

# ALLAN HOUSER (1914-1994)

Houser was a Chiricahua Apache sculptor, painter and book illustrator who fused traditional themes with Modernist aesthetics, crafting a unique abstract-figural style. He was one of the most renowned Native American painters and Modernist sculptors of the 20th century.

In the 1930s he attended the Indian School in Santa Fe, working with Dorothy Dunn, and went on to teach at the new Institute of American Indian Arts for 13 years. At age 61, he stopped teaching to devote his energies to art full time.

Houser died on August 22, 1994 in Santa Fe, NM, two years after becoming the first Native American awarded the National Medal for the Arts. In 2004, a retrospective of his work served as the inaugural exhibition for the National Museum of the American Indian.



## BORN IN CAPTIVITY

Houser was born Allan Capron Haozous in Oklahoma. He was the first member of his immediate family born outside of captivity. His mother and father, Blossom and Sam, were imprisoned after the great Apache warrior and leader Geronimo was forced to surrender to the US government in 1886. Geronimo was Sam's granduncle, and Sam acted as his translator. Geronimo's 1,200 followers were held captive in prisons in Florida, Alabama and Oklahoma.

Sam and Blossom were jailed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma for twenty years before they were finally released in 1913 and set up a farm nearby. Allan left to attend the Santa Fe Indian School at age 20, and it was administrators there who "suggested" that he change his last name to Houser.

Houser went on to become a beloved and inspiring teacher, revolutionizing public views of what Native American art should be. Before his death in 1994, Houser saw his works grace the United Nations, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Smithsonian Institution.