

CHILDS GALLERY  
ESTABLISHED 1937

# COLLECTIONS

VOLUME 5 JANUARY 2011

**Sally Michel: 1950s and 1960s**



*Fine American and European Paintings,  
Prints, Drawings, Watercolors and Sculpture*

Richard J. Baiano, PRESIDENT  
Stephanie V. Bond, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
D. Roger Howlett, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

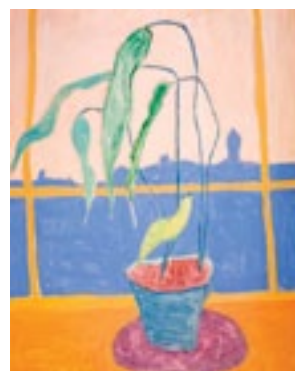
169 Newbury Street  
Boston, MA 02116  
617-266-1108  
617-266-2381 fax  
childsgallery.com  
info@childsgallery.com



We encourage you to phone or e-mail us to reserve your work of art. If you are from Massachusetts, a 6 1/4 % sales tax will be applied. A small shipping and handling fee, depending on package size, will be applied. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted. Prices are subject to change without notice. Works shipped on-approval may be returned within ten days of receipt. Firm orders have priority. All works returned must be as sent: prepaid and insured. All works in this catalogue are unconditionally guaranteed to be as described. Your bill of sale acts as your certificate of authenticity, and we will refund your money at any time if on good authority our description should be shown to vary from the work at the time that it was sold.

To Receive Our E-Catalogues:

In addition to the *Print Annual*, the *Painting Annual*, *Childs Gallery Collections*, and the *Childs Gallery Bulletin*, we offer a series of specialized e-catalogues. These email-based announcements are produced as single artist catalogues after having acquired significant new additions to the artist's work, or pertain to specific subject matter such as marine, still life, portraits, etc. Please provide your e-mail address including an indication of the artists or subjects that interest you. We hope you will let us know how we can shape this set of catalogues to serve you better. You can also register for e-catalogues at childsgallery.com.



COVER **Window Plant, 1961**

Oil on board

28 x 22 INCHES

Dated and inscribed verso.

## COLLECTIONS

*Sally Michel: 1950s and 1960s*

Editor: Richard J. Baiano  
Assistant Editor: Stephanie V. Bond  
Staff: Katya Adair, Gina Canning, Kathryn Fields, John Hamilton, and Sally Norton  
Photography: Darren Stahlman|darrenstahlmanphotography.com  
Catalogue Design: Carlos Ridruejo|caridossa.com

Images are copyright of The Milton Avery Trust.  
©2011 Bond Baiano LLC / Childs Gallery All Rights Reserved.

SCAN THE CODE  
WITH A **QR READER**  
ON YOUR MOBILE  
PHONE AND VISIT THE  
ONLINE GALLERY AT  
**CHILDSGALLERY.COM**



# COLLECTIONS

VOLUME 5

## Sally Michel

1950s and 1960s

GALLERY EXHIBITION  
JAUNUARY 10 - MARCH 21, 2011

CHILDS GALLERY  
ESTABLISHED 1937

169 NEWBURY STREET BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116-2895





# CONTENTS

Introduction 7

## Sally Michel: 1950s and 1960s

Creatures Big and Small	8
Sea and Shore	10
Friends and Family	12
The Arts	14
Landscapes	16
Still Life	18
Flora	20

# COLLECTIONS

*Childs Gallery Collections* is the latest publication in a tradition of more than seventy years of gallery publications. The *Childs Gallery Bulletin* (begun 1950), the *Print Annual* (begun 1976) and the *Painting Annual* (begun 1980) have been firmly established and are represented in almost every fine arts library in the country. As early as the mid-1940s, however, Childs Gallery presented a publication entitled *Currier and Ives Prints: A Collection*, which represented the carefully considered collection of a single owner with Charles D. Childs' commentary that "we cannot recall that a representative collection of these lithographs has been shown in Boston for many years."

We continue to celebrate collections, collecting, and collectors as a pivotal axis of the art world with this fifth volume of *Childs Gallery Collections—Sally Michel: 1950s & 1960s*. Childs Gallery has represented Sally Michel since 1986, and most recently held a retrospective exhibition celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of representation at Childs. Since that time, her paintings have been included in museum exhibitions throughout the country, and are now part of the permanent collections of The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C., The Metropolitan Museum, New York, The Wadsworth Athenaeum, The Corcoran Gallery, and many other fine public and private collections.

With special thanks to Sean and March.

