

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215/842-6353

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CONTACT: Deborah Ziska
Liz Kimball
(202) 842-6353

NATIONAL GALLERY INSTALLS

SIX PAINTINGS BY 'AMERICAN ORIGINAL' MILTON AVERY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A room featuring six paintings by Milton Avery, a major modernist who first achieved distinction in the New York School of the 1940s, was recently installed by the National Gallery of Art in its twentieth-century collection on the concourse level of the East Building. The paintings, loaned by Sally Michel Avery among others, trace the artist's career from 1947 to 1960 and include landscapes, seascapes, and one figure painting. They will remain on view until mid-April and will be reinstalled by the beginning of October 1991 for a period of approximately five months.

The oil paintings -- White Sea (1947), Two Women (1950), Advancing Sea (1953), Sunset Sea (1958), Sand Dunes and Yellow Sky (1959), and Mountain and Meadow (1960) -- are major works that highlight Avery's artistic concerns and the quality of his achievements.

"Milton Avery is an American original," said Gallery director J. Carter Brown. "We are delighted to present this concentrated overview of his paintings among galleries of stellar works by other important twentieth-century artists such as Diebenkorn, Johns, Kelly, Rauschenberg, and Rothko."

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Jeremy Strick, associate curator of twentieth-century art at the Gallery, who selected the works with assistant curator Marla Prather, said, "The paintings demonstrate Milton Avery's characteristic wit, his inventiveness with color and his unique merging of abstraction and realism."

Avery was born in 1885 into a working class family in north-central New York State. He began a series of jobs as a factory worker at the age of 16 in order to help support his family. His introduction to art occurred sometime between 1905 and 1911 when he enrolled in night classes at the Connecticut League of Art Students. His first public exhibition took place in Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum in 1915, but he did not become a full-time painter until he moved to New York City at the age of 40.

Avery's unique use of color to define form enabled him to create distinctly original and lyrical paintings that demonstrate his delight in nature. A colleague of the Abstract Expressionists, Avery maintained his commitment to nature throughout his career. He died in January 1965.

The National Gallery is open free to the public, Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., except Christmas and New Year's day.