

PRINCIPAL

Janet Lehr

Estab. 1972



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MILTON AVERY 1885 - 1965



BEACH CONVERSATION C.1938

Watercolor on paper

25 x 17 inches

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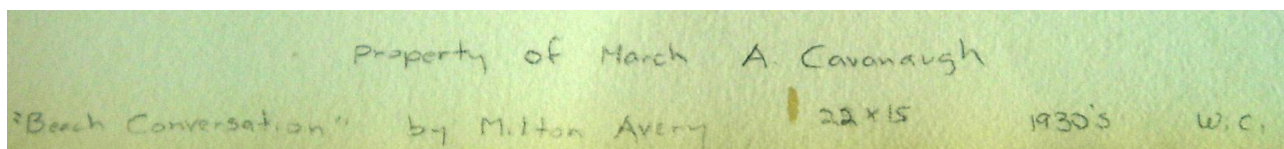


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Signed lower right; titled on the verso



Provenance:

The Artist and his Estate;

Gift to March Cavanaugh NY; (Milton Avery's daughter) consigned to:

Marianne Friedland Gallery, Naples FL; purchased by present owner;

Private Collection NY

NOTE:

"Avery retained color as the primary vehicle of feeling and expression, but achieved a greater degree of abstraction by increasing the parity between recognizable forms and abstract shapes." ("Milton Avery: The Metaphysics of Color," *Milton Avery: Paintings from the Collection of the Neuberger Museum of Art*, Purchase, New York, 1994, pp. 8-9)

The art historian, Dore Ashton wrote, *"Avery as a painter was nothing if not sophisticated.... Avery was a painters painter."*

Marc Rothko's tribute to Avery at the memorial service in 1965, *"Avery is first a great poet of sheer loveliness, of sheer beauty"*

Adolph Gottlieb wrote that Avery's last works, *"were as fresh as though he were a young painter" and yet displayed "the authority of an old master."*

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Further, Marc Rothko remarked: *“Avery is first a great poet. His is the poetry of sheer loveliness of sheer beauty. Thanks to him this kind of poetry has been able to survive in our time. . . . There have been several others in our generation who have celebrated the world around them, but none with that inevitability where the poetry penetrated every pore of the canvas to the very last touch of the brush”* (“Commemorative Essay,” essay in *Milton Avery*] New York: Whitney Museum of American Art. 1982], p. 181). (Mark Rothko 1965)

Beach Conversation is typical of Avery's best works from the late 1930's period, when he is clearly exploring volume, shadow, and space. In *Beach Conversation* his placement of two silhouette-like figures, and his use of negative/positive spaces, creates an exciting composition. His great sensitivity to color, characteristic of his best works, is clearly present in this work; and, in *Beach Conversation* we also see and enjoy Avery employing pattern. Color and patterning are an exciting element in many of Avery's finest works.

Though Avery discounted the influence of Henri Matisse on his work, it seems undeniable that he was inspired by Matisse's use of broad shapes to create depth, his preference for flat color over blended shades and his love of decorative patterning. Avery succeeds in rendering expressive figures through a strict, plastic two-dimensional design as he simplifies the figures and objects to the broadest possible forms. He then invigorates these forms through his sophisticated use of color. Avery creates tension and balance through his forms and his selection and deposition of color.

"There are hazards in this approach to the figure, but Avery has somehow side-stepped the greatest of these, namely, a sense of fixity that would deprive his figures of

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animation; Avery's figuration is always engaging. The characteristic attitude of Avery's figures is one of relaxation and repose. His women--most of his figures are female--read, carry on conversation, talk on the telephone, lie on the beach, or sit around daydreaming. They project a presence. However disinterested they appear, they are far removed from the pictorial stasis that the artist's method might seem to hold in store for them. The reason, of course, is that Avery's color imparts an emotional drama, a weight of emphasis and nuance, that recapitulates on the level of retinal sensation." (H.Kramer, *Milton Avery: Paintings 1920-1960*, New York, 1962, pp. 17-19)

"Avery's landscapes and seascapes of the early 1920s use the heavy impasto, light palette, and atmospheric mistiness of the American Impressionists Ernest Lawson and John Henry Twachtman. With his move to New York in 1925, where he encountered the work of [Matisse](#) and the pre-Cubist work of [Picasso](#), Avery began to simplify forms into broad areas of close-valued color. Although Avery's art became increasingly abstract, he never abandoned representational subject matter, painting figure groups, still lifes, landscapes, and seascapes. His mature style, developed by the mid-1940s, is characterized by a reduction of elements to their essential forms, elimination of detail, and surface patterns of flattened shapes, filled with arbitrary color in the manner of Matisse.

