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Robert Fishko, *Director*

CHAIM GROSS

(1902-1991)

Embrace, 1951

pink alabaster

15 h x 12 1/4 w x 5 1/2 d inches at base

Provenance

The Artist

Collection of Marvin Small, New York, NY

Collection Mr. & Mrs. Jacob D. Weintraub,
New York, NY

[Weintraub Gallery, New York, NY]

Private Collection, Rockport, MA

Forum Gallery, New York, NY



Literature

Getlein, Frank. *Chaim Gross*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1974, p. 48, plate 51

Note

Chaim Gross carved in milky pink alabaster the sensational *Embrace*, 1951, a lyrical composition of two figures floating together in a mid-air arabesque. It is a wonderful example of the Artist's subject of acrobatic performers, for which he is so well known. This interest developed during Gross' childhood in Austria, and his early memories of the circus coming to town, during happier times before the war tore apart Europe and drove him and his family to New York City in 1921.

Chaim Gross learned the technique of direct carving (*taille directe*) from the immigrant French master Robert Laurent at the Art Students League. Less than two decades later, Gross was poised for widespread recognition as the 20th Century American artist most responsible for reviving the significance of wood as a fundamental sculptural medium. In 1942, a year of several important milestones in the Artist's career, not only did Associated American Artists hold his first one-man exhibition, but the Whitney Museum of American Art purchased his ebony sculpture *Acrobatic Dancers* and the Museum of Modern Art his lignum vitae *Handle Bar Riders*. In December of the same year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its *Artists for Victory* exhibition, which it billed as an assertion of America's vitality, diversity, and strength versus the existential foreign threat. With

jurists including Alfred H. Barr (MoMA) and Juliana Force (Whitney), the Metropolitan awarded Gross a purchase prize by acquiring his ebony wood submission of the Ringling Brothers' acrobat *Lillian Leitzel*.



Gross, *Lillian Leitzel*, 1938, Macassar ebony (purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1942)



Gross, *Acrobatic Dancers*, 1942, ebony (purchased by Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1942)



Gross, *Handlebar Riders*, 1935, lignum vitae (purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942)

In later years, Gross transcribed his ingenuity in direct carving to marble, both white and pink, as well as to serpentine and lithium stone. For Chaim Gross his work was an unadulterated homage to the material he found most life-affirming, which reflected his own optimism and the family togetherness he experienced in both pre and post cataclysmic times—the very material which made him most happy.



Chaim Gross carving *Black Figure* at the Cumington School, Cumington, MA, 1935. (photograph by Ruth Weller)