



M I L T O N   A V E R Y













*Boathouse by the Sea*, 1959, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches



MILTON AVERY

THE SHAPE OF COLOR

SCHWARTZ • WAJAHAT





*Lone Gull*, 1957, oil on canvas, 36 x 18 inches



## FOREWORD

Milton Avery has often been hailed as the greatest American colorist, yet not enough has been said about his ability to distill nature and his genius in deconstructing subject matter to essential forms. His particular way of breaking down observed nature and recomposing it using non-associative color, simplified shapes, and negative space, was utilized by the abstract expressionists and minimalists such as Ellsworth Kelly. But nowhere is this influence more visible than in the work of Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko. In fact, from 1957 to 1961, the three artists had adjoining studios in Provincetown, Massachusetts—and to these younger artists Avery was a mentor. The reflective Cape Cod light, over long sweeping vistas of sand dunes and sea, had a profound effect on all their work. It was here that Avery undertook some of his largest canvases, including *Boathouse by the Sea* and *Yacht Race in Fog*, both of which are included in this exhibition.

Keenly aware of the grand landscape tradition, as practiced by Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt of the Hudson River School, Avery deliberately chose a non-heroic exploration of the canvas. Accessible and intimate, as if they are views from a kitchen window, Avery's paintings reject outsized ambition yet leave us with an enduring sense of place. He managed to enhance the role of nature, not through grandeur, but through evocations of quiet emotion. Using raw canvas and sparse pigment, Avery often applied color more as stain than painted surface, a technique that can be seen as an influence on color field painting. Avery created a world of outlined and interlocking forms to represent the flattened landscape. Throughout his artistic career, color remained the dominant force, especially as he became less concerned with subject details. This brought greater focus to the shapes and the colors within them. Avery's art is liminal—not fully abstract and yet not distinctly figurative. As a consequence, over time, his work has been hard to classify into a single category.

This concise exhibition, *The Shape of Color*, presents a group of paintings, dating from 1943 to 1963 that have never been shown together and includes several works that are on view for the first time. We are grateful to the Milton Avery family, March Avery Cavanaugh and Sean Avery Cavanaugh, for lending from their personal collections, and for their friendship and continued support.

