

MILTON AVERY REVISITED

Works from the Louis and Annette Kaufman Collection

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
ART COLLECTION

Milton Avery

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Syracuse University
Lubin House
New York City
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Joe and Emily Lowe
Art Gallery
Syracuse, New York
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alfred T. Collette, Director
Syracuse University Art Collection

The Syracuse University Art Collection, in association with the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, is proud to present *Milton Avery Revisited: Works from the Louis and Annette Kaufman Collection*. Milton Avery was an important artist who helped define modern American art, and whose impact on art is still seen in contemporary painting. It is revealing that Avery pursued a personal aesthetic at a time when there was great pressure to create an art that had a nationalistic identity, such as American Scene painting. While his subject matter or style of painting might not have neatly fit into this mid-1930s trend, the individuality of Avery's approach and his commitment to personal goals and beliefs is truly 'American.'

Louis and Annette Kaufman recognized these and other characteristics in Milton Avery during their nearly 40 year friendship with the artist and his family. I think Avery recognized Mr. and Mrs. Kaufman's interest in artistic and creative activities, and certainly their commitment to excellence. It is apparent in their music making, and in their art collecting. It was something we immediately recognized at Syracuse University. Annette Kaufman is a remarkable woman. Her interest in and knowledge of art is substantial. Her visits to museums, meetings with friends in the arts, and constant attention to maintaining Mr. Kaufman's name and reputation show her considerable stamina. I want to thank Annette again for graciously agreeing to a long term loan of these art works so that not only our New York alumni, friends, and patrons will enjoy these outstanding paintings, but we can bring them back to campus for our students, faculty, staff, and University community to appreciate.

I would like to acknowledge Edward A. Aiken, Director of the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, for his illuminating essay on Milton Avery. In it, he outlines Avery's career, identifies the artists who influenced him and in turn, the circle of painters Avery affected. Avery is described as an iconoclast, standing his stylistic ground against the shifting tide of American art in the early and middle part of this century. The abstract painter Adolph Gottlieb said Avery was a "solitary figure working against the stream." Avery's steadfastness resulted in few sales early in his career but endeared him to a younger generation of avant-garde painters,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

including Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Gottlieb. It was Louis Kaufman who introduced Rothko to Avery. Rothko and Kaufman had attended school together in Portland, Oregon. In New York, they met often for dinner at the Avery's apartment where there was always a new painting to see and stimulating conversation to be had. The Kaufmans enjoyed a lifelong friendship with the artist. As Ted Aiken writes, "Often ignored during his life, Louis and Annette Kaufman remained loyal to Avery the person and Avery the artist." Their special relationship with this seminal figure in American art created a collection of art work that we are very pleased to present.

My gratitude extends to Domenic J. Iacono, Associate Director of the Syracuse University Art Collection, who through extensive research on this collection developed the annotated checklist to the exhibition. Since many of these paintings are being seen for the first time, Domenic includes each object's physical information including signatures, labels, inscriptions, etc. along with exhibition and publication histories. Also included is topical information about the artist, his subjects, and biographical information about the portrait sitters. In many respects the checklist assumes the format of a catalogue raisonné and will undoubtedly become a valuable scholarly resource. In addition to his contribution to the catalog Domenic was also responsible for overseeing the catalog's production. He supervised the photography, assisted with the editing process and worked closely with the designer on layout and other graphic issues. I am confident that Mr. Avery would have been pleased with the manner in which his work is presented in this publication. I would also like to acknowledge Domenic Iacono's efforts to make the exhibition available for travel to other institutions.

I want to give a special thank you to John and Susan Edwards Harvith who helped make this exhibition possible. John is Executive Director of National Media Relations at Syracuse University and Susan is a faculty member in the University's College of Visual and Performing Arts. They first met Louis and Annette Kaufman 25 years ago. At that time the Harviths devoted considerable energy to finding, interviewing, and recording the reminiscences of musicians who had played for the Edison

label when Thomas Alva Edison acted as the Artists and Repertoire chief in his own record company. Working under a National Endowment for the Humanities Younger Humanist Grant, they were able to travel to California, seek out, and interview a number of early recording artists, most importantly the celebrated soprano Lotte Lehmann and violinist Louis Kaufman. They knew Louis Kaufman by reputation as a pioneering recording artist in the 1930s, '40s and '50s who had introduced to the record catalogues first performances on disc of works by Aaron Copland, Ernst Toch, Darius Milhaud, and Robert Russell Bennett with the composers as performance partners, and first recordings of numerous concertos by Vivaldi. I take satisfaction in knowing that their friendship has connected the Kaufmans' legacy to Syracuse University, and now allows a larger audience to appreciate and enjoy the contributions Louis and Annette have made to the cultural life of our century.

Exhibitions are essentially collaborative in nature. We are very fortunate to have an experienced and outstanding group of professionals who worked together on this project. From the University Art Collection I would like to thank Laura Wellner, Registrar, Amber Rossino, Preparator, and David Prince, Curator, for their efforts in preparing the objects, and assisting with the installation. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Bradley Hudson, Preparator of the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery at Syracuse University for his invaluable assistance with the installation of the exhibition in Syracuse.

Recognition and thanks must also be given to our friends at University Relations, the Development Office, and Lubin House in New York City. Dr. Lansing Baker, Thomas Walsh, John Allen, Jane Henn, Anne Auchincloss, Kim Dubin, and Patti Dombrowski contributed significantly to make this exhibition possible.



Syracu galleries

MILTON AVERY REVISITED

by Edward A. Aiken

S I T E D

“Why talk when you can paint?” Milton Avery asked.¹ And paint he did. Born in 1885, Avery was over forty when he moved to New York to establish himself as a professional artist.² However, success came slowly and sales were few. His wife, Sally Michel Avery, supported them both with her commercial work as a freelance illustrator. She described that period: “The struggle to survive was sometimes a little grim. But my firm belief in Milton’s great talent buoyed us over the dark days. I never doubted that the world would eventually recognize his genius.”³

In spite of their meager circumstances and Avery’s quiet nature, they maintained an active social life. Looking back, Sally Michel Avery stated: “Our friends were mainly artists, so there was more talk of art, and the latest Avery paintings would be viewed and discussed. Friends for dinner, in those early days, meant asking for a fifty cent contribution toward the hamburger.”⁴ The Averys attracted many artists, but three painters in particular—Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb and Barnett Newman—grew especially close to Milton. Although he was never their formal teacher, they held him in particularly high regard. Gottlieb said of Avery, “His attitude helped reinforce me in my chosen direction. I always regarded him as a brilliant colorist and draftsman, a solitary figure working against the stream.”⁵ Rothko observed:

I cannot tell you what it meant for us to be made welcome in those memorable studios on Broadway, Seventy-second Street, and Columbus Avenue. We were, there, both the subjects of his paintings and his idolatrous audience. The walls were always covered with an endless and changing array of poetry and light.

The instruction, the example, the nearness in the flesh of this marvelous man—all of this was a significant fact—one which I shall never forget.⁶

They talked about art and went to the movies.⁷ Louis Kaufman, who had known Rothko when they lived as young boys in Portland, Oregon, introduced Rothko to Avery early in 1929, several months after both artists displayed work in an exhibition at the Opportunity Gallery in New York. The following year Rothko introduced Avery to Gottlieb and by the summer of

1932, they and their wives were vacationing at Gloucester, Massachusetts together with Newman.⁸

In those years, Rothko saw Avery frequently. He said that Avery’s repertoire consisted of the commonplace things; the life that surrounded him; and

...his friends and whatever world strayed through his studio: a domestic, unheroic cast. But from these there have been fashioned great canvases, that far from the casual and transitory implications of the subjects, have always a gripping lyricism, and often achieve the permanence and monumentality of Egypt.⁹

The curator Barbara Haskell has noted, “Discussions about art in the Avery household revolved around the notion that a painting should be flat and lie on one plane rather than evoke what Avery called photographic depth.”¹⁰ Sally Michel Avery characterized his approach in this manner: “Shapes regular and irregular, colors strong or tender, relationships odd or familiar all held a fascination for Milton.”¹¹ Usually reticent to say or write anything, Avery put it this way:

I like to seize the one sharp instant in nature to imprison it by means of ordered shapes and space relationships. To this end I eliminate and simplify, leaving apparently nothing but color and pattern. I am not seeking pure abstraction; rather the purity and essence of the idea expressed in its simplest form.¹²

Because of his celebration of color and his close attention to the arrangement of shapes into a composition that emphasized the two dimensionality of the painted canvas, Avery has often been portrayed as the equivalent of an American Matisse. However, as the early still-lives and portraits in this exhibition remind us, Avery was well into his career before he began to integrate Matisse’s ideas concerning color and pattern into his work.

When Avery moved to New York City in 1925, he immersed himself in the cultural cross-currents that were pulling the American art world in different directions.¹³ He listened to his fellow artists, visited exhibitions, read the art periodicals and absorbed ideas from many directions as he began developing his own vision.¹⁴ In 1926, Avery began sketching at a class at the Art Students League, which he would do for the next twelve years.

Through this activity he came in contact with numerous artists, many of whom worked in modes that might be viewed as conservative or more academic than his own. Avery was also open to other sources, including Georges Braque, Raoul Dufy, Franz Marc, and Edouard Vuillard.¹⁵ Such paintings as the portraits of Clara (1929) and Thomas Nagai (1929) reveal his ability to meld these disparate influences.

Avery's knowledge of Matisse's work, in particular, would have come through exhibitions and publications, as well as through discussions with other artists. His appreciation may have quickened when Matisse visited the United States in 1930 to serve on a Carnegie International Exhibition jury. Reflecting on Matisse's visit, the critic Henry McBride observed that young artists who had reached maturity in the years prior to 1910 had enthusiastically seized the most radical of aspects of Matisse's style. In addition, the public's appreciation of Matisse increased as greater numbers of his major works were exhibited in this country. McBride noted that Matisse's earliest supporters had become connoisseurs and collectors. "Matisse was more their man than ever. He had not only justified their taste, he had justified the age they lived in."¹⁶ Matisse's art could be seen at a 1930 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and earlier at a 1927 exhibition at the Valentine Gallery.

McBride, who would champion Avery for two decades, was responsible for convincing the Valentine Gallery—Matisse's New York representative—to become Avery's dealer.¹⁷ Writing in the *New York Sun*, in 1936, McBride described Avery in terms that could have just as easily been applied to Matisse:

He is a poet, a colorist and a decorator; so excellent in each of these diversions that he might exist on any one of them; yet I presume that being a poet will eventually be his strongest claim.¹⁸

The impact of Matisse's art had long been felt in this country. His first exhibition was held at Alfred Steiglitz's 291 Gallery in New York in 1908.¹⁹ Various American artists also gained exposure to his work and ideas through such expatriate collectors as Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo, classes with Matisse, exhibitions and reviews.²⁰

American writers who supported Matisse's art advanced ideas that would have anticipated paths to be followed years later by Avery. In 1915, for example, Walter Pach, a critic and artist, discussed Matisse in terms of the goal of the modern artist. Pach believed that this was to work in a manner

that would give a new existence to the things that the artist saw and to use those pictorial elements that were most appropriate to meeting that end.²¹

In the same year, another critic, Willard Huntington Wright, praised Matisse noting that his modern style used color to express emotion. In Wright's view, while Matisse might start with nature, he purified the colors it offered. His goal was to find a color balance that would be correct solely in terms of the composition.²²

This line of thinking was restated in 1927, when the American critic, Forbes Watson, wrote that regardless of fashion, Matisse had stayed true to himself by continuing to increase his focus on pattern and pure color.²³ These words might have served as a predictor of the course that Avery would follow as he sought to develop his own artistic identity.

Although Avery studied Matisse's color, simplified forms and patterned compositions, his own style would always be more restrained, less exuberant and not so concerned with the decorative or the sensual. Early in his career, Avery's sense of color had also been nourished by his knowledge and practice of American variants of Tonalism and Impressionism.²⁴ He expressed his admiration for James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Alfred Sisley and at times he also worked in a manner indebted to such American Impressionists as John Henry Twachtman and Ernest Lawson.²⁵ His formal means also drew upon a variety of other sources that included such diverse material as the American folk art and urban social realism, as well as the work of Picasso and Marsden Hartley.²⁶

It apparently mattered little to Avery what fashions were currently flowing through the art world; he always seemed to take only that which he needed and nothing more. And, because of this independence, his work was all too frequently ignored—even in the 'Fifties when so many of those artists whom he had so inspired had allied themselves with Abstract Expressionism and were achieving critical success.

Whereas Matisse's color and form are obvious sources for Avery, Picasso's impact was subtler, yet still important.²⁷ Perhaps it was a joke, perhaps it was an homage or maybe it was both, but Avery named his dog "Picasso" rather than "Matisse". In the particularly pensive painting, *Sally with Skull*, 1946, Avery's ability to echo the achievements of both artists, while maintaining his own voice, is clearly demonstrated.

By the time Avery had arrived in New York, Picasso's reputation in the United States was rivaled only by that of Matisse.²⁸ In 1923, Wildenstein & Co. had displayed a large exhibition of Picasso's work to great critical success before it moved on to Chicago. *The Arts* magazine even reproduced a

number of works that had been exhibited.²⁹ His art was celebrated in an extensive one person exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1934 and was included in the important exhibitions, *Painting in Paris* and *Cubism and Abstract Art*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1930 and 1936, respectively. In addition, Avery would have been able to come into close contact with a substantial body of Picasso's work when he joined Paul Rosenberg's gallery in 1943.³⁰ Although Avery had produced many works with distorted figures and unnaturalistic space relationships, the painting, *Chinese Checkers*, c1941, may owe something to the radical manipulations of the human figure that marked much of Picasso's work throughout the 1930s.³¹

Avery's emphasis on pattern and color is part of a painterly tradition that was one of the fundamental currents of European Modernism. It extended back through Matisse to such artists as Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard, Paul Sérusier and Maurice Denis, all of whom belonged to a group of young artists, the Nabis, which was inspired by the words and painterly practice of Paul Gauguin.³² When we look at Avery's later work, the testimony of his wife, and his own relatively sparse comments, it is apparent that he developed a style that was well within the broad tradition established by Gauguin, his followers and those artists like Matisse who extended the concepts established earlier. The following statement by Avery helps to illuminate these issues:

I work on two levels. I try to construct a picture in which shapes, spaces, colors form a set of unique relationships independent of subject matter. At the same time I try to capture and translate the excitement and emotion aroused in me by the impact with the original idea.³³

This stance is reminiscent of Gauguin who wrote, "Art is an abstraction; derive this abstraction from nature while dreaming before it, and think more of the creation which will result than of nature."³⁴ He wrote: "...put in the shadows if you consider them useful, or don't put them in. It's all the same thing, if you consider yourself not a slave to shadow; it is, as it were, the shadow which is at your service."³⁵ He also advised that painters should avoid modeling and look to stained-glass windows for their colors and forms.³⁶ Reputedly, Gauguin told Paul Sérusier:

* How do you see this tree?