LEFT **View Through a Tree, 1953**  
Oil on board

24 X 17 3/4 INCHES  
Signed and dated lower left. Inscribed verso.





## Sally Michel: 1950s and 1960s

### *In Plain Sight*

For six decades, Sally Michel's wondrous artwork hid in plain sight. That fact is all the more remarkable considering she painted side-by-side with husband Milton Avery throughout their happy forty-year marriage, serving as constant inspiration for one another. Together, the couple developed a fresh vernacular in American Modernism, humanizing abstraction in celebration of everyday simple pleasures.

But early on, Michel (1902-2003) freely chose to support her husband professionally, emotionally, and financially to further his career. "I felt the need to paint pictures," she explained, "but not to show them."

As women's art historian Elisa Honig Fine wrote of Michel, "Like many artist-wives of famous artists, Sally painted in the privacy of her home—she made art, but allowed Milton to make art history."

In viewing Michel's works from the 1950s and '60s at Childs Gallery, one can't help but share in her obvious joy at capturing the freedom, playfulness, and amusement of a leisurely moment in life, as in an impromptu piano concert in *Duet* (1960) or a lazy beach day in *Sheltered Cove* (© 1950s). The effervescent color palette and delightful scenes are an immediate draw, but it's the abstracted forms and offbeat depth of perception that make one want to linger.

The artist couple "took their own personal environment and showed others how it could become abstract without being totally alienating, strangely distant and yet familiar, modern and still comforting," explained art historian Robert Hobbs in an article on Michel for the *Woman's Art Journal* in 1987.

Smitten after their first meeting in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Avery followed the Brooklyn-born Michel to New York City where they made museum and gallery hopping a major pastime. Though their art influences were wide-ranging in the beginning, the couple's style was highly original, and once formed, seemed unsusceptible to modern art movements of later decades.

As Robert Hobbs wrote, the paintings of Avery and Michel featured "American ingredients: the naïve, caricatured, slightly awkward charm of folk art, the harmonious and refined intimacy of turn-of-the-century Tonalism, and the democratic ebullience of the Ash Can School. If one adds to these the grace and gaiety of Fauvism and the joyous, intensely saturated, yet quite arbitrary color of Matisse, there emerges a thoroughly delightful American folk art version of Parisian Modernism."

But there were differences in their interpretations. Michel's paintings were more intuitive and less systematic than Avery's, using color to express the mood of the moment. Painting on a smaller scale also gave her work greater intimacy. In comparing their styles, Michel said, "My work is more staccato, and the colors aren't exactly what you'd see, but are related to what you'd see."

In an interview with Robert Hobbs, Michel spoke of their spontaneous painting process, "Each color dictated what the next color was going to be. You see, every time you put down one color, it changes what else may happen. So you can't really tell what's happening until it happens."

Always a very happy, humorous, and optimistic person, Michel discovered the joys of art when she was just five years old. That lightheartedness and a generosity of spirit are clearly evident in portraits of family and friends, a favorite subject, along with summer vacation spots at the beach or countryside. Close artist friends Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, and Barnett Newman often accompanied Avery and Michel on their working holiday adventures.

Though great fun, those summer idylls were strictly low budget, as the couple had little money until Avery's works began to sell in the 1950s. They often returned to Gloucester where they met in 1924—she a 22-year-old Art Student League pupil from New York City, he a 39-year-old struggling artist from Connecticut. They also spent time in Provincetown, rural Connecticut, Canada, and Mexico. Michel supported the family, soon to include daughter March, by drawing editorial illustrations for many publications, including the weekly

[PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 21]



LEFT **Long Pose, 1955**  
Oil on board

24 X 17 7/8 INCHES  
Signed and dated in pencil lower right.





1



2

**1**  
**Rooster and Hens**  
**Circa 1950**  
Oil on board  
24 X 17 3/4 INCHES  
Signed in pencil center right. Inscribed verso.

**2**  
**Bird with Wings Spread**  
**1963**  
Oil on board  
18 X 24 INCHES  
Signed and dated in pencil lower right.

**3**  
**Southern Grove**  
**Circa 1950**  
Oil on board  
18 X 24 INCHES  
Signed in pencil lower left. Signed, dated, and inscribed verso.



3





4



5

**4**  
**Sheltered Cove**  
**Circa 1950's**  
Oil on stretch-panel  
18 X 24 INCHES  
Signed in pencil lower right. Dated and inscribed verso.

**5**  
**Working Dock**  
**Circa 1950's**  
Oil on drawing-board  
17 X 11 INCHES  
Signed in pencil lower middle. Inscribed and dated verso.

**6**  
**Sunset Paddle (Lounger)**  
**1960**  
Oil on drawing-panel  
20 X 30 1/2 INCHES  
Alternative painting verso.



6



7

**7**  
**Fishing Boat on Aegean Sea**  
**1966**  
Oil on canvas  
24 X 50 INCHES  
Signed and dated lower right. Inscribed verso.  
From the estate of the artist.





