

George Tooker

Mother and Child, 1982

George Tooker (1920-2011)

Egg tempera on gessoed panel

Deeply affected by the death of his long-time partner, William Christopher, in 1973, in 1976 Tooker, who had been raised as an Episcopalian, converted to Catholicism. The artist's conversion reflected his lifelong search for community, justice, and religious faith. Much of his work during the latter part of his career focused on religious subject matter. *Mother and Child*, a twist on the traditional "Madonna and child" motif, with both figures having dark skin and appearing to be Hispanic (Tooker's mother was Cuban), was painted in 1982, between the artist's series *The Seven Sacraments* (1980) and *Stations of the Cross* (1984), both major, large-scale commissions that Tooker painted for his own church, St. Francis of Assisi, in Windsor, Vermont. Tooker used a Renaissance-style pose and palette for the two figures in addition to the traditional egg tempera painting technique. In stark contrast to the themes of loneliness and isolation that the artist has explored earlier in his career, the female figure lovingly holds the child figure, and they both look out of the picture's faux-painted frame, the child's hand raised in a gesture of greeting or blessing, seemingly connecting with figures beyond.

Courtesy Debra Force Fine Art, New York