Is it really green? Use green, then, the most beautiful green on your palette. And that shadow, rather blue? Don't be afraid to paint it as blue as possible.³⁷

Maurice Denis summarized these notions when he declared:

It is well to remember that a picture—before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote—is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order.³⁸

Denis' emphasis on the arrangement of colors across the painting's surface, rather than the specifics of the imagery, anticipate Sally Michel Avery's comments concerning her husband's methodology:

Sitting in his favorite rocker, pipe in hand, he would study the blank canvas. 'A blank canvas is a thing of beauty. The challenge is to cover it and still retain that radiance.'

Milton would sit and rock and visualize the painting he was about to create. When that image became loud and clear he would go the easel, lightly sketch the motif, and begin to paint. As the painting took shape—it might be a figure, might be a landscape, it might be a seascape—the subject was not the object.³⁹

One painting in this exhibition, *Milton Avery in a gray shirt with The Chariot Race*, c1938, may directly echo Gauguin's work. In 1936 there were four exhibitions devoted to Gauguin in the United States. Gauguin's *Self-portrait with Yellow Christ*, 1889-90, was in two of them. In the Gauguin, as in the Avery, earlier work forms a backdrop against which the artist paints his own somewhat pensive face.⁴⁰

In many respects, Gauguin's theory and practice paralleled that of Van Gogh, an artist whom Avery particularly admired. Avery likened Van Gogh, along with Picasso, to boxers who compete in the heavyweight division, and he was particularly taken with the mood Van Gogh had achieved in *Starry Night*.⁴¹ Hilton Kramer summarized this line of thinking when he wrote that Avery was the most important American painter of his time to work in a tradition that led through Matisse and Bonnard to the Post-Impressionist and Symbolist traditions, both of which owed so much to Gauguin and Van Gogh.⁴²

As with all strong, creative personalities, Avery turned prevailing ideas to his own purposes and in so doing, molded a distinctive and extraordinary style. In a profile on Avery published in 1952, the author Chris Ritter remarked on the consistency of Avery's aesthetic development. Avery told Ritter, "I never thought of being interested in pattern, but my work has always stressed it." He stated:

Today I design a canvas very carefully before I begin to paint it. The two-dimensional design is important, but not so important as the design in depth. I do not use linear perspective, but achieve depth by color—the function of one color with another. I strip the design to essentials; the facts do not interest me as much as the essence of nature.⁴³

In the process of honing and clarifying his aesthetic, the shifts in his visual thinking are clearly demonstrable, as a comparison of his two paintings of Annette Kaufman reveals. In the early work from 1933, we see a contemplative sitting figure wearing a green dress with ruffled white sleeves, her hair is red as are her lips. Annette is seen from above, her torso leans to the left, and it is as if the edge of the canvas keeps her from falling from our view. Her eyes are dark and while outwardly she appears to look beyond the perimeter of the canvas at some distant point to the lower right, we know that her gaze is pointed inward and she is lost in thought.

The 1944 portrait has a totally different mood. In this work Annette stands at the center of the painting. She stares straight out at us, and the eyes are fully revealed. Avery is not interested in modeling her figure. Her arms and torso have been melded together into a single, dark shape, modified only by a large decorative pink bow and two large decorative buttons. The preliminary drawing for this work shows a torso that is slightly to the left of center, eyes looking to the right. The drawing, as with the earlier portrait of Annette, is more tied to naturalism in its conception. However, in the late portrait painting, Avery abstracted the image to its essentials and in so doing, created a powerful iconic figure. He also demonstrated his commitment to a modernist vision. The painting also reveals Avery's appreciation of pictorial traditions rooted in American folk art—traditions that emphasized pattern and simplification. This combination of Modern and folk should not be surprising given the frequency with which artists devoted to Modernism repeatedly looked to sources outside of the traditions of Western European “high” art.⁴⁴

One devoted American Modernist who also delighted in folk art was Marsden Hartley. Avery's friendship with Hartley began in 1938, and as Hobbs has noted, the two shared a common desire to fuse the “naïve vision” of American folk art with modernism.⁴⁵ Over the course of their friendship, Avery and Hartley learned from and encouraged each other in their separate paths. Avery's profound sympathy and admiration for Hartley is affectionately displayed in the 1943 portrait he painted of his friend. In this work, Avery's signature rests comfortably on Hartley's shoulders. The pigment

looks as if it was recently applied and the colors harmonize, yet push against each other in a manner that is unexpected.

Another remarkable work in the Kaufman collection is Avery's 1949 self-portrait. While the other self-portraits in this exhibition are strong in conception and execution, this painting moves to an altogether different level. Having painted the self portrait shortly after a major heart attack, this work is both an intense affirmation of life and a profound recognition of the inevitability of death. The icy blue eyes, the pale purple shadows on his face, and the skull-like mask that forms the frontal plane of his face, raise this particular painting to an emotional peak unmatched, in my opinion, by any other work in this exhibition.

Louis and Annette Kaufman remained loyal to Avery the person as well as Avery the artist. This steadfast devotion allowed them to develop a collection of the artist's work that is unlike any other. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to see the fruit of that special relationship. This exhibition fulfills Mark Rothko's words when he wrote shortly after Avery's death that his friend

...was a great poet-inventor who had invented sonorities never seen nor heard before. From these we have learned much and will learn more for a long time to come.⁴⁶

¹ The literature on Milton Avery is extensive. Several volumes, in particular, may be regarded as particularly useful and highly important, especially in terms of critical reception and scholarly research. See, Hilton Kramer, *Milton Avery: Paintings, 1930—1960* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962); Adelyn D. Breeskin, *Milton Avery* (Washington: The National Collection of Fine Arts, 1969); Bonnie Lee Grad, *Milton Avery* (Royal Oak, Michigan: Strathcona, c1981); Barbara Haskell, *Milton Avery* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1982); Robert Hobbs, *Milton Avery* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1990), which has the most recent bibliography. Quote from Breeskin, np; rpt. in Haskell, 13.

² In her important monograph, Haskell established an accurate chronology for Avery. During his lifetime he claimed to be eight years younger than his actual age. See, 13 and 186—192.

³ Sally Michel Avery, "Foreward," in Grad, np.

⁴ Grad, np. In the literature there are various references to Avery's productivity as an artist. See, for example, Hobbs, 84.

⁵ Quoted in Charlotte Willard, "In the Art Galleries," *New York Post*, 10 January 1965: 46; rpt. in Haskell, 56.

⁶ Mark Rothko, "Commemorative Essay," delivered at the The New York Society for Ethical Culture, January 7, 1965, rpt. in Haskell, 181.

⁷ David Anfam, *Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale, 1998) note 188 on 69. Quote from an interview with Sally Michel Avery by Louis Sheaffer, *The Reminiscences of Sally Michel Avery* (unpublished typescript, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1980), 31.

In the catalogue, *Mark Rothko in New York* (New York: Guggenheim, 1994), Diane Waldman notes that while the American artist Max Weber exerted a substantial impact on Rothko's early development, he did so as a teacher at the Art Students League. In contrast, Avery, who was of Weber's generation, played quite a different role because of his "accessibility and his willingness to engage in a meaningful dialogue." She notes that Rothko considered Avery as "...both a role model and contemporary, the epitome of the painter. Rothko's life as an artist took a turn the year he met this mentor." 15

⁸ Anfam. For greater discussion, see endnotes 53 and 54 on 43. Haskell notes that during the decade of the 'Thirties, when the Averys vacationed in inexpensive accommodations in Gloucester or southern Vermont, they were often joined by Rothko, Gottlieb, and Newman, 60; also see endnote 74 on 184. Hobbs writes that Avery began to paint during the summer in Gloucester as early as 1920, and he discusses the importance of the town to the development of American art, 36. He also notes that in the summers of 1958 and 1959, Gottlieb, Rothko and Avery once again summered together in Massachusetts—this time in Provincetown, 202–204.

⁹ Rothko, "Commemorative Essay," in Haskell, 181.

¹⁰ Haskell, 56. This statement is based on numerous interviews that Haskell had with Sally Michel Avery.

¹¹ Sally Michel Avery, "Forward," in Grad, np.

¹² Statement by the artist. *Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1951) 158.

¹³ Hobbs, especially 30, 84 and 91. A particularly useful study of the art exhibitions and literature of the period can be found in Susan Noyes Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art I New York from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985).

¹⁴ Haskell, 26—37.

¹⁵ Hobbs, 47.

¹⁶ Henry McBride, "Matisse in America," *Cahiers d'Art*, 1931; rpt. in Matisse: *A Retrospective*, ed. Jack Flam (Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1988) 266—268.

¹⁷ Haskell, 52.

¹⁸ Henry McBride, "Attractions in Other Galleries," *New York Sun*, February 29, 1936, Art section, 14.

¹⁹ A sense of the reaction provoked by Modern Art in general, and the work of Matisse and Picasso in particular, can be found in the wonderful volume by Marius de Zayas, *How, When and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, ed. Francis Naumann (Cambridge: MIT, 1996). De Zayas was a key figure in the development of early American Modernism. Matisse's first exhibition in the United States was held at 291, April 1908.

²⁰ See Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art & Culture, 1900—1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) 93.

²¹ Walter Pach, "Why Matisse?" in *The Century Magazine* February 1915; rpt. in Flam, 154—55. Pach, who was introduced by the Steins to Matisse in 1907, was a critic and artist. The quotation comes from a review of a Matisse exhibition in New York in 1915.

²² Willard Huntington Wright, *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1915); rpt. in Flam, 155—158. Wright's book was one of the first American surveys of modern painting. Wright was the brother of the Synchronist painter, Stanton MacDonald-Wright.

²³ Forbes Watson, "Henri Matisse," *The Arts* January 1927; rpt. in Flam, 225—228.

²⁴ For greater discussion of these issues, see Haskell, 19—24 and Hobbs, 33—35.

²⁵ Chris Ritter, "A Milton Avery Profile," *Art Digest* 1 December 1952: 28.

²⁶ Hobbs's monograph provides a marvelous discussion of Avery's ability to interweave and comment on these various sources. See, for example, p. 95.

²⁷ Haskell notes that "...by 1930 Avery had begun incorporating aspects of the work of Picasso and Matisse into his paintings." 40 Also see 37.

²⁸ In his essay for the catalog, *The Pictographs of Adolph Gottlieb* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1994), the Sanford Hirsch calls Picasso "...both a looming presence and a major stumbling block for the Americans." In the decade of the 'Thirties, he notes, there was a major Picasso exhibition in New York every year and in 1936 there were four retrospectives in the City. 14 Stieglitz, working with De Zayas, held the first American exhibition of Picasso's work at 291, April 1911.

²⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of Picasso, his exhibitions in America and sales to American collectors, see Michael C. Fitzgerald's fine study, *Making Modern: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth Century Art* (Berkeley: U. of California, 1996). The discussion of the Wildenstein show can be found on 122—127.

³⁰ For an extensive discussion of Rosenberg, Picasso and Avery, see Haskell 76—92.

³¹ Linda Konheim Kramer, *Milton Avery in Black and White: Drawings, 1929—59* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1990) 11.

³² For a useful discussion, see Arthur Elridge, Gauguin and the Nabis. *Prophets of Modernism* (Paris: Terrail, 1995).

³³ Statement by Milton Avery, in *Contemporary American Painting* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1951) 159; quoted in Grad, 8.

³⁴ Paul Gauguin, from a letter to Emile Schuffenecker, Pont Aven, 14 August 1888; rpt. in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: U. of California, 1968), 60.

³⁵ Gauguin letter to Emile Bernard, Arles, November 1888; rpt. in Chipp, 60.

³⁶ Gauguin letter to Daniel de Monfried, Tahiti, August 1892; rpt. in Chipp, 64.

³⁷ Gauguin's comments to Paul Sérusier in 1888 are quoted in Chipp, 53.

³⁸ Maurice Denis, from "Definition of Neotraditionism," 1890; rpt. in Chipp, 94.

³⁹ Sally Michel Avery, Foreward to *Milton Avery: A Retrospective of Forty-eight Oils, Watercolors, Gouaches, Drawings, Monotypes, and Original Prints* (Milwaukee: Barnett Gallery, 1984), np; quoted in Hobbs, 83.

⁴⁰ See Richard Brettell et al, *The Art of Paul Gauguin* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1988) 177 and 511. Exhibitions were held in New York at Wildenstein; in Cambridge at The Fogg; in Baltimore at the Baltimore Museum of Art; and in San Francisco at the San Francisco Museum of Art. The Gauguin portrait was shown both in Cambridge and Baltimore. Whether or not Avery saw any of these exhibitions is not known.

⁴¹ Ritter, 28.

⁴² In his fine "Introduction" to Hobbs' study, Hilton Kramer explains that Cézanne, Seurat, Gauguin and Van Gogh were so little known in the United States in the 'Twenties, that when the Museum of Modern Art opened in 1929, its first exhibition was devoted to these painters. 16; also see, 116.

⁴³ Ritter, 12 and 28.

⁴⁴ For a considerable discussion on folk art and Avery, see Hobbs, 68—95. Modernism and its relation to art forms variously described as "folk", "primitive", "tribal", "non-Western" and "other" is an important, if often contentious area of study. See for example, Gill Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern'," in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Charles Harrison (New Haven: Yale, 1993) 3—85.

⁴⁵ Hobbs, 108—116; also see Haskell, 77—81.

⁴⁶ Rothko, *Commemorative Essay*, in Haskell, 181.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

by Domenic J. Iacono

Checklist notes

All titles printed in boldfaced lettering were designated by the artist. All other titles are either descriptive or have been associated with the art work for a long time.

Dimensions are height by width, and are the unframed sizes.

Inscriptions are notations written directly on the artwork (verso of canvas) or one of its parts (stretcher bar); labels are attached with adhesive or mechanical fasteners (brads, staples, etc.).

