXED SEQUENCE OF EVENTS ILLUSTRATING THE PASSAGE OF MANKIND FROM PARADISCAL BEGINNINGS FOLLOWED BY DECLINE, PUNISHMENT BY WARRIOR KACHINAS AND FINALLY PURIFICATION AND BETTERMENT. THEIR BURLESQUE, AMUSING DANCES CARRY A SERIOUS MESSAGE, BUT ARE DESIGNED TO BREAK THE MONOTONY AND HUMOUR THE PEOPLE.

FRANK HAMILTON CUSHING ('MY ADVENTURES IN ZUNI' 1882.83:4-5) DESCRIBES THE CLOWNS OR 'MUDHEADS' DANCING 'Â€¦SPRAWLING ABOUT THE GROUND IN FRONT AND BEHIND THE ROW OF DANCERS IN ATTITUDE'S GROTESQUE YET GRACEFUL, I OBSERVED FOR THE FIRST TIME TEN MOST LUDICROUS CHARACTERS, NUDE SAVE FOR THEIR SKIRTS AND NECK CLOTHS OF TATTERED BLANKETING, THEIR HEADS ENTIRELY COVERED WITH FLEXIBLE ROUND WARTY MASKS. BOTH MASKS AND PERSONS WERE SMEARED OVER WITH PINK MUD GIVING THEM THE APPEARANCE OF REPTILES IN

HUMAN FORM THAT HAD ASCENDED FROM THE BOTTOM OF SOME MUDDY POOL AND DRIED SO NEARLY THE COLOR OF THE GROUND AND THE SURROUNDING HOUSES THAT AT FIRST IT HAD BEEN DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH THEM'.