WAQAS WAJAHAT  
Spring 2016



Milton Avery, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1945









*Grazing Brahmins*, 1952, oil on canvas, 44 x 54 inches





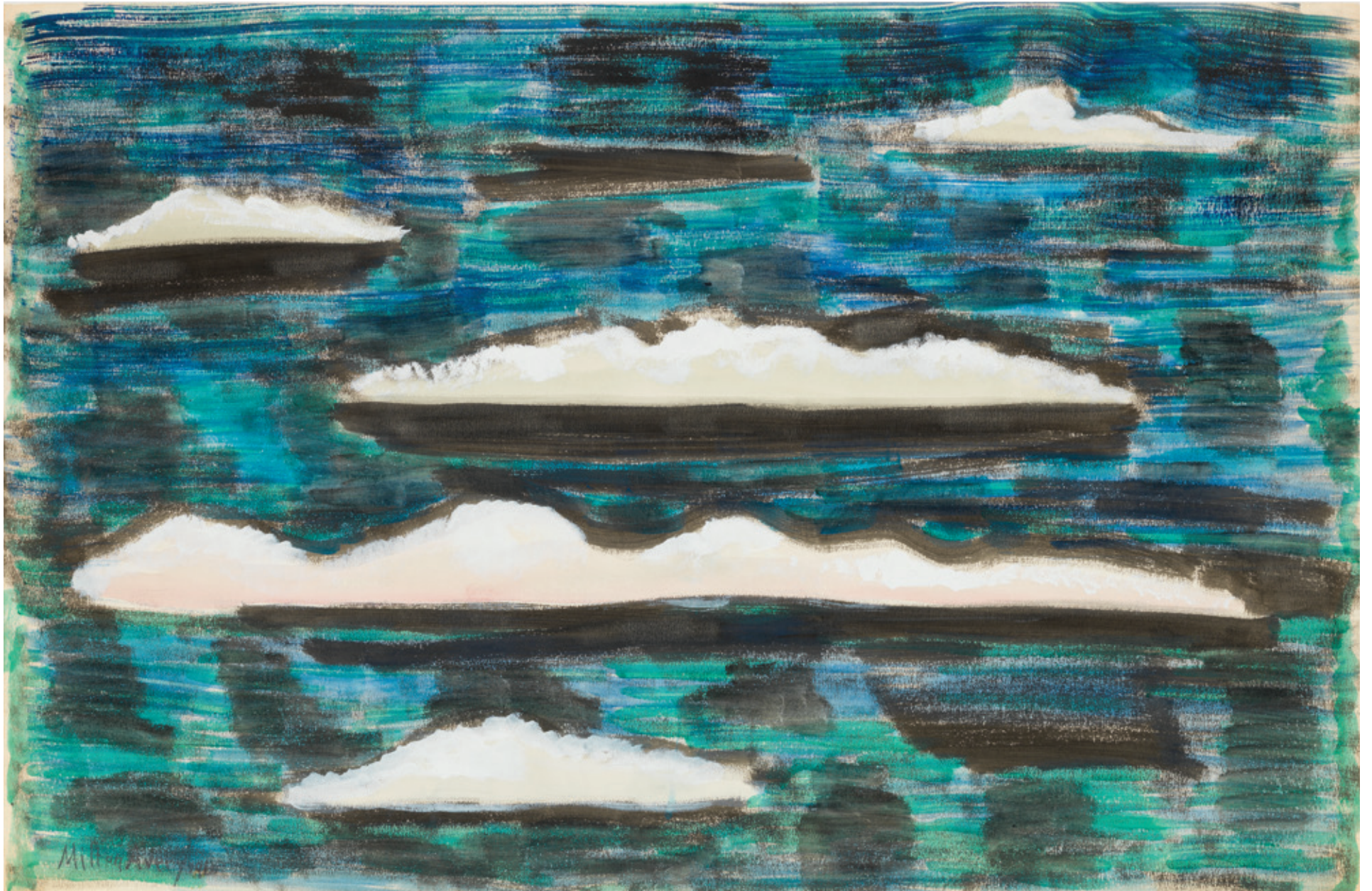




*Wavy Yellow Sea*, 1958, watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 inches







*Breaking Sea*, 1960, mixed media on paper, 23 x 35 inches









*Twisting River*, 1951, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches







*Seven White Cows*, 1953, oil on canvas, 26 x 43 inches







*Sheep*, 1952, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches







*Hen Yard*, 1955-56, oil on canvas, 34 x 46 inches







*Flying Gulls*, 1950, oil on canvas, 34 x 38 inches







*Bird and Fish*, 1952, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches





*Still Life with Skull*, 1946, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches









*Grey Nude*, 1943–44, oil on canvas, 36 x 20 inches







*White Pitcher*, 1946, oil on canvas, 32 x 27 inches







*Palms*, 1951, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches







*Ten Pound Island (Sea and Rocks)*, 1956, oil on canvas, 38 x 60 inches







*Goat Island*, 1958, oil on canvas, 30 x 44 inches







*Siamese Cat*, 1957, oil on canvas board, 18 x 14 inches





*Young Couple (Husband and Wife)*, 1963, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 inches