Objects displayed in previous exhibitions are listed, when known, in chronological order.

The 'k' numbers refer to an Annette Kaufman inventory of Avery art works in the Kaufman Collection.



Still life with bananas and a bottle, c1928

oil on masonite

16 x 20 inches

signed lower right: Milton Avery

k.01

Still life with bananas and a bottle was the first Avery purchased by Louis Kaufman. Over the next 35 years the Kaufmans became close friends with the artist and acquired twenty-nine paintings, including portraits of Louis, his wife Annette, and her mother Sarah Leibole. The Kaufmans would eventually donate parts of their collection to several museums including the National Museum of American Art (Washington, D.C.), the Portland Art Museum (Portland, Oregon), the Skirball Museum (Los Angeles, California), and Reed College (Portland, Oregon).



Still life with iron, plant, and bananas, c1928

oil on canvas board

16 x 26 inches

signed upper right: Milton Avery

Verso: portrait of a seated man (Wallace Putnam?)

k.14

Still life with iron, plant, and bananas, like *Still life with bananas and bottle*, illustrates the influence of the Art Students League on the developing artist. A more conservative school, the League offered a traditional setting where aspiring artists could refine their skills and practice new techniques. During the late 1920s the League provided a collegial atmosphere for artists who, after paying a nominal fee, could attend sketch classes in the evening. Avery and several of his friends, including Wallace Putnam, Thomas Nagai, Vincenzo Spagna, and Aaron Berkman, would meet there on a regular basis.



Still Life, 1928
oil on masonite
16 x 20 inches
signed lower left: Milton Avery
inscriptions: verso in pencil: Still Life
by Milton Avery 1928 20 x 16
k.02

Still lifes, along with figure compositions were Avery's favorite subjects into the mid-1930s. His habit of working from hastily arranged settings of fruits and vegetables, easily found household materials, and oddly shaped objects, allowed Avery to concentrate less on the subject matter and more on form, pattern, and color. The 1920s and 1930s may have been a transitional period for Avery's approach to creating his art, but he never wavered from his conviction that form and color superseded subject matter.



Still life with 'Pop' bottle, 1928

oil on composition board

11 x 21 inches

signed lower right: Milton Avery

inscriptions on verso: center in black crayon: 24246/116

label: Still life with 'Pop' bottle (1928) by Milton Avery

k.04

Still life with 'Pop' bottle indicates Avery's early steps towards developing his own style of painting. In this image he creates a shallow, undefined pictorial space in which the individual elements have been simplified and flattened. A greater interest in brushwork is evident. Compare the red checked tablecloth in this painting with the same cloth in the earlier *Still Life*, 1928 and one sees the artist's evolution. It may have been his speed at painting a canvas (sometimes finishing a painting in a day) that encouraged the reduction of detail and the deflation of volumes.



Portrait of Clara, 1929

oil on canvas mounted on board

16 x 20 inches

signed upper right: Milton Avery

inscriptions on verso, upper middle in black

crayon: 24246/137

middle in pencil: Milton Avery 150 W. 42 NYC

(illegible word, phone number exchange?) 9603.

label, verso, upper middle: Portrait of Clara, 1929

by Milton Avery

k.10

‘Clara’ was a frequent model for Avery in the late 1920s and early 1930s. She may have been Clara Lea Cousins, who tried to paint seriously and was exhibited, along with Avery, in 1930 at the Morton Galleries (NYC). Cousins may also have been a local schoolteacher who lived near the Avery’s residence at the Lincoln Arcade.

Galleries



Portrait of Thomas Nagai, 1929

oil on canvas* mounted on board

22 x 16 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery

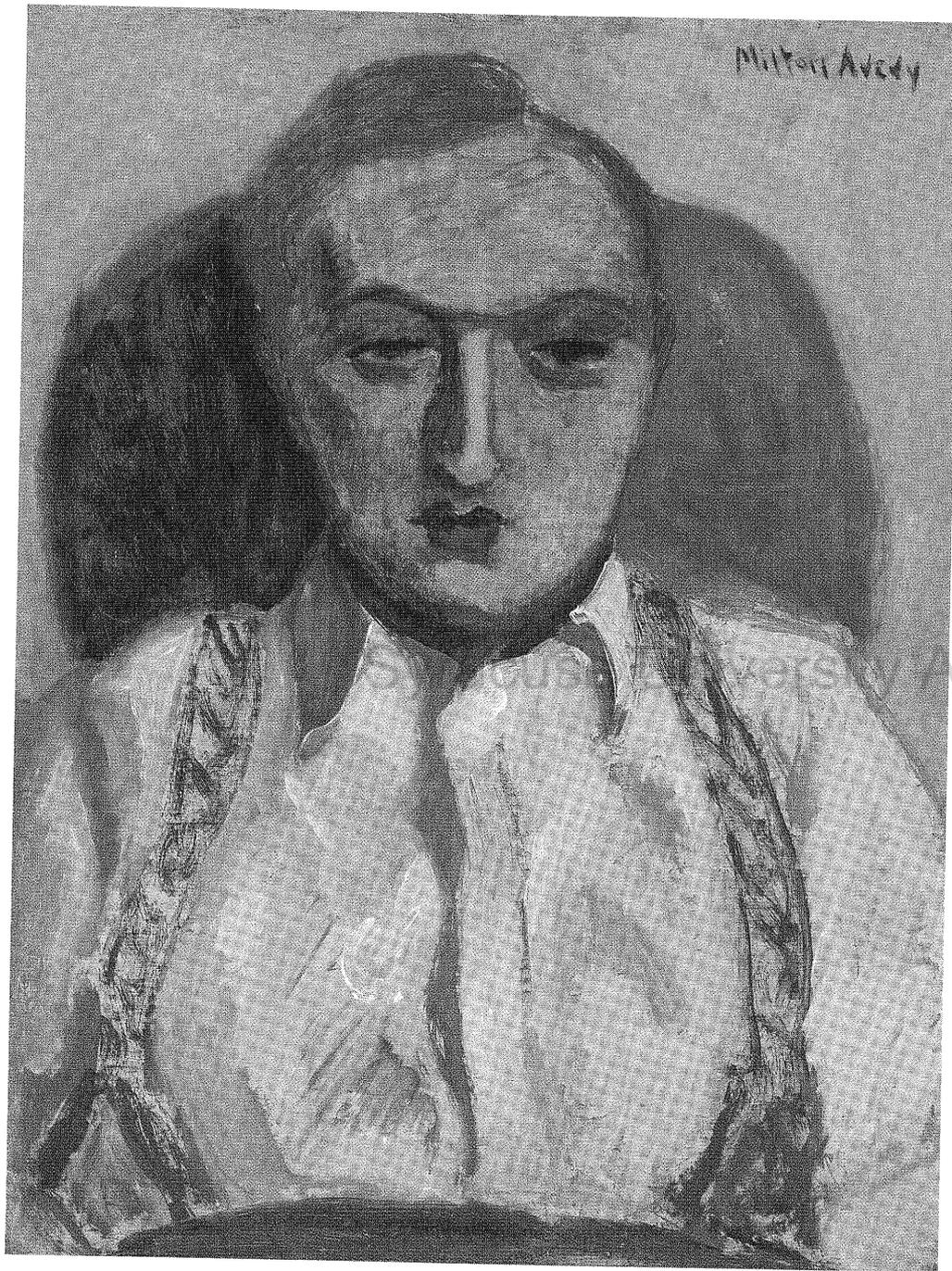
inscription, verso, upper left of board in pencil: Japanese Artist 150.00

**canvas appears to have come from a deck chair, there is a green and black stripe on the left edge, top right, and bottom right edges.*

k.06

Nagai was a Japanese artist who arrived in America when he was seventeen years old. Known primarily for his sensitive watercolors and gouache paintings, Nagai would join Avery and fellow artists Vincenzo Spagna, Raphael Soyer, and David Burliuk when the group pooled their resources to hire a painting model. In the 1930s Nagai had several successful reviews for his exhibitions at the A.C.A., Uptown, and La Salle galleries.

Avery's use of the shoulder length, full face pose was favored for many of his portraits (as well as self portraits) throughout his early career. The composition enabled him to more easily flatten the figure and create a greater balance between the planar forms and his selection of colors. Pictorial depth was further negated by using clothing accessories like hats and scarves that Avery painted as fields of color with little physical modeling.



Louis Kaufman with red suspenders on white shirt, 1931
oil on canvas mounted on board
24 x 18 inches
signed upper right: Milton Avery
label, verso, upper left: Cart & Crate
k.18

Louis Kaufman had introduced Mark Rothko to Milton Avery in 1929 several months after the two artists were exhibited at the Opportunity Gallery. Rothko and Kaufman had been acquaintances in Portland, Oregon and all three men continued their friendship until Avery's death in 1965. Correspondence between the Averys (usually penned by Sally) and the Kaufmans indicates that they shared information about mutual friends and their successes at selling paintings to important collectors or museums.

This portrait shows the artist's ability to change his palette to suit his subject. Avery employs a quick brush and a narrow range of bright colors to capture the likeness of his friend and patron. Using ochre heightened with white to paint the face and hair, Avery adds a swipe of cerulean blue under each eye and reddens the lips. The effect adds a certain intensity to Kaufman's visage that is belied by the sitter's casual attire of an open white shirt and red suspenders.

Portrait of Annette in a green dress, 1933
oil on canvas mounted on board
22 x 16 inches
signed lower right: Milton Avery
label, verso, upper right: Portrait Study of
Mrs. Louis Kaufman (1933) by Milton Avery
k.21

A year before the Kaufmans moved to Los Angeles this portrait was painted in a fairly typical, mid-1930s Avery manner. The background is flat and Annette Kaufman is seen sitting in a chair with a slight twist to her torso. Once again Avery illustrates his interest in carefully controlling the value and intensity of his palette and creates a very interesting surface for Annette's dress by modulating the color. The strongly modeled figure and equally strong brushwork help to enliven this portrait. According to Mrs. Kaufman this portrait was painted in an afternoon and was intended to be used for publicity purposes by the couple for their concert engagements.

Syracuse Uni





Self Portrait with red tam and scarf, 1938

oil on canvas mounted on board

22 x 14 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery

labels, verso, lower right: M. Flax Inc. Artist Materials,
upper right: Milton Avery Self Portrait (pink scarf) 1938,
oil 14 x 21

Previous exhibitions: Fresno Art Museum: *Milton Avery:
An American Master* November 24, 1989- April 8, 1990
k.07

In 1935, after years of little success, Avery was asked by Valentine Dudensing to join his Gallery on 57th Street. The Valentine Gallery was one of the most prestigious in the city and represented many of the major European artists including Matisse, Picasso, and Miro, and Americans like Reginald Marsh and Stuart Davis. This boosted Avery's confidence significantly and encouraged him to pursue his own color theories and painting style.

This self-portrait illustrates Avery's growing determination to make paintings according to his own set of rules. While Avery uses a strong shadow on the left side of his face to help develop a sense of volume for his head, the face, by being rendered in a monochromatic flesh tone, flattens into an abstracted plane from the forehead to chin and left cheek to right ear. Set against a flat background, Avery's face emerges from the canvas while the scarf, which is carefully modeled with soft folds, falls somewhere in between the flat and strongly modeled shapes. Comparing this portrait with the earlier portrait of Thomas Nagai offers an excellent illustration of Avery's aesthetic development.

Milton Avery in a gray shirt with The Chariot Race, c1938

oil on canvas

20 x 24 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery

signed middle right (in *The Chariot Race*): Milton Avery
label, verso, upper middle: Self Portrait of the Artist—

Milton Avery, Painted by Milton Avery in 1941 (sic)

Illustrated: Hobbs, Robert. Milton Avery. New York:
Hudson Hills Press, 1990, p. 67.

Previous exhibitions:

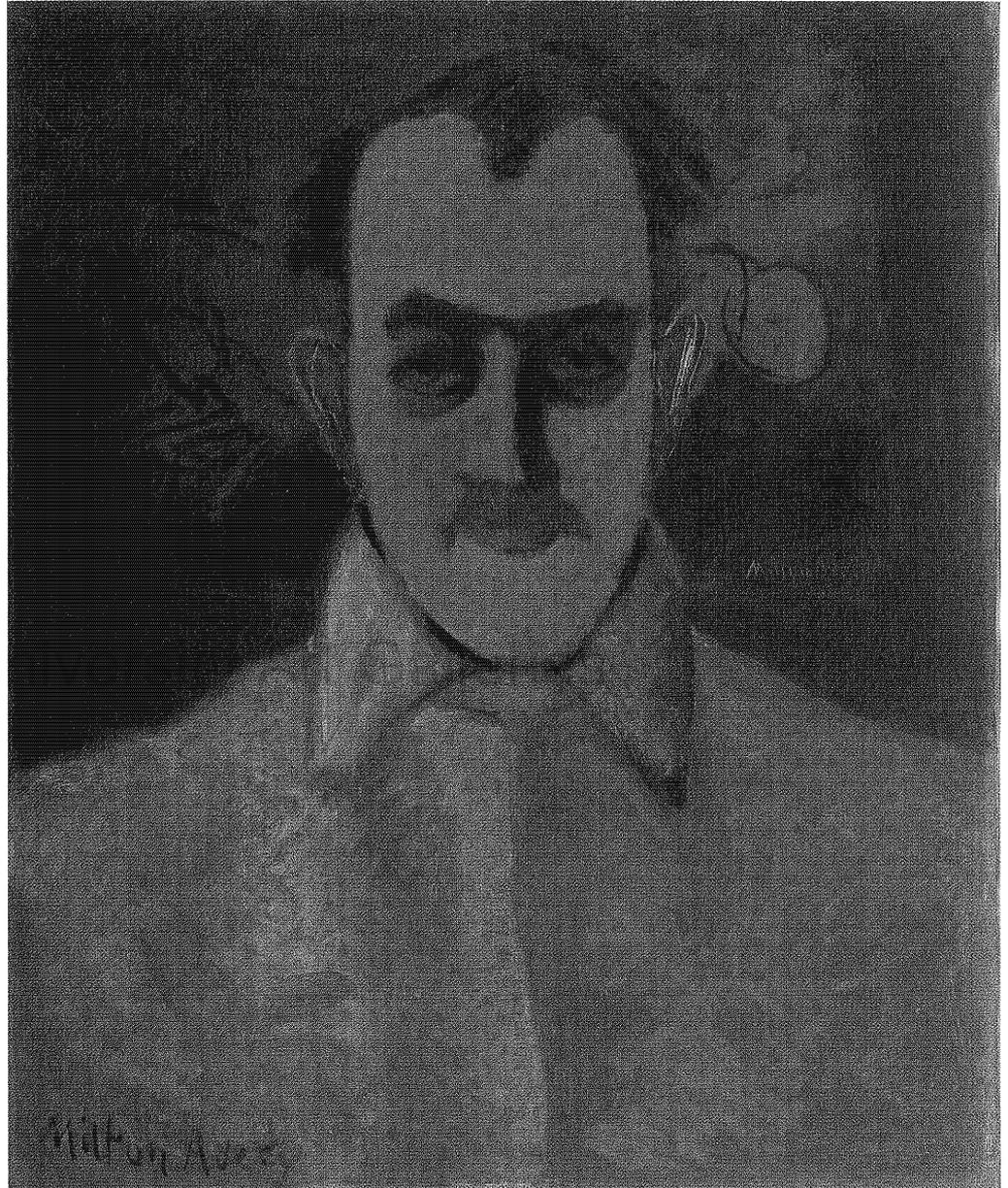
Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition,

