

Winifred Rembert: Memories Of My Youth

The Upper East Side's Adelson Galleries features the works of artist Winifred Rembert in its current exhibit, *Memories of My Youth*. Rembert's work is inspired by his youth, growing up as a fieldworker prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

The topic could be a morose one, but Rembert's work is joyous and colorful, while acknowledging the more negative aspects of the South during this period. Family and community are strong themes—with depictions of religious life, music, work and home.

Rembert works with sheets of leather, which he carves and manipulates before painting with dyes. The results are colorful and tactile works with raised surfaces. People in his work tend to form rows and patterns and individuals become part of a larger, dynamic whole.

For example, in "Chain Gang—The Ditch," 18 prisoners are clumped together, shovels flying out to the side. Dressed in striped prison garb, they disappear into one another and form one clump of stripes and shovels. The same is true for "Chain Gang Picking Cotton." There seems to be strength in numbers, even amid the harshest of circumstances.

It's clear, though, that Rembert's memories include a great deal of joy. Much of this seems to have come from the many rich cultural aspects of life at the time. Men and women in bright zoot suits and dresses dance, sing and play checkers and pool. And Rembert's memories of his mother are depicted, too, as in "Flour Bread," in which children stand and watch their mother making bread in a wood-paneled kitchen.

Rembert grew up in Cuthbert, Ga., in the 1950s and was raised by a great-aunt. He worked the cotton fields in Cuthbert before being arrested and serving seven years in jail following a Civil Rights march. He learned to work with leather while serving time in jail. Like his other work, his depictions of chain-gang life—picking cotton or digging ditches in the blistering sun—are based upon personal experience and memories. (Carl Gaines)

Through May 28, Adelson Galleries, 19 E. 82nd St., 212-439-6800.



Chain Gang—The Ditch, 2005
Dye on Carved and tooled leather