*Wader*, 1963, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches





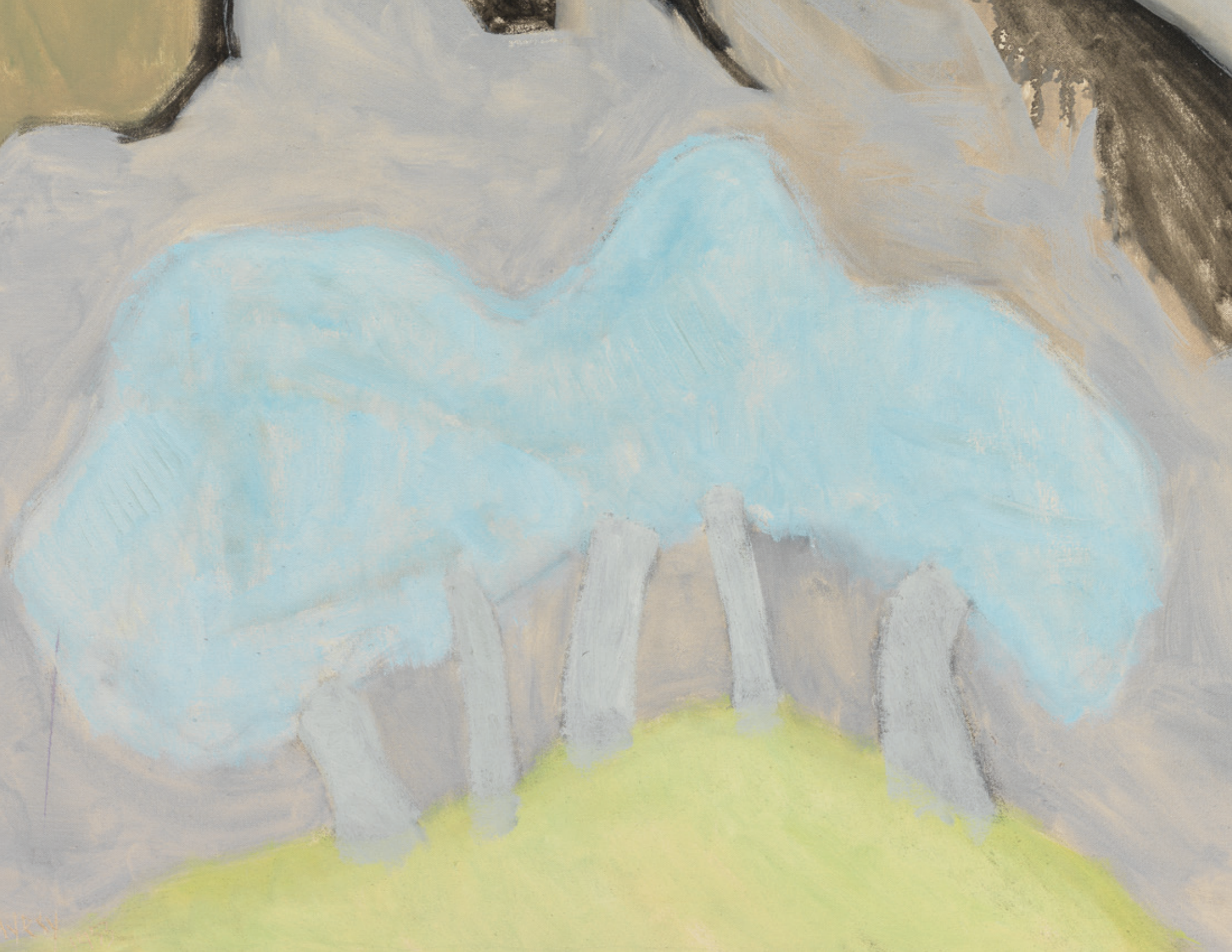
*Dark Tree*, 1954, mixed media on paper, 25 x 19 inches