"Early in Avery's career, when Social Realism and American Scene painting were the prevailing artistic styles, the semi-abstract tendencies in his work were viewed by many as too radical. In the 1950s, a period dominated by [Abstract Expressionism](#), he was overlooked by critics because of his adherence to recognizable subject matter. Nevertheless, his work, with its emphasis on color, was important to many younger artists, particularly to Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, [Helen](#)

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[Frankenthaler](#), and other Color Field painters."

- From Patterson Sims, "[Whitney Museum of American Art: selected works from the permanent collection](#)"

Kark Emil Willers, Director of the Nassau County Museum of Art, writing in the Exhibition catalog, *Milton Avery and the End of Modernism (2011)*, describes Avery as, *an artist who brought the sketch, with its spontaneity, movement, and fleetingness, to the status of a finished painting.*

"I try to construct a picture in which shapes, spaces, colors, form a set of unique relationships, independent of any 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." — Milton Avery

Milton Avery and the End of Modernism looks at work by the artist who brought the sketch, with its spontaneity, movement, and fleetingness, to the status of a finished painting. The works reproduced in this exhibition catalog feature Avery's intense saturated color fields, the simplification of form, and figures that emphasize the flatness of canvas surface.

In the four chapters that open the catalog, Karl Emil Willers takes a concerted look at the contributions of Milton Avery as a significant figurative painter from the late 1920s through the early 1960s, and at the development of Avery's signature paintings from his idiosyncratic drawing style that captures the essence of a person, place, or time. Placing Avery's work within a long history of modernist practice that recognizes the

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artist's sketch as a "final, complete and a self-sufficient work of art," Willers argues that, within the emergence of his avant-garde style, Avery can be seen as one of the preeminent American painters of his time, exerting great influence among both his contemporaries and subsequent generations of artists.

Regarding Avery's place in American art history, Patterson Sims has written: "Early in Avery's career, when Social Realism and American Scene painting were the prevailing artistic styles, the semi-abstract tendencies in his work were viewed by many as too radical. In the 1950s, a period dominated by Abstract Expressionism, he was overlooked by critics because of his adherence to recognizable subject matter. Nevertheless, his work, with its emphasis on color, was important to many younger artists, particularly to Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, Helen Frankenthaler, and other Color Field painters."

Milton Avery and the End of Modernism opened at the Nassau County Museum of Art on January 22, 2011, and remained on view through May 8, 2011. It was organized by Director Karl Emil Willers and the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York. It was funded, in part, by the New York State Council for the Arts, the Friends of the Neuberger Museum of Art, and the Westchester Arts Council.

Milton Avery's works are in the permanent collections of museums in America and Europe including: [Addison Gallery of American Art](#); [Akron Art Museum](#); [Allen Memorial Art Museum](#); [Arizona State University Art Museum](#); [Art Institute of Chicago](#); [Boca Raton Museum of Art](#); [Brooklyn Museum of Art](#); [Butler Institute of American Art](#); [Cantor Arts Center, Stanford](#); [Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh/Carnegie](#); [Chrysler Museum of Art](#); [Cincinnati Art Museum](#); [Colby College Museum of Art](#); [Crocker Art Museum](#); [Dallas](#)

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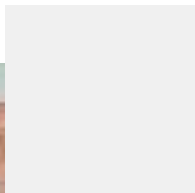
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Milton Avery's beach watercolors on paper consistently command high prices and price is not necessarily relative to size or to date – particularly his beach pictures.

MILTON AVERY WORKS ON PAPER AUCTION RESULTS



Milton Avery (b. 1885, d. 1965)

[Female Artists by Sea](#)

1944 Works on Paper 22.52 x 30.98 inches.

December 05, 2013 Christie's New York American Art (Lot 11) \$ 250,000 - \$ 350,000 USD \$ 305,000 USD Premium



1

Milton Avery

Title Visitor by the sea
Medium watercolor and pencil
Year of Work 1945
Size Height 22.8 in.; Width 31 in. / Height 57.8 cm.; Width 78.7 cm.
Misc. Signed, Inscribed
Sale of Christie's New York: Thursday, December 01, 2005 [Lot 00133] Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
Estimate 100,000 - 150,000 USD
Sold For 284,800 USD PREMIUM [Currency Converter](#)

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2

Milton Avery

Title Southern Sea
Medium watercolor and gouache
Year of Work 1950
Size Height 22.5 in.; Width 31 in. / Height 57.2 cm.; Width 78.7 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, November 28, 2007 [Lot 00090]
American Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture
Estimate 125,000 - 175,000 USD
Sold For 265,000 USD PREMIUM [Currency Converter](#)

[Full details](#)



3

Milton Avery

Title Beach sitters
Medium watercolor and pencil on paper laid on board
Year of Work 1944
Size Height 22.5 in.; Width 31 in. / Height 57.2 cm.; Width 78.7 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Christie's New York: Thursday, May 19, 2005 [Lot 00030]
Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
Estimate 100,000 - 150,000 USD
Sold For 262,400 USD PREMIUM [Currency Converter](#)

