



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

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Major Milton Avery Retrospective Coming to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Where Artist Got His Start, Before Traveling to London

Hartford, Conn. (January 7, 2022)—Beginning in Hartford in the early 1900s, American painter Milton Avery (1885–1965) forged a staunchly independent path as an artist. Today, Avery is celebrated as a preeminent modern painter and one of the greatest colorists of the twentieth century. The first large-scale survey on the artist in three decades, *Milton Avery* will travel to Hartford after its debut at the Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth, TX, and will be on view at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art March 5–June 5, 2022, before its final showing at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

The exhibition brings together nearly 70 works of art representative of Milton Avery’s signature themes including serene landscapes, portraits, and large-scale abstractions. Its presentation at the Wadsworth is a significant homecoming, considering the artist’s long-standing ties to the museum and the state.

“Visitors will see some of the earliest paintings Avery made right in and around the city of Hartford and then follow his artistic evolution into a significant modern artist,” says Erin Monroe, Kriebler Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Wadsworth. “This is a long overdue celebration of a fascinating artist whose professional life spanned major art movements in the United States, including American Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism, and whose paintings can be considered an unexpected link between the two.”

Milton Avery grew up outside of Hartford and studied at both School of the Art Society of Hartford (now the Hartford Art School, then housed at the Wadsworth Atheneum) and the Connecticut League of Art Students. From 1905 to 1925, while working full-time in various area factories, Avery continued taking art classes, gradually finding his artistic footing in the region. In 1915, Avery exhibited his first painting in the Wadsworth Atheneum’s Annex Gallery, an

exhibition space adjacent to the museum's main building. Avery continued to show his work in solo and group exhibitions in Hartford's art galleries and at the Wadsworth Atheneum throughout the following decade. Even after Avery left Connecticut for New York City in 1925, he would continue to exhibit work in Hartford, and would return to the area to visit family and friends.

Spanning three galleries at the Wadsworth, this survey features some of Milton Avery's most celebrated paintings from the early 1910s to the 1960s, tracing his artistic development from impressionistic landscapes to radically simplified compositions featuring flattened forms and innovative colors. Avery's imaginative palette, often described as "poetic," and balance of form influenced a younger generation of artists such as Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Adolph Gottlieb, who he befriended and mentored. In Rothko's words, Avery celebrated the world around him with a poetry that "penetrated every pore of the canvas to the very last touch of the brush."

"Milton Avery was inspired by the extraordinary collections at the Wadsworth Atheneum and the people and places of Connecticut, so we are delighted to be bringing his work back to our city," says Matthew Hargraves, Robert H. Schutz, Jr., Interim Chief Curator at the Wadsworth. "It is especially satisfying to be partnering with the Modern Art Museum in Fort Worth and the Royal Academy in London to transport Avery from his roots in Connecticut and introduce him to new audiences in Texas and in Britain."

This exhibition is organized by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in collaboration with the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; curated by Edith Devaney, formerly the modern and contemporary curator at the Royal Academy of Arts and now managing director and curator of the David Hockney Foundation. Accompanied by a major catalogue featuring essays by Edith Devaney; Erin Monroe, Kriebel Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture at the Wadsworth; Marla Price, Director, The Modern Art Museum Fort Worth; and a conversation with the artist's daughter March Avery Cavanaugh.

Exhibition and Program Support

Support for this exhibition is generously provided by The Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc. and The Saunders Foundation.

Sustaining support for the Wadsworth Atheneum provided by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign, and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn.

Current hours are noon–5pm Thursday–Sunday. Berkins on Main café hours are noon–4pm Thursday–Sunday. The library is currently closed to the public. Visitors are required to wear a face mask/covering while inside the museum. Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students, and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm. Advance ticket registration via thewadsworth.org is encouraged, not required. Phone: (860) 278- 2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

Images (left to right): *Blossoming*, 1918. Oil on board, 11 x 15 inches. Milton Avery Trust. © 2021 Milton Avery Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; *Husband and Wife*, 1945. Oil on canvas, 33¾ x 44 inches. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger. © 2021 Milton Avery Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; *Boathouse by the Sea*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches. Milton Avery Trust. © 2021 The Milton Avery Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Victoria Miro and Waqas Wajahat.

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