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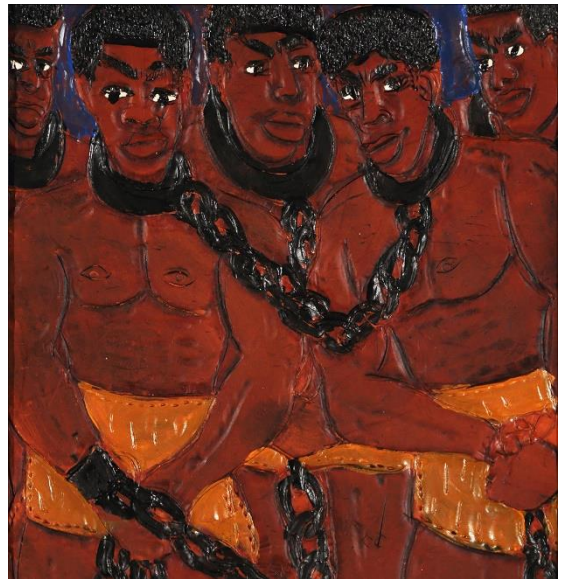
Robert Fishko, *Director*

WINFRED REMBERT
(1945-2021)

The Slave Brothers, 2013
dye on carved and tooled leather
10 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches
initialed bottom middle recto

Provenance

The Artist
(Michelle Tillou Fine Art, Brooklyn, NY)
Private Collection, Rye, New York
(acquired directly from the above)



Note

Winfred Rembert was born in 1945 in Americus, Georgia, during the Jim Crow era of the American South. Influenced by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement as a teenager, Rembert attended a peaceful protest in 1965 and was attacked by white antagonists. He fled the assailants by stealing a car, leading to his arrest for theft. Rembert spent two years incarcerated while awaiting charges before escaping from jail in 1967. He was caught, placed in the trunk of a police car and released to an angry white mob. Surviving the ensuing lynching, Rembert was thrown in jail for the next seven years of his life and was transferred to multiple penitentiaries within the Georgia prison system, enduring taxing physical labor while working on various chain gangs. The harrowing experience would later prove central to the narrative of his extraordinary art.

The Slave Brothers is a one such work by Winfred Rembert from 2013, which shows five black men chained together at the neck and wrists. Stripped to the waist, the figures are lined up and crowded into the small format of the picture. Here, Rembert draws a connection between the plight of enslaved men in the south and those working in chain gangs as prisoners.

A related work by Rembert, titled *The Walk*, 2002 is reproduced in the Pulitzer Prize winning autobiography, *Chasing me to my Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*. Here a black man shackled at the wrists and ankles is held by two white men, one

in a police uniform, with whipping belts in hand. Behind them is a mob of five additional white men holding shotguns and pistols. It is a menacing and disturbing scene.¹

Rembert learned how to tool and craft leather from a fellow prisoner, a technique he would use to share his story with the world. Following his release from prison in 1974, Rembert married Patsy Gammage and the couple eventually settled in New Haven, Connecticut where they raised a family.

At the age of fifty-one, with his wife's encouragement, Rembert began a full-time artistic practice. Combining his mastery of leather working with his skilled draftsmanship, he built a unique body of autobiographical paintings and continued to make art for nearly twenty-five years, before his death in 2021 at the age of seventy-five.

Rembert continued to make art for nearly twenty-five years, before his death in 2021 at the age of seventy-five. His works can be found in the collections of numerous museums including Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Legacy Museum, Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, AL; Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

In addition to his pictorial narratives in leather, Rembert recalled his life in an autobiography penned by Erin I. Kelly, *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*. Published in 2021, Rembert was posthumously awarded the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Biography.

¹Rembert, Winfred and Erin I. Kelly, *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., New York, NY, 2021, p. 120.