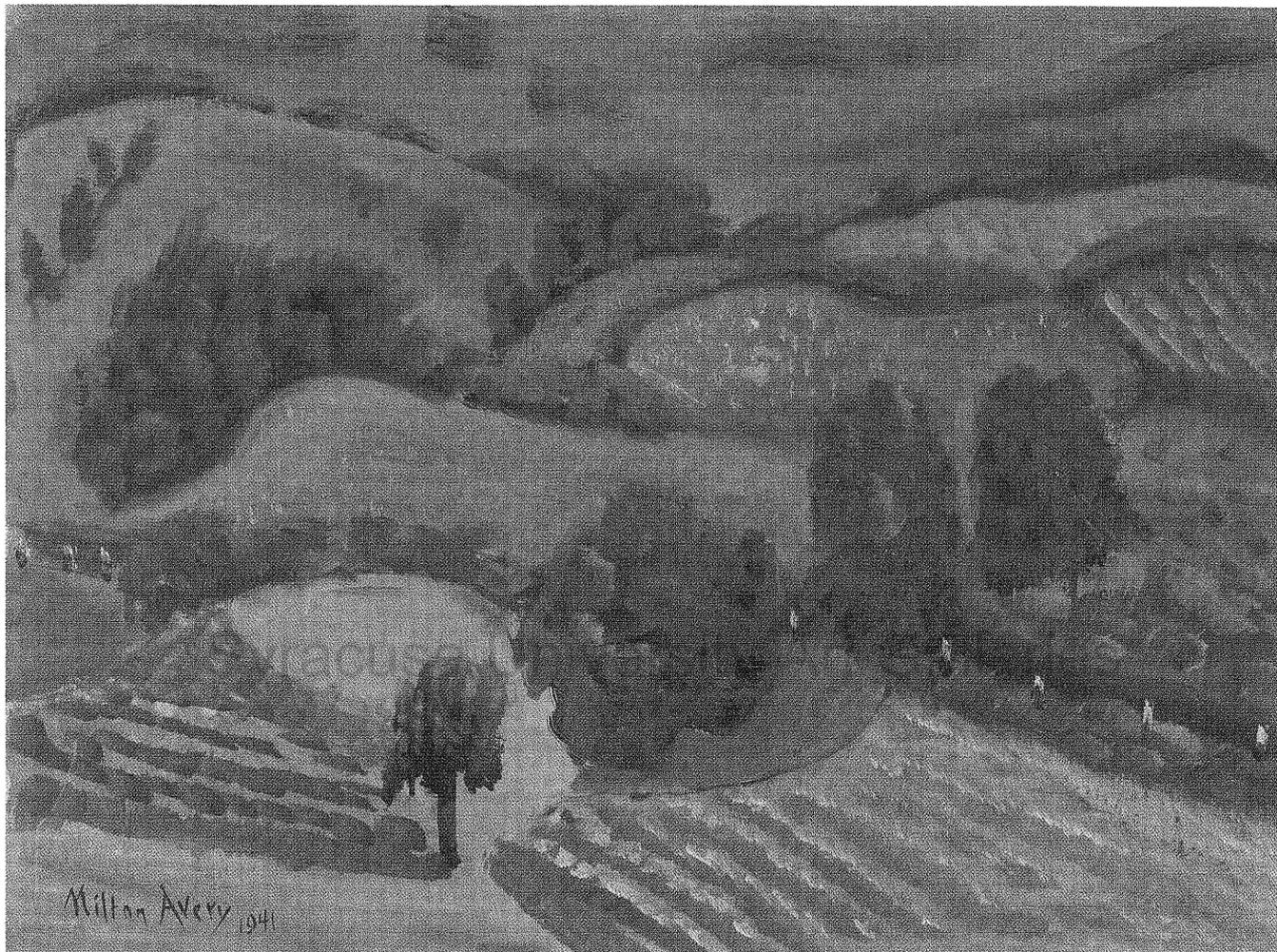
"Milton Avery." September 16-December 5, 1982

k.20

After his arrival in New York City, Avery began making sketches of circus and vaudeville performers, usually in gouache or watercolor, that had a spontaneity and whimsical nature admired by Louis Kaufman. One such painting was *The Chariot Race* (Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation) of 1933, which, when it was sold to another collector, disappointed Mr. Kaufman very much. As a result Avery painted this self portrait and included a representation of *The Chariot Race* in the background for Mr.

Kaufman's pleasure. It is one of the earliest instances where Avery included one of his earlier compositions in the background of a new design.





Vermont Landscape, 1941

oil on canvas board

18 x 24 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery 1941

inscription, verso, in white chalk: Kaufman

k.16

Even though they had very little extra money during the 1930s, Avery knew the value of leaving New York City in order to re-invigorate himself and his family. They often would summer in New England, before 1935 in Gloucester, Massachusetts and later at Jamaica or Rawsonville, Vermont. Quite often they would be visited by friends from New York, especially Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko. Avery developed the habit of making quick sketches on paper, in either ink or watercolor, as a type of notebook for his thoughts. Rather than bring his oils to a particular setting where weather or light might present unwelcome challenges, Avery's sketching tools were not burdensome and these designs could later be developed into oil paintings. This image was probably painted after a watercolor study made during their 1940 summer trip to Rawsonville.

Vincenzo Spagna and Avery's daughter, March, are seen here playing a game of Chinese Checkers. Spagna had been a friend of Avery's since their days in Hartford, Connecticut. Also a painter, Spagna spent many hours at the Avery household and also with Wallace Putnam, Aaron Berkman, and Avery at the Art Students League where they would paint from live models. In a 1945 review of Spagna's work exhibited at the American British Art Center, the reviewer described a 'Cezanne-sque' quality that was probably due to Avery's influence on Spagna. Throughout his career Avery made numerous paintings that appear to be figure studies or genre scenes but could actually be portraits.

Even without their names we somehow realize that the two game players who are pondering a move have identities. It is certainly a strength of Avery's art that he can develop a sense of personality or intimate knowledge of the sitters when at first glance they might appear anonymous.



Chinese Checkers (March Avery and Vincenzo Spagna), c1941

oil on canvas

28 x 36 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery

inscriptions, verso, on upper stretcher bar: Chinese Checkers by Milton Avery 294 W 11 St. NYC

verso, on left stretcher bar in white chalk: 294 W 11.

Illustrated: Kramer, Hilton. *Milton Avery: Paintings 1930-1960*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962, #83.

Hobbs, Robert. *Milton Avery*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990, p. 110.

Previous exhibitions: The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md. "Milton Avery."

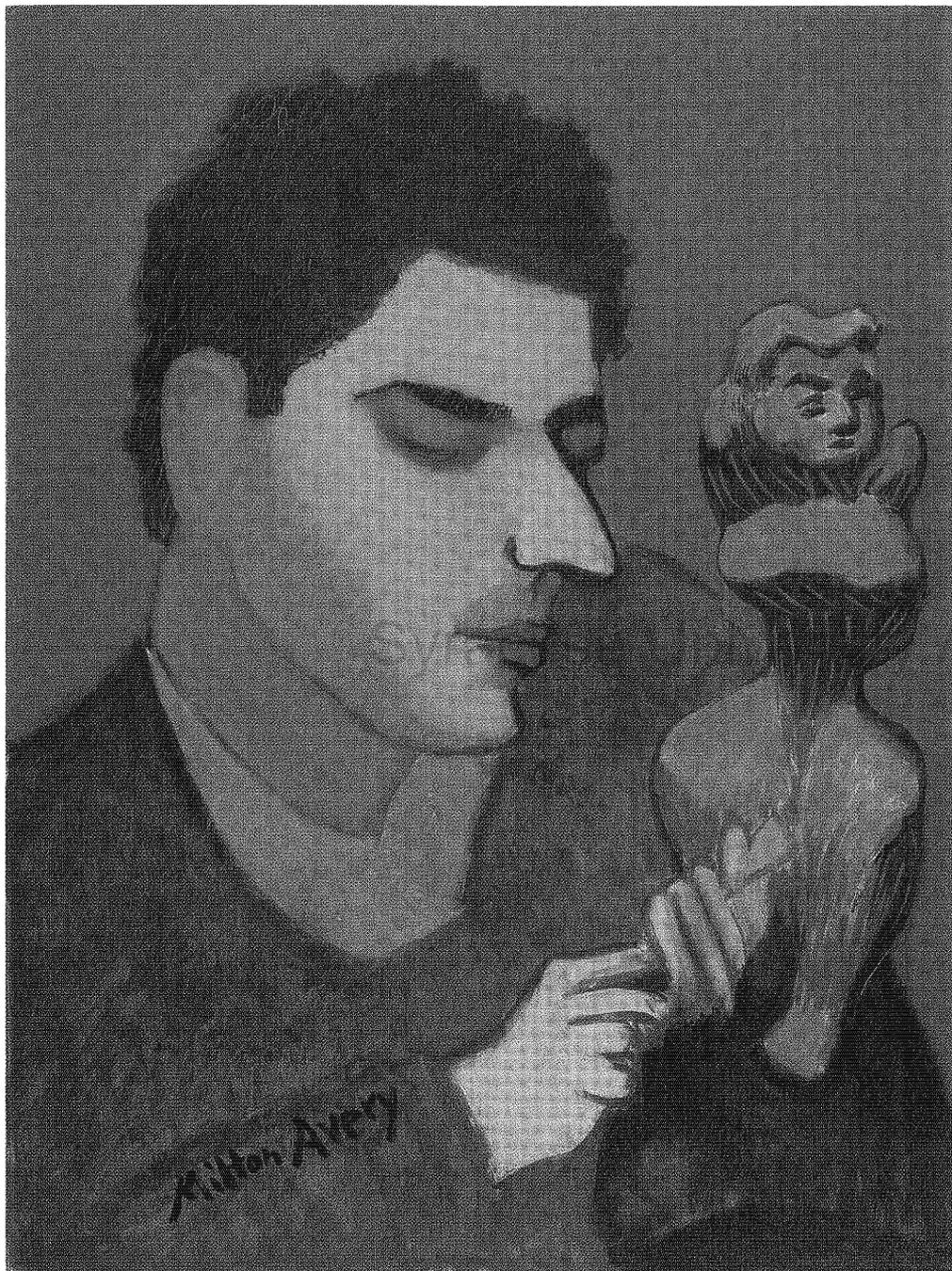
December 9- January 18, 1953.

k.17



California landscape/seascape, 1942
oil on canvas board
18 x 24 inches
signed lower left: Milton Avery 1942
inscription, verso, in white chalk: Kaufman
k.12

In the summer of 1941, the last summer before the war and gas rationing, Avery took his family on a trip across the country to California. One would think that the California coastline with its great variety of colors and textures must have been a delight for the artist who had previously never left the East Coast. According to Mrs. Kaufman however, Avery did not like the intensity of the southern California sun and preferred to make quick sketches that he would later recompose into oil paintings. With the aid of Mr. and Mrs. Kaufman, who were now living in Westwood, Avery had his first exhibition in the Los Angeles area. The exhibition was reviewed for *The Los Angeles Times* by Arthur Miller.



Portrait of Chaim Gross, c1943

oil on canvas board

24 x 18 inches

signed lower left: Milton Avery

k.09

Avery and Chaim Gross became friends in the late 1920s when the two frequented the Art Students League. In January 1943, Avery and Gross were reviewed in the same *Magazine of Art* article for exhibitions they had at the Valentine and Associated American Artist Galleries. It was probably about this time that the *Portrait of Chaim Gross* was completed because the piece being sculpted by Gross in this painting appears to be *Vanity, Early Morning*, 1944 (Hirshhorn Museum, a gift of the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation.)