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4

Milton Avery

Title Orange hat
Description Milton Avery (1885-1965) Orange Hats signed and dated 'Milton/Avery/1944' (lower [More ...](#))
Medium gouache and pencil on paper
Year of Work 1944
Size Height 22.5 in.; Width 30.7 in. / Height 57.2 cm.; Width 78.1 cm.
Misc. Signed, Inscribed
Sale of Christie's New York: Wednesday, December 02, 2009 [Lot 00019] Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
Estimate 150,000 - 250,000 USD
Sold For 242,500 USD PREMIUM [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)

5

Milton Avery

Title Loungers by the pale green sea
Medium watercolor and pencil on paper laid on paperboard
Year of Work 1945
Size Height 22.2 in.; Width 30.7 in. / Height 56.5 cm.; Width 78.1 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Christie's New York: Thursday, May 19, 2005 [Lot 00029] Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture
Estimate 80,000 - 120,000 USD
Sold For 210,000 USD PREMIUM [Currency Converter](#)

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6

Milton Avery
Title Bather
Description Milton Avery (1885-1965)Bathersigned and dated 'Milton Avery [More ...](#)
Medium gouache and watercolor
Year of Work 1952
Size Height 30.5 in.; Width 22.2 in. / Height 77.5 cm.; Width 56.5 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Christie's New York: Wednesday, May 21, 2008 [Lot 00001] Important American Paintings, Drawings And Sculpture
Estimate 60,000 - 80,000 USD
Sold For 193,000 USD PREMIUM



[Full details](#)

7

Milton Avery
Title Small Figures in a Big Sea
Description signed Milton Avery and dated 1959 (lower left)oil on [More ...](#)
Medium oil on paper
Year of Work 1959
Size Height 20 in.; Width 26 in. / Height 50.8 cm.; Width 66 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Thursday, November 29, 2012 [Lot 00005] American Art
Estimate 40,000 - 60,000 USD
Sold For 158,500 USD PREMIUM

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The highest price for a painting by Milton Avery at public auction is \$5,653,000.



[Full details](#)

1

Milton Avery

Title March and Sally outdoors
Description signed Milton Avery and dated 1950 (lower left)oil on canvas30 b [More ...](#)
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1950
Size Height 30 in.; Width 40 in. / Height 76.2 cm.; Width 101.6 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, May 21, 2014 [Lot 00012]
American Art
Estimate 2,000,000 - 3,000,000 USD
Sold For 5,653,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)

2

Milton Avery

Title Music Makers
Description signed Milton Avery and dated 1947 (lower left); also signed Milton Avery [More ...](#)
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1947
Size Height 35.5 in.; Width 41.8 in. / Height 90.2 cm.; Width 106.1 cm.
Misc. Signed, Inscribed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, May 22, 2013 [Lot 00030]
American Art
Estimate 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 USD
Sold For 2,965,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)

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3

Milton Avery

Title The reader and the listener
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1945
Size Height 30 in.; Width 40 in. / Height 76.2 cm.; Width 101.6 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Wednesday, November 28, 2007 [Lot 00018]
American Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture
Estimate 700,000 - 900,000 USD
Sold For 2,505,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



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4

Milton Avery

Title Sketching by the sea
Description Milton Avery (1885-1965) Sketching by the Sea signed and dated 'Milton/Avery/1944' ([More ...](#))
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1944
Size Height 28 in.; Width 36 in. / Height 71.1 cm.; Width 91.4 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Christie's New York: Wednesday, May 20, 2009 [Lot 00010]
Important American Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture
Estimate 600,000 - 800,000 USD
Sold For 2,210,500 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)

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5

Milton Avery

Title Siesta
Description signed and dated 'Milton Avery 1946-47' (lower right) oil on canvas 30 x 40 in. (76 [More ...](#))
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1946-1947
Size Height 30 in.; Width 40 in. / Height 76.2 cm.; Width 101.6 cm.
Misc. Signed
Sale of Christie's New York: Thursday, May 22, 2014 [Lot 00058] American Art
Estimate 1,000,000 - 1,500,000 USD
Sold For 1,565,000 USD Premium [Currency Converter](#)



[Full details](#)

6

Milton Avery

Title Double wave
Description signed Milton Avery and dated 1955 (lower left); also signed, titled, da [More ...](#)
Medium oil on canvas
Year of Work 1955
Size Height 35.7 in.; Width 58 in. / Height 90.8 cm.; Width 147.3 cm.
Misc. Signed, Inscribed
Sale of Sotheby's New York: Thursday, November 20, 2014 [Lot 00033] American Art
Estimate 1,500,000 - 2,500,000 USD
Sold For 1,565,000 USD [Currency Converter](#)