*Dark Fir*, 1962, oil crayon and pastel on board, 30 x 24 inches





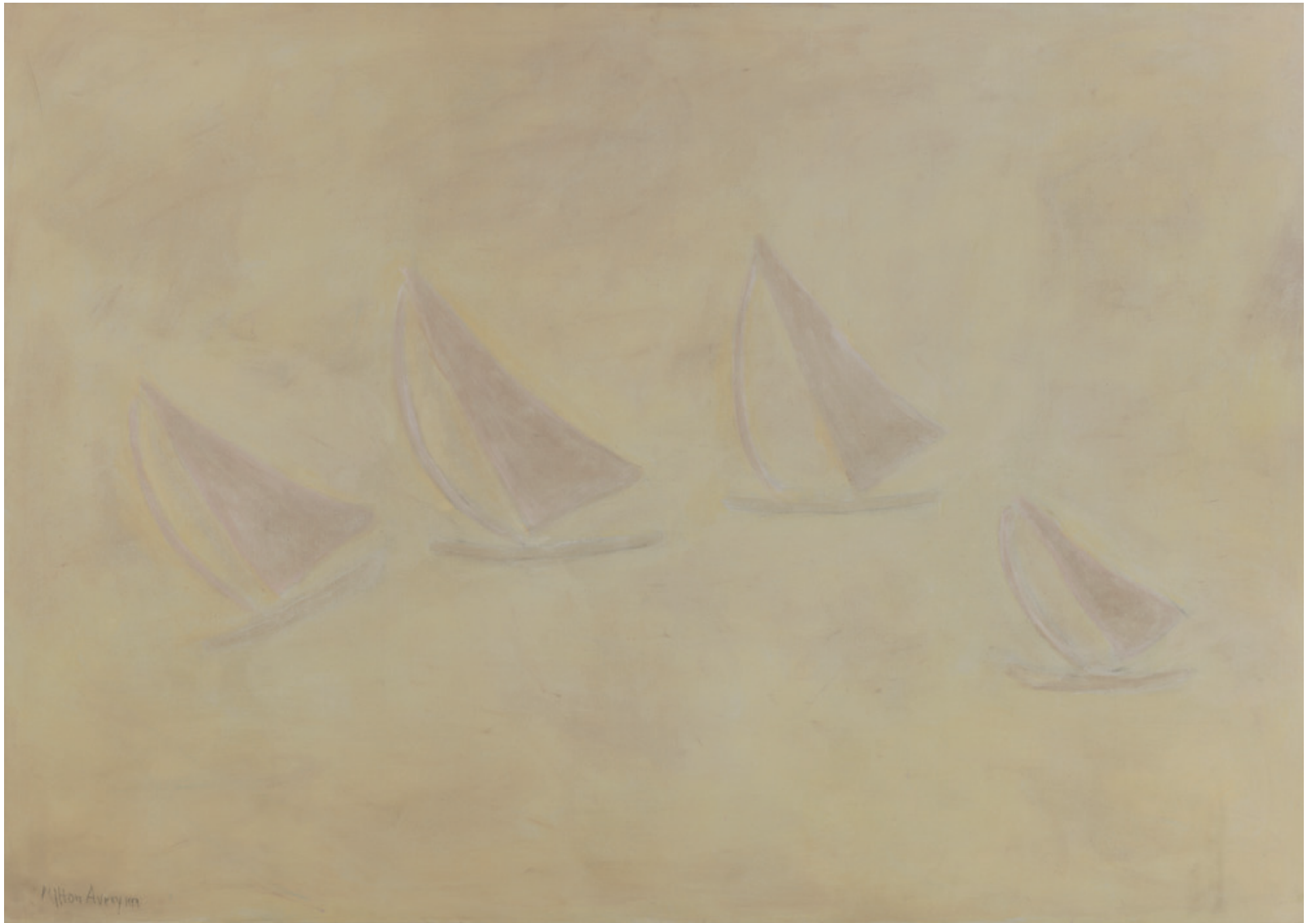




*French Landscape*, 1953, oil on canvas, 44 x 34 inches







*Yacht Race in Fog*, 1959, oil on canvas, 50 x 72 inches

## SELECTED CHRONOLOGY

- 1885 Born March 7 to Russell N. and Esther March Avery in Altmar, NY.
- 1898 Family moves to Wilson Station, near East Hartford, CT.
- 1905 Enrolls at the Connecticut League of Art Students, Hartford, CT. Studies life drawing and remains there until 1918.
- 1915 Exhibits publicly for the first time at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.
- 1920 Visits Gloucester, MA, where he spends the next few summers.
- 1924 Meets Sally Michel in Gloucester and becomes a member of the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts.
- 1925–26 Moves to New York City with fellow artist Wallace Putnam. Marries Sally Michel.
- 1927 Included in his first New York City exhibition, *The 11th Annual Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists*.
- 1928 Included in a show at the Opportunity Gallery, NY where he meets Mark Rothko and begins a lifelong friendship.
- 1929 The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, becomes the first museum to acquire a painting. Meets Adolph Gottlieb through Rothko.
- 1930 *White Horse* wins the Frank G. Logan Prize at the annual watercolor exhibition of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL.
- 1932 Summers in Gloucester with Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman. Daughter, March, is born in October.
- 1935 Dr. Albert Barnes purchases *The Nursemaid* from first solo exhibition at the Valentine Gallery, NY.
- 1935–43 Several summers in Jamaica and Rawsonville, VT.
- 1938 Summers on Gaspé Peninsula, Québec, Canada.
- 1941 Drives cross country to California, stopping at Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks.
- 1943 Leaves Valentine Gallery and joins Paul Rosenberg & Company, NY. Roy Neuberger buys 35 paintings.  
Begins dating paintings on front of canvas.
- 1944 First solo museum exhibition at The Phillips Collection.
- 1945 Concurrent exhibitions at Paul Rosenberg and Durand-Ruel Galleries, NY.
- 1946 Travels to Mexico for three months.
- 1947 First retrospective, *My Daughter, March*, at the Durand-Ruel Galleries.
- 1948 Awarded first prize for watercolor *Sea and Rocks*, 1944 at the Baltimore Museum of Art, MD.  
Summers in Maine, at Pemaquid Point.
- 1949 Suffers major heart attack. Last exhibition with Paul Rosenberg. Winters near Orlando, FL.
- 1950 Summers in Woodstock, NY. Roy Neuberger purchases 50 paintings from Paul Rosenberg.
- 1951 Joins Grace Borgenicht Gallery, NY. Summers in Woodstock.