Art Galleries

Portrait of Marsden Hartley, 1943

oil on Whatman Composition board

12 1/2 x 12 inches

signed lower left: Milton, lower right: Avery 1943

(across shoulders)

inscription, verso, upper middle in white chalk: Kaufman
labels, verso of frame, upper left, white sticker: T/R0035/1

verso of frame, upper middle:

Portrait of Marsden Hartley, 1943 by Milton Avery in 1943,

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Kaufman, Los Angeles CA

verso of frame, lower right: Portrait of Marsden Hartley

(1943) lent by Mr and Mrs Louis Kaufman,

verso of frame, lower right, Milton Avery, Portrait of

Marsden Hartley, 1943, oil , 12 1/2 x 12

Previous exhibitions: Fresno Art Museum: Milton Avery:

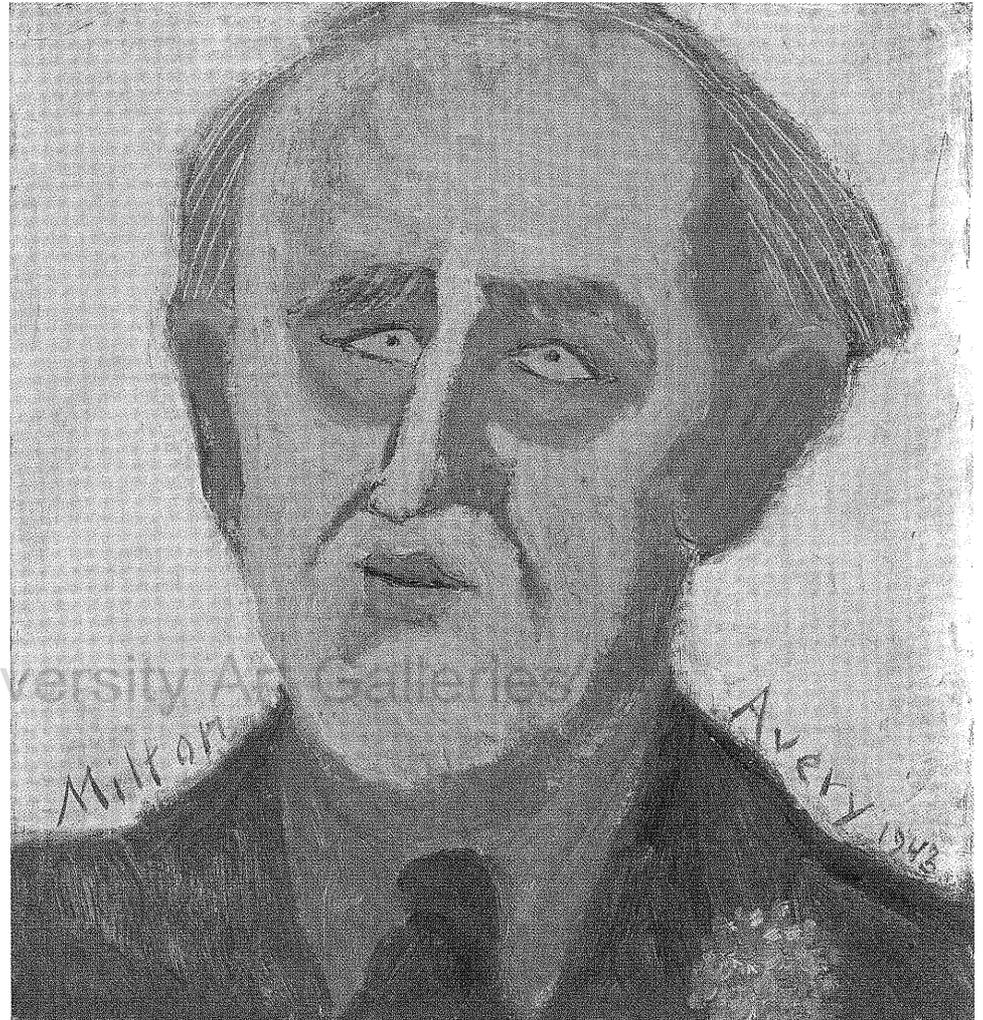
An American Master November 24, 1989- April 8, 1990.

k.22

Marsden Hartley was a longtime friend of Milton Avery and several years his senior. Hartley died in 1943 at the age of 66. Avery made two portraits of Hartley in 1943, the Kaufman collection painting and another in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. At three-quarter length the Boston portrait shows a full faced Hartley leaning against a piece of furniture, hands tightly clasped. Hilton Kramer, in his 1962 *Milton Avery: Paintings 1930-1960* called the Boston portrait his best effort and remarked that it was "one of the keenest psychological portrayals in modern portraiture."

The Kaufman *Portrait of Marsden Hartley* is also a haunting image. Not a study for the Boston portrait, this portrayal has the look of death and the fear of one's own mortality present.

The sunken sapphire-colored eyes, unreal in their intensity, contrast with the two tones of green/gray-green which Avery has composed with a death mask character.





Annette Kaufman in a black dress, 1944

oil on canvas

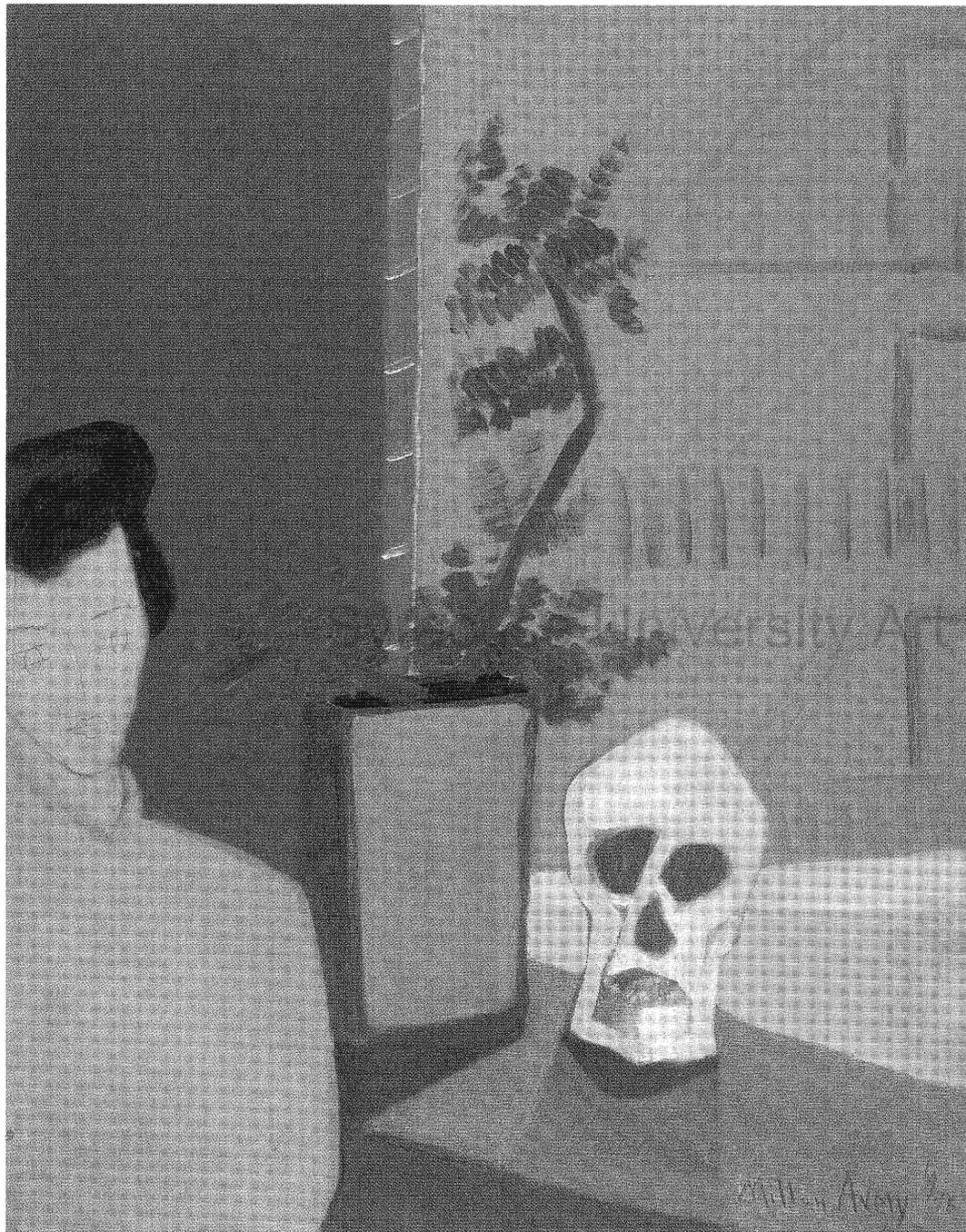
30 x 22 inches

signed lower left: Milton 19, lower right: Avery 44
inscription, verso, upper right in white chalk: Kaufman
k.13

The Avery's and the Kaufmans had been friends for many years when this portrait was painted. Each time the Kaufmans visited New York City during a concert tour or for a recital they would spend at least one evening with the Averys. On the occasion of this portrait being painted, a photographer friend was present and recorded Milton in the process of painting and Louis practicing his violin (see page 5.)

This was one of the last single figure portraits ever produced by Avery. Between 1943 and his death in 1964 Avery continued to make self portraits, but single figure paintings became depictions of anonymous individuals. About this same time Avery abandons the expressive details and brushy paint application of his earlier work in favor of larger areas of thinly applied, monochromatic colors, and clearly delineated forms.

It may have been due to the influence of the gallery entrepreneur Paul Rosenberg that Avery discontinued making portraits. Rosenberg had numerous strong convictions about art that he would often share with his artists and clients. Portraits, unless commissioned were notorious 'bad sellers,' and Rosenberg kept his artists aware of trends in art styles and interests.



Sally with Skull, 1946

oil on canvas

33 x 26 inches

signed lower right: Milton Avery 1946

label, verso, upper left: Milton Avery, Sally with Skull 1946, oil 33 x 36;

Previous exhibitions: The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md. "Milton Avery." December 9-January 18, 1953.

Fresno Art Museum: "Milton Avery: An American Master." November 24, 1989- April 8, 1990.

k.08

After returning from a three-month-long family trip to Mexico in 1946, Avery returned to New York with renewed vigor and much inspiration for new paintings. The family brought back many mementos including the skull seen here, while Avery's palette took on many of the local colors he had seen in the ceramics and paintings of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.



Leo Lerman in Mitzi Solomon's Studio, 1948

oil on canvas board

24 x 18 inches

signed lower right: Milton Avery 1948

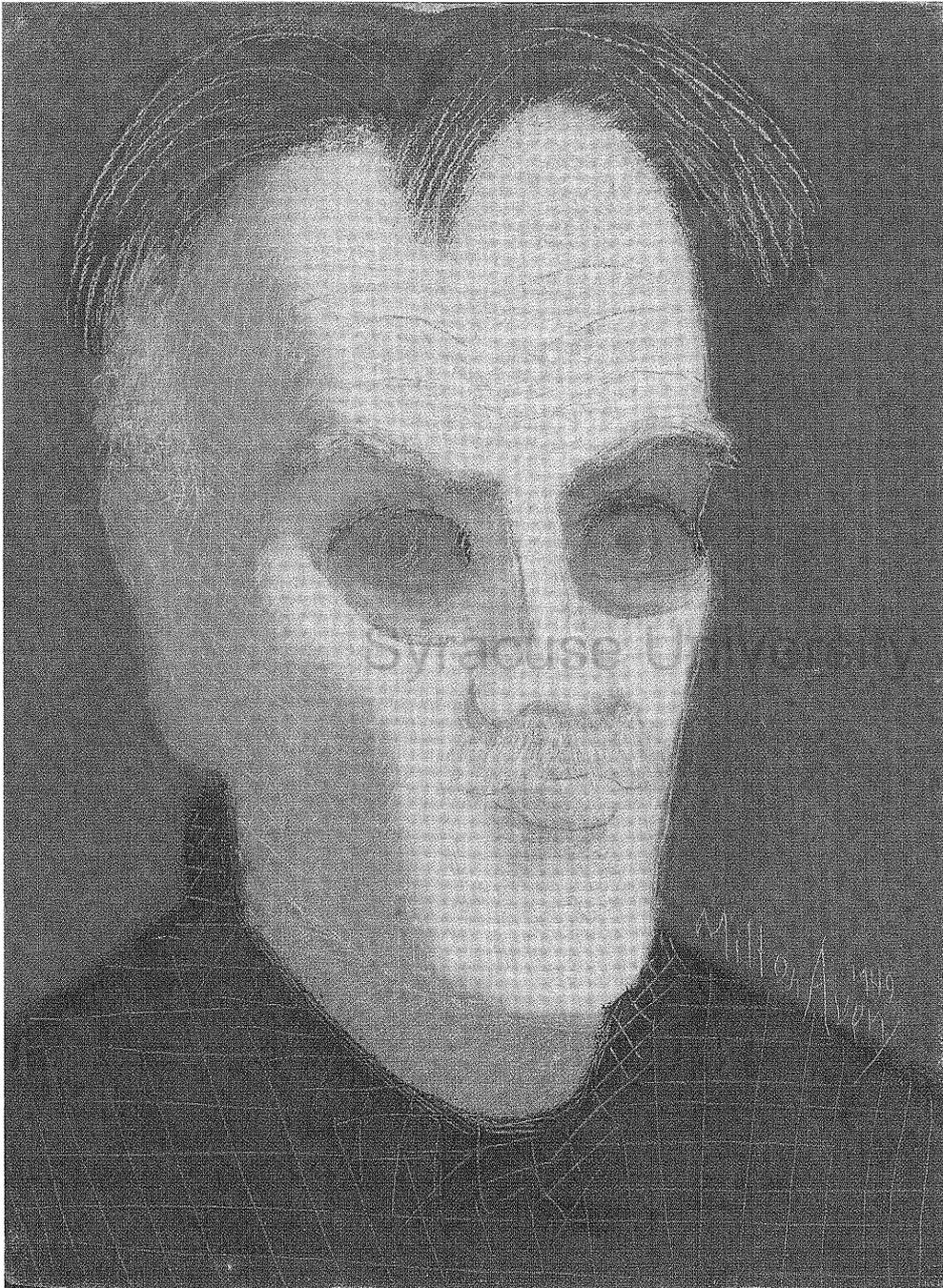
Inscription, verso, Leo Lerman in Mitzi Solomon's

Studio, 1948 Milton Avery Kaufman 12PR3(?)

k.19

Leo Lerman was a critic who wrote regularly for *The New York Times* reviewing the wide variety of dance events that took place in the city. He was also an author of several books including one that marked the centenary of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Here he is placed by Avery in the Central Park South studio of the sculptor Mitzi Solomon who received some notoriety in 1947 because one of her sculptures was removed from an exhibition at the National Academy of Design. *'The Lovers'* was barred from the exhibition because of its subject matter and the ensuing controversy saw the resignation of Ms. Solomon and another NAD member from the association.

Avery imbues this painting with a wit and fancy that must have thrilled Louis Kaufman. Even though he is shown between two sculptures on their pedestals, and supported by a chair, Lerman's figure, accentuated by the pinstripes of his suit, seems to be caught in a dance step ready to bound out of the picture frame. A background diagonal creates an interesting dynamic for this unusual portrait.



The Convalescent (Self Portrait in red sweater), 1949

oil on canvas board

12 x 9 inches

signed lower right: Milton Avery 1949

labels, verso, upper left on frame: T/R 0035/4

verso, upper middle: **The Convalescent (Self-Portrait)**
Milton Avery Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Kaufman
verso, upper right: **WMAA (Whitney Museum of American Art)**

Illustrated: Milton Avery, catalog for Whitney Museum Exhibition, 1982, p. 109

Previous exhibitions: **The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Md. "Milton Avery." December 9- January 18, 1953.**

Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition, "Milton Avery." September 16-December 5, 1982.

Fresno Art Museum: Milton Avery: An American Master November 24, 1989- April 8, 1990.

