

Milton Avery Drawings

Syracuse University
Lubin House
11 E. 61 St.
New York, New York
Nov. 21 — Dec. 15, 1972

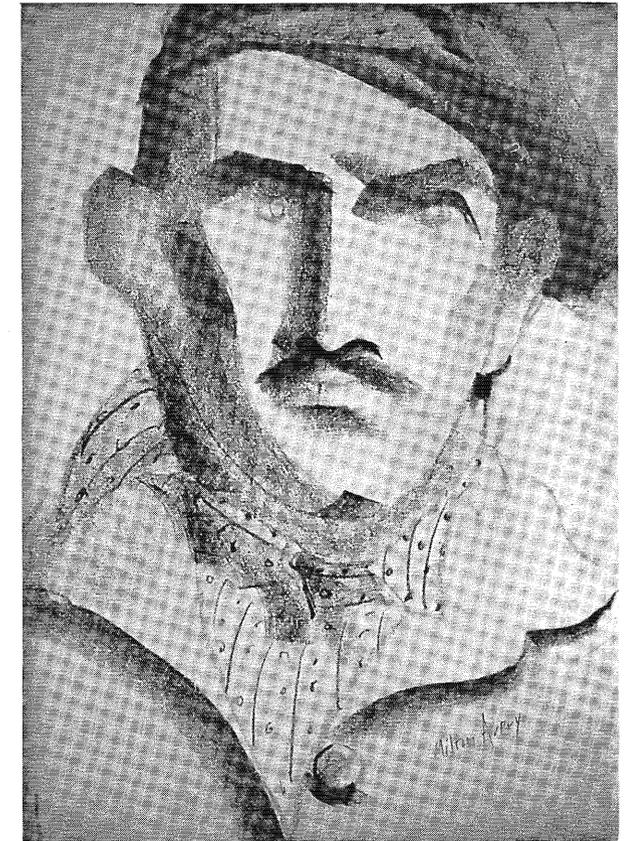
Syracuse University Art



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YOUNG AVERY WITH BERET



The current selection of Milton Avery's drawings has been made with the kind assistance of Mrs. Avery and is intended to highlight and celebrate once again the lyrical qualities of this important American artist. These drawings create for the viewer an essential personal experience rather than a mass display. They reflect a more intimate aspect of Milton Avery's work and are here fortuitously assembled in an intimate setting. Drawings cannot be enjoyed in cavernous spaces.

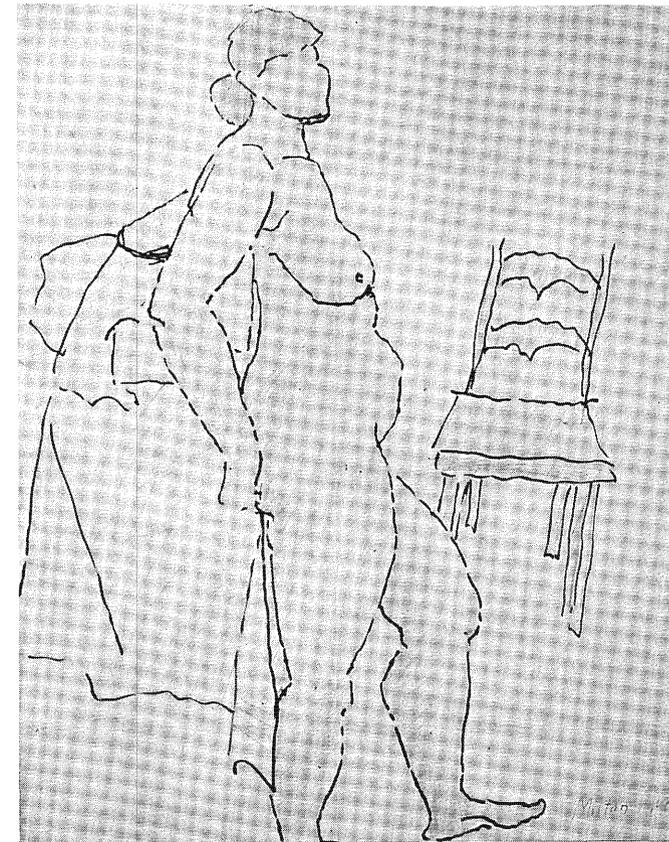
Despite their small size the subtleties of an Avery work carry tremendous impact. The three "Nude Studies" suggest monumental graces totally unlike an academic life drawing. These graces are like huge blocks of carved stone. In some of the landscapes and in the "Nude Studies" the delicate choice of line is a powerful statement leading to a better understanding of such major landscapes as "Tangerine Moon and Wine Dark Sea". Yet at the same time they are fully capable of standing on their own more intimate level as work from a masterful hand.