- 1952 Travels to Europe for the first time, including London, Paris and the French Riviera.  
A retrospective opens at the Baltimore Museum of Art.
- 1953 First residency at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, NH.
- 1954 Daughter, March, graduates from Barnard College and marries Philip G. Cavanaugh.  
Second residency at the MacDowell Colony.
- 1955 Residency at Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY.
- 1957–61 Summers in Provincetown, MA, along with Gottlieb and Rothko. Executes first large-scale paintings.
- 1959 Winters in Key West, FL.
- 1960 Retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY. Suffers second heart attack.
- 1962 Hilton Kramer writes the first monograph on Avery, *Milton Avery: Paintings 1930–60*.
- 1964 Paints last painting in February.
- 1965 Dies January 3 in New York. Buried in the Artists Cemetery, Woodstock, NY.





Milton Avery in his studio, New York City, c. 1942

## SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Albertina, Vienna, Austria  
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY  
Art Institute of Chicago, IL  
Baltimore Museum of Art, MD  
The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, PA  
Brooklyn Museum, NY  
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA  
Cleveland Museum of Art, OH  
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR  
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA  
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC  
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA  
Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, FL  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY  
Milwaukee Art Museum, WI  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN  
Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX  
Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, Montréal, Canada  
Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Québec City, Canada  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
Museum of Modern Art, NY  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY  
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh  
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA  
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA  
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC  
Tate, London, United Kingdom  
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum of Art, Madrid, Spain  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond  
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT  
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN  
Whitney Museum of American Art, NY  
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