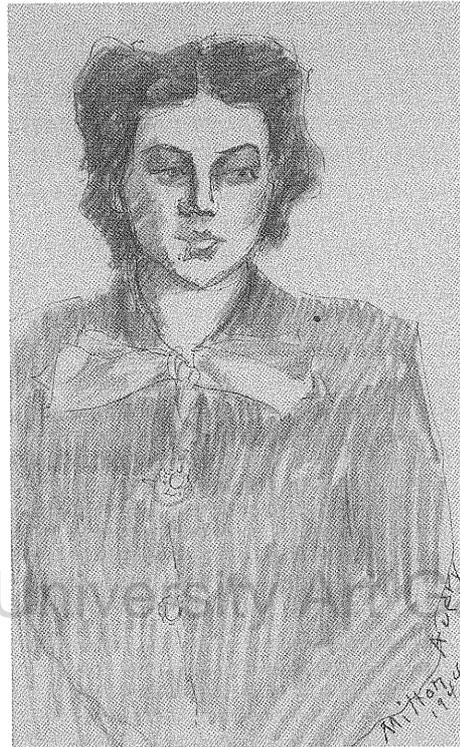
k.05

This portrait was created shortly after Avery's heart attack in 1949. He had been hospitalized for more than a month and after recuperating at a friend's home in New York, Avery traveled to Florida to continue his convalescence. This haunting self portrait conjures up many of the same visual references Avery had used in his portrait of Marsden Hartley. The facial shadows give a skull-like shape to his pallid skin tone, and the frightening gaze of the deep set eyes leave little doubt that Avery saw his days numbered when he completed this portrait.

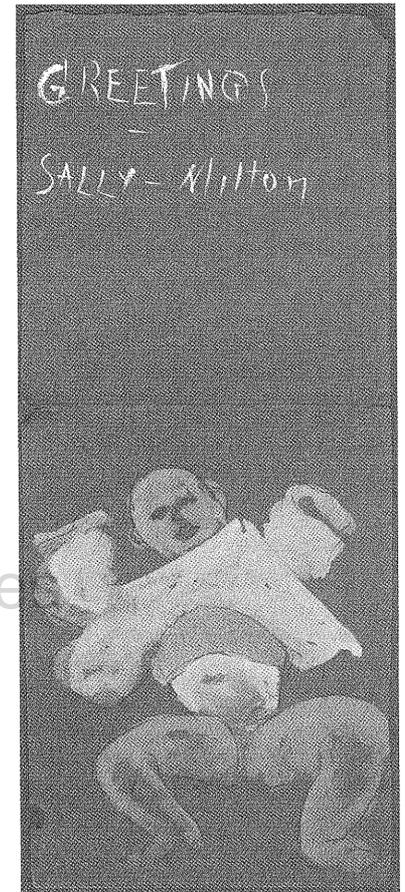
OTHER WORKS IN EXHIBITION



March Avery, n.d.
pastel on paper
12 x 9 inches
k.23



*Study for Annette Kaufman in a
black dress, 1944*
pencil on paper
9 x 6 inches
k.24



Greetings (announcement card), 1932
gouache/relief on paper
16 x 10 1/2 inches (frame)
k.28

Birth announcement for March Avery
sent to the Kaufmans in late 1932.

LAUREL GALLERY PORTFOLIO

Title page description

Laurels Number Four, Milton Avery, Five Drypoint Etchings on Copper,

Title of Prints, 1 Reclining Nude 1948, 2 March at Table 1948, 3 By the Sea 1948, 4 Riders in the Park 1934, 5 Head of a Man 1935, An Appreciation by Joseph Solman, Portfolio No. 30.

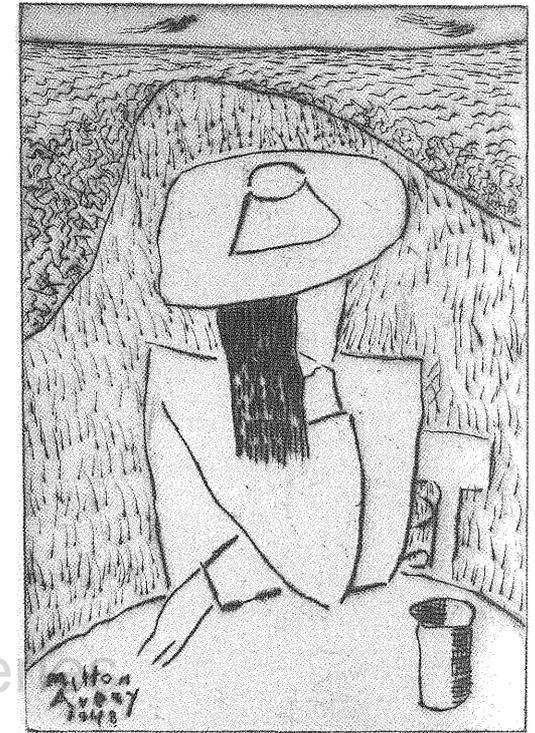
One hundred copies of this portfolio were published by the Laurel Gallery in June '48.

The plates were printed by Atelier 17, the text and title page were hand set and printed on the Hand Press of Douglass Howell on Howell handmade Paper.

The Laurel Gallery, Chris Ritter, Director, 48 East 57th Street, New York 22.

Avery had been making drypoint prints since the mid 1930's when his sister-in-law gave him several used plates from an engraver's shop. Since drypoints did not need any special chemicals or tools, Avery was able to create prints inexpensively, an important consideration during the Depression. He continued to make drypoints and rarely worked in another print medium until 1950, when he began making lithographs and woodcuts.

When Chris Ritter published this series of five drypoints, Avery's reputation was established as a painter, but not as a printmaker. Over the next decade he would create some of the most interesting prints of the modern era and today his woodcuts are very much sought after.

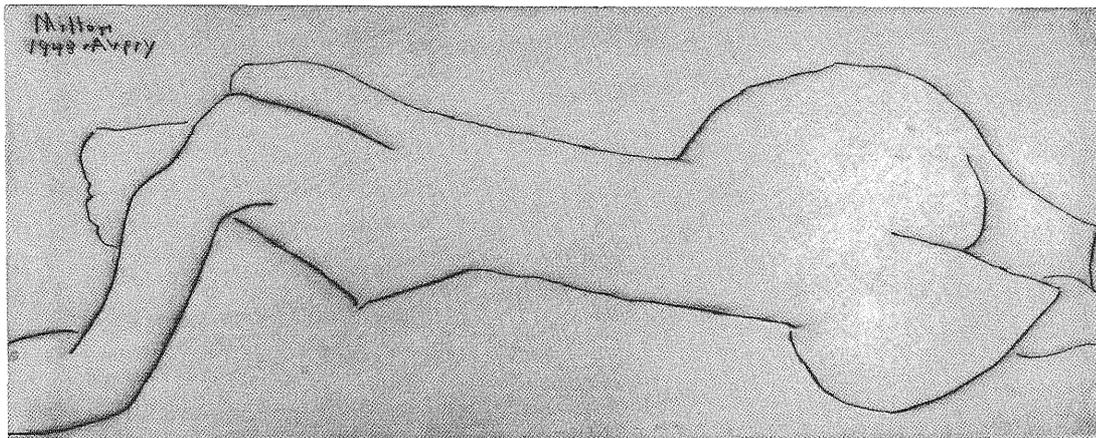


March at a Table, 1948

drypoint

8 3/4 x 6 inches

k. 27e

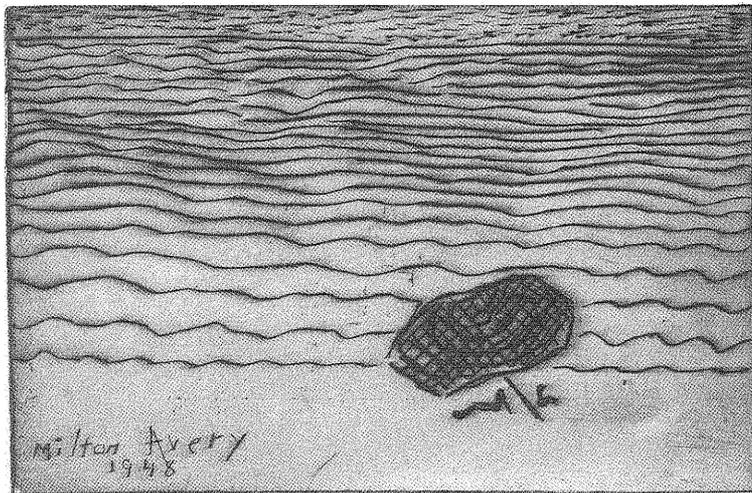


Reclining Nude (Nude with long torso), 1948

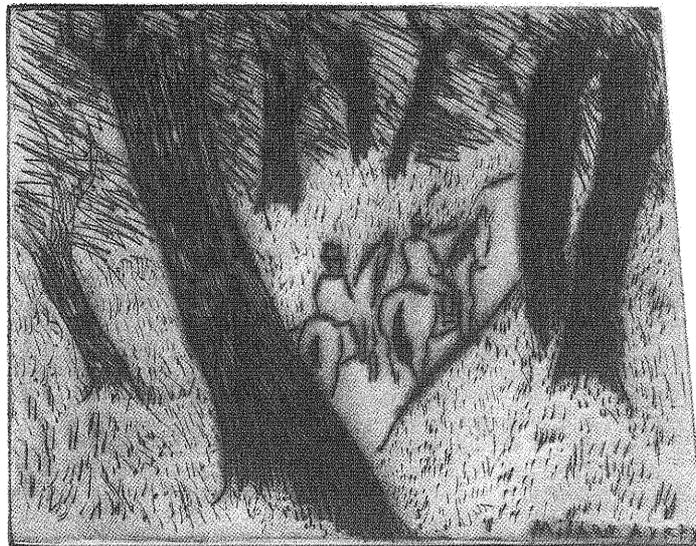
drypoint

5 7/8 x 14 7/8 inches

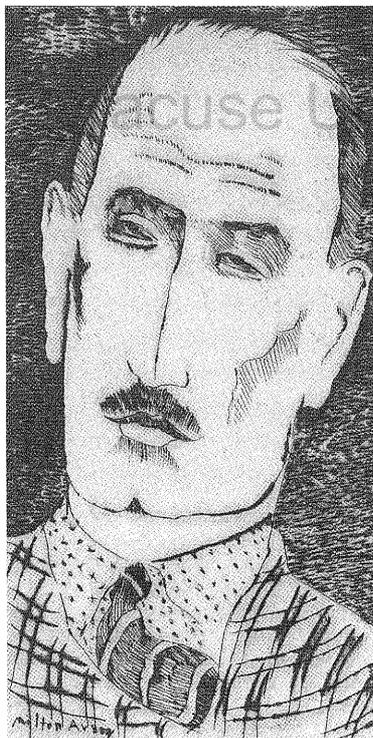
k. 27b



By the sea, 1948
(Umbrella by the sea)
 drypoint
 4 3/4 x 7 1/4 inches
 k. 27d



Riders in the Park, 1934
 drypoint
 4 x 5 inches
 k. 27a



Head of a man (Portrait of Louis Wiesenberg), 1935
 drypoint
 9 1/8 x 4 3/4 inches
 k. 27c

March with Babushka (Head of March), 1948
 published by Collectors of American Art
 drypoint on paper
 9 3/4 x 9 5/8 inches
 k.29



LOUIS AND ANNETTE KAUFMAN

by John and Susan Edwards Harvith

The Kaufmans' West Los Angeles home, designed in the mid-1930s by Lloyd Wright, son of Frank Lloyd Wright, has its walls festooned with representational 20th-century paintings. Built-in bookcases are crammed with books, which overflow onto all available surfaces, including the Steinway grand piano, TV console, and coffee table, while the tops of bookcases and mantelpiece are adorned with Asian, African, and pre-Columbian sculptures. It was in this setting that the first of many interviews with the Kaufmans took place, in December 1974.

Both Louis and Annette were amazingly gracious and set us at ease from the start. It was one of those magical moments when we realized at once that a lifelong friendship had been struck. We also realized that both Kaufmans were among the most articulate people we had ever interviewed, and also a treasure house of information about the history of music and music performance, the history of recording, the history of art, the history of filmmaking in Hollywood, even modern political and cultural history. They could speak intelligently and at length about virtually any arts-related topic one could imagine, and they had met and gotten to know a "Who's Who" of musicians, artists, and filmmakers, from Jascha Heifetz, Pablo Casals, and Fritz Kreisler to Mark Rothko, Man Ray, Milton Avery, and Charlie Chaplin.

Because of the stereotypical portrayal of Southern California we had absorbed from our years in the Midwest, we had expected to encounter a plethora of women in rhinestone-studded sunglasses and men sporting Hawaiian shirts and gold necklaces, all engaging in vacuous conversation. This, we quickly discovered, is not representative of the creative people responsible for making movies in Hollywood's so-called Golden Age, from the 1920s through the immediate postwar era. The Kaufmans and their colleagues were deeply committed to the arts, knowledgeable, and participated in a rich and varied cultural life. The artistic attainments of many of these film pioneers had been unfairly dismissed, because artists and musicians outside the film industry tended to discount the considerable artistic contributions of those in the Hollywood film studios as "commercial," and, hence, crass, corrupted, and worthless. Happily, the greatness of American films from the first half of the century has been acknowledged, and we now cele-

brate the behind-the-scenes contributions of musicians, cinematographers, still photographers, art directors, costume designers, writers, editors and others who made the classic Hollywood cinema into an internationally acclaimed art form.

Louis Kaufman was among those sterling artists who contributed so generously to film. Once called by *The New York Times* "a violinists' violinist and a musicians' musician," Louis was born in 1905, in Portland, Oregon. At age 10 he toured the Western Pantages vaudeville circuit for six months as a violinist and went on to study violin with Franz Kneisel from 1918 to 1926 at New York's Institute of Musical Art, later absorbed by the Juilliard Musical Foundation. He was the original violist of the Musical Art Quartet (1926-33), and won the Naumburg Award in 1928, the year of his American solo recital debut in New York's Town Hall. During these early years, he played chamber music with Pablo Casals, Mischa Elman, Heifetz, Kreisler, Gregor Piatigorsky, and Efreim Zimbalist, among other giants of the classical music scene.

Louis first met 17-year-old Annette Leibole from Bismarck, North Dakota, in 1932, and it was instant love. Annette was a pianist studying with James Friskin at the Institute of Musical Art and shared Louis' passions for music, art, and theater. The two were married on April 16, 1933, and embarked on a lengthy honeymoon in France, where Annette pursued further piano studies in Paris with Mme. Jeanne Blocard.