It is however with the portraits that Avery's drawings are most enjoyable. "Profile of Self" is a fierce one-eyed man with a beard stubble, his face like so many pebbles on a rough beach. In "Hatted Girl" the aquiline nose and unembroidered felt hat are suggestive of a world which in-

cluded coffee at Horn and Hardarts, worker solidarity, and apple stands on the corner. In contrast the quick sparse lines of "Spring Bonnet" denote a bourgeois pride in a creation of stiffly wound lace and starched cloth flowers. We see the artist's vision of himself in the "Self Portrait" of 1953 or in "Young Avery with Beret". Here a whole life span can be studied through the means of a few sketchy lines of crayon or flo brush.

For many of that generation of Americans growing up in the art world of the forties and fifties Milton Avery was a God-like figure. His exhibits in a museum or college gallery attracted small groups of knowledgeable worshippers who admired his daring simplicity, his poetry in form, and his power of suggestion. His name was by no means a household word, like those of the art superstars of the sixties or seventies, but he was an established influential figure. There can be no doubt that his is a major body of work.

Syracuse University



NUDE RECLINING

Critic Frank Betlein, in the catalogue for the 1966 Avery show at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Arkansas Art Center, speaks of "the spare, austere, going-out-of-his way quality" of Avery's work. In the 1960 catalogue published by AFA, Adelyn Breeskin speaks of "the poetry and mystery" which abound in his paintings. In the 1966 Monograph published by Brooklyn Museum, Una Johnson says, "The quality of restraint may be noted in all of Avery's work."

His was a contemplative style. He was not a loquacious man, but often sat for long periods of time looking at a landscape or model, drinking into his mind the myriad details of life, then creating through art a shorthand notation in which the most significant details only suggest the universe described.

Throughout this selection of Avery's work, a wide variety exists in the media used. He was very fond of flo brush, yet his croquill pen drawings are precise and elegant, and the pencil and crayon drawings warm and gentle. It is not the particular medium however which fascinates, but rather the infinite variety of ways in which they are used. Dots can suggest beard or stubble or rocky hillsides. Fine inked lines express both the edge of a dune, and, combined with crosshatching, a bit of chia-

rosкуро. "Russian Woman" and "Pensive Profile" are almost fully modelled and shaded.

The two self portraits of 1951 and 1953 both in the same flo brush technique, are remarkably similar in pose. But there is a vast difference. One, the latter, is serene and shows a man at peace. The 1951 drawing is fierce, and expressionistic in its approach. In still greater contrast the early self-portrait, done with the flat of a litho crayon and a frontal view, is a classic in its simplicity and its elegance. The "Young Girl" of 1956 is nothing more than a series of lines, outlining with the greatest charm a mere suggestion of the model.

I am particularly delighted that Syracuse University has been given the opportunity to see and exhibit an intimate side of this great American artist's work. Our own deep commitment to American art, Milton Avery's pre-eminence, and an opportunity to share these drawings with you; each contribute to the impact and importance of this exhibit.

August L. Freundlich, Dean
College of Visual and Performing Arts

DRAWINGS

YOUNG AVERY WITH BERET

Litho Crayon 1932
14½ x 11

PROFILE OF SELF

Flo Brush 1951
8½ x 11

SELF PORTRAIT

Flo Brush 1951
8½ x 11

"JOY"

Ink 1956
17 x 14

SAND DUNES

Flo Brush 1957
8½ x 11

HARBOR

Ink 1957
8½ x 11

BUCOLIC NOTES

Flo Brush 1956
8½ x 11

BIRDS AND BIRDS

Flo Brush 1957
8½ x 11

TREE

Flo Brush 1954
8½ x 11

RECUMBENT NUDE

Flo Brush ca. 1956
17 x 14

THREE STUDIES

Flo Brush ca. 1955
17 x 14

NUDE WITH CHAIR

Flo Brush and Pencil 1954
17 x 14

FANCY CHAIR

Pen and Ink 1960
17 x 14

NINE MAINE SKETCHES

Flo Brush 1949
17 x 14

PENSIVE PROFILE

Pencil ca. 1935
8½ x 11

THINKING NUDE

Ink 1940
8½ x 11

HATTED GIRL

Wash ca. 1940
8½ x 11

YOUNG GIRL

Flo Brush 1956
17 x 14

SPRING BONNET

Ink 1943
app. 9 x 12

WOMAN

Pen and Ink 1930
app. 9 x 12

BIRCHES

Oil on Paper 1956
26 x 20

NUDE RECLINING

Oil on Paper 1962
26 x 20

STUDIES

Flo Brush 1948
17 x 14

MAN NAMED SMITH

Flo Brush ca. 1939
17 x 14

RUSSIAN WOMAN

Litho Crayon ca. 1947
17 x 14

WALKER BY SEA

Oil on Paper 1956
29 x 23

DOLIA

Flo Brush 1946
17 x 14

SELF PORTRAIT

Flo Brush 1950
11 x 8½

ARTIST'S WIFE

Gouache 1960
22 x 16

MARCH

Pencil ca. 1937
17 x 14