

MILTON AVERY was born in Sand Bank, New York in 1885 and moved to Hartford, Connecticut, with his family in 1898. Avery worked as an assembler and mechanic before enrolling in a lettering class at the Connecticut League of Art Students in Hartford in 1905. In 1918, Avery transferred to the School of Art at the Society of Hartford and exhibited his work while working as a clerk and construction worker. In 1924, Avery became a member of the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, and a year later moved to New Jersey.

Avery's early training had prepared him for a career as an academic painter. He also sought outside inspiration and frequented New York galleries that exhibited modernist European art. The prestigious Valentine Gallery, which held a retrospective of Matisse's work in 1927, had particular influence. By 1930, references to Matisse and Picasso can be discerned in Avery's paintings.

He was invited to join the Valentine Gallery in 1935, which exhibited Matisse, Picasso, Miró, Derain, Braque, Kandinsky, Davis, and others, had a vitalizing effect on his painting and his outlook.

Also during the 1930s, Avery's apartment became a meeting ground for young painters. Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman were frequent visitors. Despite this socializing Avery was a quiet man who constantly sketched — landscapes, people, interiors — whatever was at hand.

In 1943, Avery joined the New York gallery of Paul Rosenberg, an important dealer who had been forced to flee Paris in 1939. His affiliation with Rosenberg, coupled with a retrospective exhibition at the Phillips Memorial Gallery in 1944, brought Avery national acclaim. In spite of this, sales remained few, and New York museums, for the most part, showed little enthusiasm for his work. Avery persisted nonetheless, refining form and clarifying color. In 1946 he spent time in Mexico which served as inspiration for new subject matter.

In 1949, Avery suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered. Prevented by his health from working outdoors, Avery began making monotypes, a medium that requires rapid execution. These monotypes affected his painting style, and after 1950 Avery increasingly eliminated detail from his work and began to focus on the harmony of the overall canvas rather than the interrelation of its parts. By late in the decade he had achieved recognition as one of the most subtly powerful artists in mid-century America.

Among the many places that exhibited Avery's work were the Phillips Memorial Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Durand-Ruel Galleries in New York. In his last twenty years of life, the harmonious colors and perfect calm of his paintings reflected his desire to distill everything in his art—as in his life—that was not absolutely necessary.

SELECT COLLECTIONS

Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC
Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Binghamton University Art Museum, Binghamton, NY
Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL
Brock Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester, MA
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, SC
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR
Davistown Museum, Liberty, ME
Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, OH
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA
Charlotte and Philip Hanes Art Gallery, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC
Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, HI
Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI
Maier Museum of Art, Randolph College, Lynchburg, VA
Maitland Art Center, Maitland, FL
Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, NY
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MI
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX
Montana Museum of Art and Culture, Missoula, MT
Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY

Miles McEnery Gallery

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GALLERY

New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma City, OK
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR
Reading Public Museum, Reading, PA
San Antonio Art League Museum, San Antonio, TX
San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA
Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom
University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington, KY
Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery, Nashville, TN
Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, FL
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MI
Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, PA
Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, Woodstock, NY

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