After their honeymoon, the couple said farewell to New York and struck out for the West and California. They first concertized in Portland and performed radio concerts, did the same in San Francisco, and then Louis asked Annette if they could try to settle in Los Angeles, because he had cherished memories of the Santa Monica beach, the palm trees, and the warm weather from his days as a 10-year-old vaudeville performer. Their plan was to give concerts, play over the radio, and teach.

After they performed a few radio concerts in Los Angeles, however, their world was turned upside down: MGM's music contractor phoned Louis and told him that Ernst Lubitsch had heard him play over the radio and wanted him to perform the violin solos for his film *The Merry Widow* (1934). After Louis demurred, telling the contractor that he was a serious

classical violinist, the contractor persisted, thinking that Louis was after more money, and offered him double the union scale. Louis was then persuaded to give it a try, made \$275 the first day of the recording session (this in the depths of the Depression!), and quickly became the most sought-after violin soloist in Hollywood.

Over the course of his legendary career in Hollywood, which extended into the 1970s, Louis played in some 500 films, from *Of Human Bondage* (1934 and 1946), *Show Boat* (1936), *Modern Times* (1936) and *Wuthering Heights* (1939) to *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), *Casablanca* (1942), *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *The Sound of Music* (1965), and *Hello, Dolly!* (1969).

Louis became the favorite violinist of the great Hollywood composers, including Robert Russell Bennett, Bernard Herrmann, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Miklos Rozsa, Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and Victor Young. His violin solos were featured in a number of films honored with Academy Awards for best musical score, among them *The Informer* (1935, Max Steiner), *Pinocchio* (1940, Leigh Harline, Paul J. Smith, Ned Washington), *All That Money Can Buy* (1941, Bernard Herrmann), *Since You Went Away* (1944, Max Steiner), *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956, Victor Young), *The Sound of Music* (Irwin Kostal), and *Hello, Dolly!* (Lennie Hayton, Lionel Newman). At the same time, Louis championed concert works by living composers, giving premieres of numerous new works, among them violin concertos by Anthony Collins, Leighton Lucas, Dag Wiren, Lars Erik Larsson, Henri Saugué, Bohuslav Martinu, and Bennett and violin-piano works by William Grant Still and Bennett. And he was the first violinist to record Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto, Milhaud's Violin Concerto No. 2, and Walter Piston's Violin Concerto No. 2.

From the 1930s to the mid-1970s, Louis and Annette gave concerts together nationwide and made recordings of modern concert repertoire. (During the Depression, they gave many WPA-sponsored concerts and performed for the armed services during World War II.) They also concertized extensively in Europe from 1948 to 1956, conducting, at the same time, musicological research on Vivaldi that unearthed dozens of "lost" Vivaldi violin concertos that Louis edited and then performed as premieres in London, Paris, Brussels, and New York. Louis was the first violinist to record Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" (Op. VIII, Nos. 1-4), for which he won the 1950 *Grand Prix du Disque* in Paris, and the first violinist to record Vivaldi's Op. VIII, Nos. 5-12 and the complete Op. IX.

Louis nourished his love of art by collecting paintings as soon as his modest earnings as a chamber music performer would allow, in the late 1920s. As Annette relates in this catalog, Louis was the first collector to buy a painting from Milton Avery and later, on their first date, took her to meet the Averys; he and Annette then went on to amass a large and important Avery collection and urged other collectors to follow their example. But Avery formed but one comparatively small, albeit significant, portion of the Kaufman collection. Together Louis and Annette assembled a remarkably large and varied art collection that includes, in addition to the African, Asian, and Pre-Columbian pieces mentioned earlier, 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century works on paper, as well as numerous paintings by artists they had also befriended: David Burluk, Hinson Cole, Jean Charlot, Louis Michel Eilshemius, Jean Hélon, Lawrence Lebduska, David Park, Jean Pougny, and Yves de Saint-Front among many other modern American, Latin American, and European artists.

When Louis Kaufman passed away on February 9, 1994, he was probably history's most recorded violinist, with conventional disc performances of some 100 major concert works and film soundtrack recordings of hundreds of classic Hollywood film scores. And thanks to his solos in countless celebrated movies, from *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) to *Pinocchio*, he undoubtedly has been heard by more people more frequently than any other violinist worldwide.

Annette has remained as active as ever in keeping Louis' life and work alive, overseeing the continued publication of his Vivaldi violin concerto editions, supervising the reissue of his recordings on CDs, and editing a book-length manuscript of his memoirs, which will be published by Syracuse University Press.

A friend of Syracuse University, Annette Kaufman has come to Syracuse to lecture about Louis' career, has donated art work to the University, and has agreed to lend the works in this exhibition for a national tour and a fall 2000 showing in the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery on campus.

THE AVERYS AND THE KAUFMANS: *Reminiscences of an Enduring Relationship*

ANNETTE KAUFMAN IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN AND SUSAN EDWARDS HARVITH

How did Louis meet Milton Avery? That was a few years before he met me. Louis was the original violist of the Musical Art Quartet, which was formed in 1926 and based in New York City. The quartet rehearsed in New Hartford, Connecticut, and Louis went to see an exhibit of women painters of the region while he was there. He bought a painting by Mary Kumpf, a picture of the Brooklyn Bridge. He thought it would be lovely in his one-room apartment, and he was told he could only take it when the show was over, which coincided with the quartet's return to New York.

Louis met an artist in New Hartford by the name of Aaron Berkman, a painter and a friend of Milton's. He came to visit Louis in his room in New York and said, "That's an awfully mediocre thing. How could you put something like that on your walls?" Louis said, "Well I like it, I think the bridge is a nice form." And Aaron said, "Now, I'll take you to see a real artist. We painters in Hartford think a lot of him, and his name is Milton Avery."

At that time, in the late 1920s, Milton and Sally Avery had just been married, and they lived around Columbus Circle. There was an old tenement there, right on the spot where Lincoln Center now stands; it was very rickety, and a few artists had studios there. Milton and Sally had a one-room apartment where they cooked and slept and painted and entertained friends. They were very gregarious and hospitable. All in this one room, about the size of the room we're in, ten by twelve, something like that.

Sally was an English Jewess and Milton was a real Connecticut Yankee. (I think there are a lot of graves in Hartford with Avery on the tombstones.) In any event, Louis was just enchanted with them both. Milton was rather laconic and quiet, but he was a very strong personality, and you knew what he liked or didn't like with just a word or two. Sally was bubbly. She was like champagne, always very excited about what Milton was doing. And this was very attractive to Louis. He found them really delightful people and couldn't bear his painting of the Brooklyn Bridge after a while—it started to look uninteresting, so he put it up at auction and got his \$25 back.

Louis was very much attracted to Milton's palette. They were very rich paintings. I would say that Milton was then influenced a lot by Cézanne and by Ernest Lawson, the kind of regional painting that was awfully good and was going around New England at that time. And after a few weeks, Louis found a still life that he just thought was marvelous, very rich, and he said to Milton, "I'd like to buy that. What do you want for it?" Milton said, "Well, would \$25 be all right?" And Louis said, "Sure." And his collecting of Avery had begun. This was the first oil painting that Milton had sold.

There was a Catholic priest by the name of Father Kelly who had met Milton earlier in Hartford, and he bought a couple of watercolors. But when his superiors heard about it, they said, "Father Kelly, it's not right for you to have personal luxuries. You're living in a very poor parish, and you should give the money to the poor if you have any money." So he had to sell them and give the money to the poor, and that ended that for him. But Louis bought the first oil painting.

When the Averys were first starting out, they didn't have money for canvas—it was very expensive. So Sally would take the boards that came from the laundries when you sent shirts to be washed, and cover them with glued-on linen dish toweling that she treated so that Milton could paint on them. It was a very nice surface to paint on. I think some pictures that we have are painted on toweling. Those canvases never cracked—she prepared them very carefully.

Milton and Sally and all of the artists were really very, very poor in those years. I'm speaking of when Louis first met them during the late Twenties and early Thirties. Louis was slightly better off: He was working in a string quartet. He wasn't making very much money, but he was still better off than they were. So Milton would say, "Louis, why don't you buy a picture from George Constant, he's really having a tough time," or "Why don't you buy something from Ben Benn?" or from some of the other artists who were his friends. It was really an awfully nice thing that he and Sally both had. Milton wanted Louis to buy things, so Louis would buy pictures on time. He didn't quite have all the money to pay for something, but he'd give them a partial payment every week.

Many years later—it was after Milton had died—Sally told both of us, “You know, Louis, I won’t ever forget what you did, because when people pay a lot of money now for a canvas, it doesn’t make much difference to us, we don’t really have that crying need for money. But when you bought a painting, we ate on that: We bought milk, we bought bread. It really meant an awful lot to us.”

How did they manage to live without selling paintings? Well, Sally was very gifted as an artist. She drew beautifully, sort of a cross between Matisse and James Thurber, and she made absolutely delicious drawings for *The New York Times* magazine section for little articles on how to raise children, how to care for children, and she would do very charming illustrations of mothers and children or babies. And then she got into working for an agency, so that she even designed ads for Macy’s or for Gimbel’s.

Sally had a real passion for painting and was so enthusiastic about Milton’s work and his ability, that it never seemed to her that she was doing anything outrageous or even out of the ordinary to help him. And Milton really wanted to do what he was doing. He’d had a large family that he had to help when he was growing up: He had to take care of his mother and some sisters, he worked in a factory of some kind, and he couldn’t paint. So he really welcomed this chance; he thought it was wonderful of Sally. But he never felt that he was taking advantage of her. It was for both of them that he was working.

Milton had this—as Louis described it—absolute fury to paint. He would get up early in the morning with ideas in his head, and he would sometimes complete three or four paintings in a day. And then, of course, he’d go over them and later maybe paint them out and paint something on top of them, but he was working very, very hard. It really fascinated him to be able to finally express all of these ideas that he had inside of him.

Milton was interested in pure painting. He wasn’t interested in using paint as a means of propaganda for one thing or another. It was always the idea of making a fine composition, beautiful color, and over the years his palette gradually lightened, and he started painting in a thinner way. He had used rather a thick impasto in some of the very first pictures that Louis bought, and then he began to use paint very sparsely, not feeling that he had to build up a surface.

Milton’s first portrait of me was done in 1932, when Louis first met me. On our first date, we went rowing in the park, we had a Chinese dinner, we went up for half an hour to see the Schwarzes (friends that Louis had met in Italy—he wanted to see if I’d pass muster with them), and then he thought

it would be fun to end up the evening at the Averys. So we went to the Averys. Milton didn’t paint me then, but a couple of visits after that: The third day that we knew each other Louis asked me to marry him, and shortly after that, he said, “I’d like to have Milton paint you—a nice concert dress—we can use it for publicity.”

When Milton painted my mother, we were there. My mother and father had come to New York because they were worried: My letters suddenly were all full of Louis Kaufman. I was going to concerts and operas with Louis, I was going to artists’ studios with Louis. They weren’t sure what kind of artists they were, or what went on in artists’ studios. Were they dens of iniquity? They didn’t really think so, because they knew me. But they felt that we might not be altogether appropriate companions. Well, my mother and father fell in love with Milton and Sally. My mother bought a painting of a landscape in Gaspé, a bay somewhere in Canada. And then Milton wanted to make a sketch of her; he thought she had an interesting face, and he was dying to have new subjects to paint.

Louis would go to the Averys two or three times a week. He was just rehearsing with the quartet and playing concerts then, and there really weren’t distractions that interested him. He was always interested in the theater and in concerts, of course, but he was absolutely enchanted by Milton and Sally as people.

I must say that when I met the Averys I was enchanted by them as well. They had a wonderful simplicity of manner. Everybody felt completely at home with them. They never were pretentious, and they had a good sense of humor. It was really delightful to spend an evening in their company. They were interested in the other arts, and when we’d go there, we’d have fascinating, friendly conversations.

Louis also was extremely unpretentious, but the members of the quartet used to criticize him. They’d say, “Louis, you’re not doing your share of socializing with the rich people who are supporting the quartet. You just play, slip out and go off with artists who haven’t any money. They can’t help us, you know, and you’re not trying to be charming and win over friends for the quartet.” Louis either didn’t say anything or would just say, “You’re doing so well, you don’t need me.” He found he couldn’t talk to most of those people—they changed their interests very frequently, sometimes they were just into horse racing, or they didn’t care about the things that interested him.

One of the marvelous things the Averys had in their one-room arrangement, by the way, was a storage section with a cloth covering that Sally must

have made, to put art work away after the paint was dry. So every time we came, Sally would bring out all of these fascinating new works to look at, studies that Milton did of family, friends, or people who were going by.

There were always artists at the Averys'—not only Aaron Berkman, but Wallace Putnam, George Constant, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko.

In the late 1920s, Mark Rothko was living with Gordon Soulé, a pianist from Portland who had been an old childhood friend of Louis—Louis had studied piano with Gordon's aunt. Gordon had arranged for Louis to make a record for the Edison company in 1928 as well as Louis' first recording, for the Gennett label, about 1923. Everybody was as poor as church mice, and Louis was seeing Mark, whom he knew very well; in fact, Louis had known Mark's whole family in Portland.

Louis took Mark to the Avery studio for the first time. I think Mark had said hello to the Averys once before at the Opportunity Gallery or another of the small galleries in New York, but it was Louis who took him by the arm to the Avery studio, where he became fascinated. Mark was studying with Max Weber at that time, and he was painting with a very dark palette. All the artists were fascinated to see what Milton was doing, because his work was very imaginative. He loved to paint anything he saw.

Milton and Sally would go on Saturday afternoons—and very frequently Louis would go with them—to look at all the galleries. They saw French paintings at the galleries on 57th Street; Milton was enchanted by Braque and by Matisse and Picasso, and he and Sally loved Bonnard.

The Averys moved from their one-room apartment to the Village after March was born, about 1934, 1935. It was about three rooms that they had—a big living room, a bedroom, a kitchen and a bath, down on 10th Street. There was such joy in that household, with Sally's enthusiasm. When we'd come in, she'd say, "Gee Louis, you've got to see what Milton did today. He made a stunning still life" or "He made a stunning landscape" or some other marvelous thing. She always had this real appreciation for what he did. Milton didn't say much.

