

Basic Detail Report



Untitled

Date

c. 1991

Primary Maker

Thornton Dial

Medium

Watercolor

Description

Thornton Dial Sr., was a prolific Black folk artist who came to prominence in middle-age in the late 1980s. He is famous for his vigorous, imaginative mixed-media artwork that expresses his personal symbolism. Dial often depicted animals, such as birds,

fish, and tigers, alongside the female figure. Raised by his extended family, Dial's formal education ended in third grade and he labored on a farm from the age of six. He moved to Bessemer, Alabama, in 1941 and worked various manual jobs, creating artwork in his spare time, later commenting, "My art is the evidence of my freedom." In 1987, artist Lonnie Holley introduced Dial to art collector William Arnett, who became deeply invested in his work and helped him gain prominence in the art world. Dial utilized the tiger as a symbol of overcoming in the context of the African American experience, and his personal history as a Black man. He saw tigers as suave and strong creatures that could conquer any challenge. The enmeshed bodies of tigers and women convey an overt sexuality, but also show the tiger as a masculine protector. In an interview with Arnett, Dial said "People say I make all my art about tigers, but I got tigers in just some of it. Women be in just about everything I have made, in one way or another way. That tiger for me symbolized the Struggle, in the works of life, but women are the creation of the world, at the creation of all works. If it wasn't for women it wouldn't be none of us here, and without them we couldn't make it through the struggle."

Dimensions

Sheet: 22 1/2 x 30 1/2 in. (57.2 x 77.5 cm) Frame: 28 5/8 x 36 5/8 x 1 3/8 in. (72.7 x 93 x 3.5 cm)