

# Hopi Kachina Dolls



*Wilson Tewaquaptewa painting kachina doll, Oraibi, Hopi Third Mesa, ca. 1950.*

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*Hopi kachina dancers surrounding kiva entrance, ca. 1905. Kivas are underground ceremonial chambers from which the kachinas emerge.*

### **Kachinas**

Kachinas are spirit beings in Pueblo religion. They are believed to act as intermediaries between humans and the religious realm in Pueblo societies. Each group has its distinct forms and variations of hundreds of different kachinas that represent a variety of animals, plants, and natural phenomena. Kachinas are believed to visit the various pueblos from winter solstice in late December until first ripening of corn in July. During this time, men perform traditional dances and ceremonies while wearing the masks and costumes that represent the individual kachinas.

### **Kachina Dolls**

Kachina dolls are carved wooden figures that are made to represent the dancers who portray these spirit figures in public ceremonies. The dolls are given to Pueblo children to teach the identities of the various kachinas and the symbolism of their costumes. They are traditionally carved from cottonwood tree roots and

*Hopi girl holding kachina dolls given to her during Powamuya-Bean Dance ceremony, Bacavi village, Hopi Third Mesa, 1989.*



*Hopi Mudheads crossing rooftops on way to dance plaza, ca. 1905.*

painted and adorned according to their function. Kachina dolls are still used as teaching tools in Pueblo societies but are also recognized as artistic works that are sold as such to outsiders. The Hopi are particularly well-known for their kachina dolls. The late 20th-century Hopi kachina dolls on display represent a variety of kachinas, including several examples of the Mudhead, Hano Clown, and Butterfly Maiden figures.

### **Mudhead (Koyemsi)**

Mudheads serve as healers, warriors, magicians, and messengers between humans and the kachina spirits. Dancers portraying the Mudhead cover their bodies with clay and wear distinctive masks with bulbous protuberances. The mud symbolizes the earth, where humans originated. Mudheads accompany dancers from kivas to the outdoor performance areas, where they provide cues for the dancers and interact with the audience during intermissions. They often carry a rattle or drum.

### **Hano Clown (Koshari)**

Hano Clowns are identified by their distinctive black-and-white striped body and headdress. During ceremonies they act as caretakers for other kachinas.



*Hopi Palik Mana dancers, ca. 1905.*

They are also known for engaging in comic and boisterous actions that would not normally be considered acceptable public conduct in Hopi society.

### **Butterfly Maiden (Palik Mana)**

The Butterfly Maiden is a female figure that is portrayed by men or young women. Butterfly Maiden wears a carved and painted headdress with rain and cloud designs and performs dances with a male partner. They sometimes grind corn during ceremonies, as is represented in the figure on display.

### **Resources**

- Haberland, Wolfgang. *Kachina*. Badisches Landesmuseum, 1980.
- Mora, Joseph. *The Year of the Hopi*. Rizzoli International Publications, 1982.
- Peabody Museum. "Rainmakers from the Gods: Hopi Katsinam" [www.peabody.harvard.edu/katsina].
- Teiwes, Helga. *Kachina Dolls: The Art of Hopi Carvers*. University of Arizona Press, 1991.
- Wright, Barton. *Kachinas: A Hopi Artist's Documentary*. Northland Press, 1973.

### **Credits**

Map from Teiwes (p. 3). Photos are from Haberland (Tewaquaptewa, p. 60); Mora (kiva, p. 42; Mudheads, p. 46; Palik Mana, p. 85); Teiwes (girl, p. 13).