It was always hard to get people to come, in those years, to chamber music concerts or to solo concerts. Whenever Louis played in New York, Sally would ask Louis for passes, which he was delighted to give her. So all the artists—the Averys, all three Soyers (Raphael, Isaac, and Moses), George Constant, the Gottliebs, Mark Rothko—would come to hear Louis, because they couldn't really afford to buy tickets for anything. It was probably the one concert they could get to. Because it was only a subway fare for them, they could afford it. It was always nice to play for people who

really liked it. I think every painter we've ever met loved classical music. But you couldn't say that musicians were all that interested in painting; the love ran the other way, really.

When the WPA was established, Milton and Sally were thrilled. They thought it was so marvelous that they would get canvas and paints and that they would get a sum—\$90 a month, or whatever it was. Almost all the artists we knew—Burluk, the Soyers—were delighted. The only one who was unhappy was Mark Rothko, because Mark thought that the government was taking advantage of artists, that they were not giving them proper pay or attention. So he was the only one who, if he was required to do only one painting a month, would do just one painting a month, while the other artists all did a lot of work because they were thrilled to have the opportunity.

Louis would try to take anybody he knew to Milton's studio to buy something. Over the years he took Leopold Stokowski, Robert Russell Bennett, Bernard and Lucille Herrmann, John Graham, and Concert Hall Records co-owners Sam and David Josefowitz. None of them ever bought anything from Milton, but Louis always did. It was hard to put Milton in a slot, you see. Later, Sam Josefowitz, following Louis' advice, collected Post-Impressionist paintings, which he recently sold to the Indianapolis Art Museum. Walter and Louise Arensberg, whom we met later in California, had a very big collection of wonderful works they had been advised on for the most part by Marcel Duchamp and later donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. If it was surrealist or cubist, the Arensbergs could find a place for it. But they didn't seem to be able to see anything in artists like Bonnard or Avery, artists who neither headed a particular movement nor fit within a certain genre of painting. Louis always wanted to help people. It was one of the things that first drew me to Louis, the fact that he wanted to help everybody, including me. It was a very great part of his life.

The Averys' fortunes began to improve in the 1940s, with French art dealers coming to America who were interested in showing Milton's work. We left New York after our marriage, in 1933, but every time we returned, Louis would buy one or two Avery pictures he thought he couldn't live without, they were so beautiful. And the Averys always gave us very friendly prices. We were almost like family members, you know. Every time we came to New York, we spent the first night with the Averys. Right near their apartment was a wonderful Basque restaurant where we would eat. March loved it, and so did Milton and Sally. Then we'd look at paintings, to see what Milton had been doing in the year since we'd been there. They traveled out West too, and they came to see us.

Now Louis did take Adelyn Breeskin to the Averys' apartment before he took me. Louis knew Adelyn because she loved chamber music and had heard Louis play in the Musical Art Quartet at Evergreen House, the Baltimore estate of U.S. Ambassador to Italy John Garrett and his wife, Alice Garrett, who together had a great collection of books, Persian miniatures, and paintings by Canaletto, Tiepolo, Modigliani, Utrillo, and Picasso; the quartet played in the Garretts' beautiful little theater that was decorated by Leon Bakst, who had done all of the designs for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Adelyn was first head of prints and drawings at the Baltimore Museum of Art in the 1930s and then became director of the whole museum in the 1940s. She had the ability to just charm people and was responsible for many great collections going to Baltimore. One of the most important was that of the Cone sisters—Miss Etta and Dr. Claribel Cone—who were cousins of Gertrude Stein: They had amazing, wonderful Matisse and a lot of Picasso drawings. Adelyn liked Avery very much, and that was one of the happiest contacts Louis made for Milton, because in the early 1950s, she arranged a big Avery show for the Ford Foundation that toured America, and after that she gave Milton a very big show in Baltimore.

Adelyn's exhibitions really helped Milton; they got him out of a New York circle that was fairly small. Remember, there weren't international shows touring around the country at that time. We've gotten so used to television and radio and mass communications, and when one worked in those days, one worked very quietly. Who was really interested in Ryder or Lawson? It was just the people in the towns they lived in. People knew Prendergast's paintings in Boston and New York but they didn't have a chance to see them in Chicago or Minneapolis. And somehow around the Fifties, people got the idea that you could ship exhibitions around. I think it was the Museum of Modern Art that started doing that. And things still didn't come to Los Angeles. Louis and I had to go up to San Francisco when the Museum of Modern Art did an absolutely terrific cubist show, a Van Gogh show, and a Masters of Popular Painting show.

There's one hilarious story I may never have told you. Milton liked to do things he saw in Central Park or in circuses. One day in Central Park he saw a portly black lady wheeling a white baby in a buggy. By that time he was having a show at Valentine Dudensing's gallery on 57th St.—that was Milton's first French dealer. And so Milton brought up a group of paintings, including a painting of this large black lady and the little white child. When Dudensing saw the painting, he said, "Milton, I don't think we should have that in the show." And Milton said, "Why not?" And he said, "Well, it'll

never sell." And Milton said, "Well, I really like it. I think it's a very good painting"—and that was a big speech for Milton to make. And Sally said, "I agree with him. I like it I think it should be in the show." Dudensing said, "If you feel so strongly about it, all right, we'll put it in. But I can tell you it'll never be sold."

There was a very interesting collector in Merion, Pennsylvania, by the name of Dr. Albert Barnes, who used to have a habit in New York of walking around in a gallery very quickly and looking quickly at everything on every wall and walking out. He had had a curious success. He'd been a poor boy, and he made his money in marketing a product that was called Argyrol that was supposed to help people with sinus trouble. He'd been helped in his research by a black scientist, and this was the one opening to get to see his collection in later years, if you let me jump ahead. If anyone was black, that person could get in to see the collection, but if you were a museum director or a critic or an art dealer you could never get in, because Dr. Barnes had been ignored by the big collectors in Philadelphia when he was a young man. And so Dr. Barnes, when he came to see the Avery show, walked around quickly, saw the painting of the black nurse and the little white baby, and he said quickly to Mr. Valentine Dudensing, "I'll buy that," and then walked out. He bought the picture. And it's in The Barnes Foundation. We are speaking now about the 1940s. How much did it cost? I would think it probably would have been about six, eight hundred dollars. Wasn't any more than that. That was the market. It wasn't very expensive. The funny thing is that Kimberly Camp, the current director of the Barnes, is a friend of mine!

We were at the Averys one time when Joseph Hirshhorn came with his wife, and when he was looking at the paintings with Louis and me, he was saying, "Put that aside, put that aside, put that aside." He had twenty or more paintings set aside. New Yorkers at that time went around with big wads of bills, and it surprised me. He asked Avery what he wanted. I think he gave Milton a few thousand dollars, just rolling out this wad of bills, and then he took the Averys and us out to a Romanian restaurant, because he was of Romanian descent, as was Louis. Hirshhorn had bought land in Canada, and it turned out that it had, I think, uranium. In any case, he became a millionaire and he offered stock in his company to all the artists. Milton and Sally weren't about to invest in anything, so they didn't, but some of the others did buy the stock and made an awful lot of money on it.

Someone said to me the other day that if you went to the Averys, there was a terrible smell of paint, and I said that never occurred to us. We were

so interested in what we were seeing that we didn't mind if there was a smell of turpentine or whatever—we never paid any attention to it. We were just so glad to see them. We were young people and all enthusiastic. Louis was bubbling over with enthusiasm all of the time about things. He enjoyed everything. He had a really wonderful nature. And of course I got educated through Louis, and Louis was really educated through the Averys, because they pointed out the interesting books to read, and went to exhibits with him.

Over the years, we had collected 29 of Milton's paintings as well as works on paper. We gave ten of the paintings away. Louis gave four to Reed College and I gave two to the Portland Art Museum in memory of Louis' family, who had lived in Portland. I gave the portrait of my mother to the Skirball Museum here in Los Angeles. And Louis gave three to the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.: a portrait of the painter Louis Michel Eilshemius; a portrait of Sally, which he bought on our first date, a marvelous, beautiful painting; and a big nude with a guitar.

I still have two landscapes, four still lifes, two portraits of me, one portrait of Louis, a picture of Sally and another with March, a portrait of Nagai, of Clara, of Marsden Hartley, and three self-portraits of Milton that are absolutely wonderful. Louis felt that Milton's portraits were really extraordinary, that he got something of the personality of the people. He did the most wonderful one of Chaim Gross. Really, it's absolutely marvelous, and a wonderful one of Leo Lerman in a studio.

I myself sat for Milton three times. The 1944 photograph that shows Louis playing the violin while Milton is painting my portrait would have been taken in Miltons' studio. Louis would have been in New York to play a concert, so he was just practicing. He went over there with me. It didn't bother Milton, didn't bother me.

My portrait sessions with Milton didn't take long. He was very quick—He had a wonderful technique. He made sketches. And no, I don't think he ever made sketches on paper before he did the painting. He would just go right to the canvas with paint and brush. There would be just one sitting per portrait—never any more than that. And it was very rapid. Milton could do something like that in an hour.

Milton thought a great deal about spontaneity, and if he didn't get what he wanted, he just painted it out. He had an expression: He said he didn't believe in tickling up things. So he would do it very rapidly. That's how he would do three or four paintings a day in that period. He did a tremendous amount of work. And with a tremendous joy, somehow, of being able to get

images that he had in his mind's eye out as a permanent thing. I think there must be a wonderful joy for painters to be able to express a great deal of what they want in a more permanent form. We musicians, it's like writing in water—it depends on the hall, depends on the audience, depends on how you feel, how you play and it's evanescent, it's not there any more. That's why Louis always considered recording a wonderful thing. He said, what would we give to know how Paganini played, or some of those other remarkable musicians of the past?

Milton took us to meet Eilshemius. Milton really loved his paintings, and he liked Milton and Sally and March very much. Milton said, "You ought to see the old boy." The portrait of Leo Lerman dates from the time the French dealers were showing Milton's work and Mitzi Solomon, a sculptor, probably invited him over to her Central Park South studio. Leo Lerman wrote about art for *Vogue* and other magazines. He had an interesting suit on, it was an interesting color, and the whole thing kind of caught Milton's eye, so he probably made a sketch, or kept it in his mind, and decided he could make a nice picture. I think a lot of things like that happened with Milton.

We were absolutely flabbergasted by the small 1949 self-portrait of Milton, the first picture he painted after his heart attack. It's small but wonderful.

Chaim Gross' wife told me that Louis bought the first Chaim Gross sculpture ever sold by a gallery. A painter by the name of Schwartz had an 8th St. gallery, and this head is still upstairs in Louis' room. Louis saw the sculpture, liked it very much, and paid \$50 for it to the gallery. They were very excited about it because it was the first sale that had ever been made in the gallery. This was before we were married, in 1932.

Thomas Nagai was a Japanese artist in New York who was quite gifted. You see, Milton had no prejudice against any person of any race or any color or any religion. He just saw people as people. He thought it was an interesting face, and was glad to have a subject.

In the end, the wonderful thing about Louis' and my relationship with the Averys is that we were really awfully good friends, and we stayed friends.



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SOME PERSONAL NOTES ON MILTON AVERY

by Louis Kaufman

It was as a young music student in New York, during the pre-crash 1920's, that I first met Milton Avery. Through some young painter friends, I acquired the habit of occasionally visiting Milton, who had recently arrived from Hartford, Conn., and his delightful wife, Sally. It was fascinating to us all to see what Milton would be turning out next. What started through curiosity and a natural sympathy with young people in the most bitter of circumstances, ended in a life-long friendship.

To visit the Averys in their old Lincoln Square combined studio-living-room-bedroom-workroom was valid proof of human persistence and artistic tenacity. It seems so improbable now, but hardly anyone that I could cajole or bluster into entering the Avery's studio (with a possible purchase in view) ever responded to the array of freshly painted canvases that seemed so irresistible to me. The excursions often resulted in my own purchases of modest works, usually on the installment plan. It was many years later that Sally told me that I had been the first to buy an Avery oil!

The growing horde of Avery collectors are a fanatical lot, and it was their persistent enthusiasm that enabled Milton to survive and develop, if one may except the inspiring example of his wife Sally (also a highly gifted artist) who was always his most constructive critic and active champion. In spite of crushing poverty, Milton was painting with an inspired fury and quickly consolidating the special point of view that has eventually made him a true "chef d'école". Nothing could be less aggressive or clamorous than the dark sober poetry of Avery's early work in landscape, still-life and some of the most penetrating and vital portraits of their time in America.

A quarter of a century of world turmoil and innumerable artistic developments have only pointed up the fundamental validity of Avery's qualities. Those dark early paintings have gradually lightened into a radiance of form and color. The acidity of drawing, which was not understood in America but delighted the French dealers, to whom I showed his work, during my first tours in Europe, is now appreciated as a charming willfulness of line. His arbitrary use of color and grandiose conceptions of space are now seen, in perspective, to be related to some of the finest contemporary efforts.

Where does his almost oriental exuberance of color come from? That

Avery is a New Englander of long-existing background is well known. It might not be too far-fetched to relate him to a Whitman, a Thoreau or an Emerson, if we could transmute these personalities into artisan of line and color. I would like to think of myself as a sort of pupil of Milton's since I have long enjoyed the benefits of his artistic viewpoint. A few words from him, a quizzical glance, would be enough, from this most reticent of individuals, to illuminate whole worlds of obscurity and clearly define the subtle and enormous differences between the true artist and the pretentious or academic hack.

This laconic and subtle artist has been a strong and enduring influence on some of the most advanced American artists such as Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, George Constant, John Graham and many others. They have all acknowledged the persuasiveness of Avery's lyricism, which is expressed so directly and simply.

David Burliuk, the painter, himself a pioneer in a world-wide struggle to establish Modern Art, said enthusiastically, on first seeing Avery's work in my studio, 'Avery is an aristocrat of color—just as Modigliani was of line'.

Today Milton's works are generously represented in the great majority of American museums from the Metropolitan and Modern Museums in New York to Honolulu's Academy of Fine Arts, and Averys hang in some of the most significant American private collections from the Barnes Foundation and Duncan Phillips to the Rockefellers and Walter Chrysler.

In the sunset of a life-time of completely honest striving, here is the serenity and harmony of expression of an artist, who has been touched by grace. Today Avery's canvases seem like a breath of fresh air in the hopelessly frenetic atmosphere of our epoch, in which many values seem and are hopelessly confused.

Los Angeles, September 15, 1961

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