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SPRING / SUMMER 2016

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BY APPOINTMENT

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*Sail Loft and Orange Sky*, 1959, mixed media on paper, 23 x 17 ¾ inches

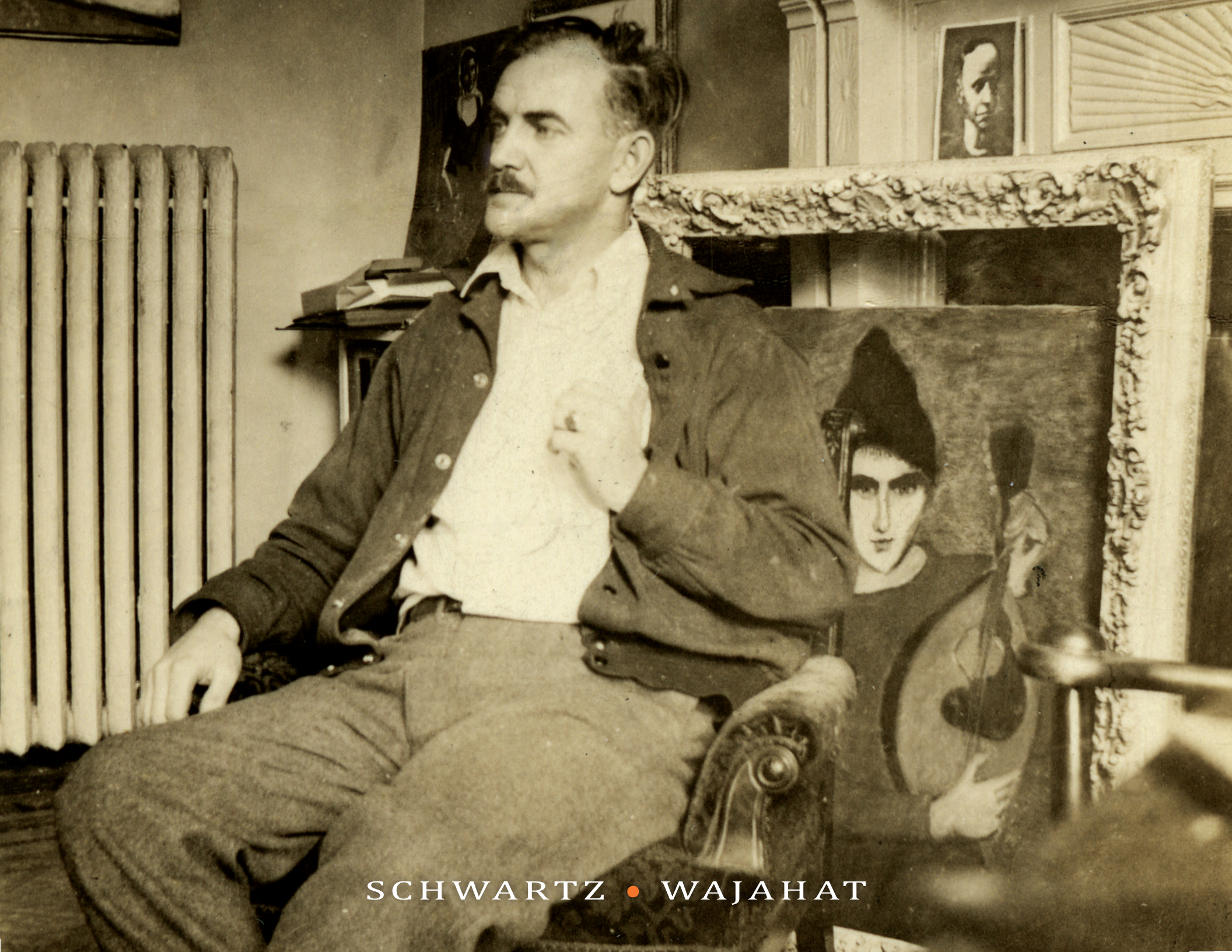












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