8

**8**  
**White Nude, Brown Sea**  
**1962**

Oil on board  
30 X 24 INCHES  
Signed and dated in pencil lower right. Inscribed verso.



9

**9**  
**Milton Indoors**  
**1960**

Oil on board  
22 1/8 X 28 INCHES  
Dated and inscribed verso.



10

**10**  
**Resting and Reading**  
**1963**

Oil on board  
24 X 30 INCHES



11

**11**  
**Pink Nude**  
**1962**

Oil on board  
24 X 20 INCHES  
Signed and dated in pencil lower right.



12

**12**  
**Haircut**  
**1962**

Oil on board  
30 X 24 INCHES





13



14

**13  
Ballet  
1963**

Oil on board

24 X 30 INCHES

Signed and dated in pencil lower right. Inscribed verso.

**14  
Portrait Painter  
1963**

Oil on board

30 X 24 INCHES

Signed verso.



15

**15  
Duet  
1960**

Oil on board

24 X 17 3/4 INCHES





16

**16**  
**Pines**  
**1953**  
Oil on board  
17 7/8 X 24 INCHES



17

**17**  
**Forest Puzzle**  
**Circa 1950**  
Oil on board  
18 X 24 INCHES  
Signed in pencil lower left.



18

**18**  
**Dappled Forest**  
**1953**  
Oil on board  
24 X 17 7/8 INCHES  
Signed and dated in pencil lower right. Inscribed verso.



19

**19**  
**Bare Orchard**  
**1953**  
Oil on board  
17 7/8 X 24 INCHES  
Signed and dated lower right. Inscribed verso.



20

**20**  
**Landscape**  
**1953**  
Oil on board  
17 7/8 X 24 INCHES





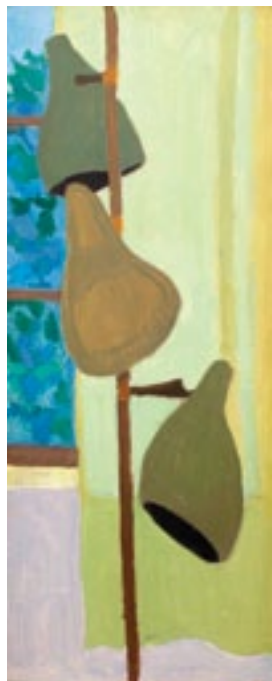
21

**21**  
**Garden Chair**  
**1957**

Oil on board

24 X 18 INCHES

Signed and dated in pencil lower right. Inscribed verso.



22

**22**  
**Tall Lamp**  
**1960**

Oil on hand-made board

24 X 8 7/8 INCHES

Inscribed verso.

**23**  
**Toilet**  
**1950s**

Oil on hand-made board

24 X 17 3/4 INCHES

Signed, dated, and inscribed verso.



23





24

**24**  
**Pineapple**  
**Circa 1950**  
 Oil on Board  
 16 X 12 INCHES  
 Signed in pencil lower left. Dated and inscribed verso.



25

**25**  
**Little Bouquet**  
**1961**  
 Oil on canvas board  
 12 X 6 INCHES  
 Signed and dated lower left. Titled, signed, inscribed, and dated in pencil and pink crayon verso.



26

**26**  
**Bloom and Lime**  
**1950**  
 Oil on stretch-panel  
 18 X 14 INCHES  
 Signed and dated in pencil center right.

[CONTINUES FROM PAGE 7] “Parent and Child” page in the New York Times Sunday Magazine. Even in her commercial work, Michel brings a charm and devilish whimsy to domestic scenes, with added graphic dimension provided by Edouard Vuillard-like clashing pattern mixes.

Michel’s works of the 1950s and ‘60s hold particular interest, as Avery’s financial success made it possible for the couple to visit Europe for the first time in 1952. And with daughter March grown up, there was the additional freedom to accept invitations from the prestigious MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire and the Yaddo art community in upstate New York.

Time spent in Paris museums and art galleries is evident in the beautiful nudes of this period: Long Pose (1955), an amalgam of Cubist influences, and the Matisse-inspired Pink Nude (1962). Michel’s nature scenes also benefited from renewed exposure to Fauvists like Andre Derain, with Raoul Dufy’s scratched surface technique used to great effect in Old Orchard (1953.) Almost violently colorful, Michel’s abstracted landscapes recreate her initial impressions. It’s like the difference between a fond memory and a vacation photo, with the latter often less emotionally fulfilling.

Michel’s wonderful sense of humor also infuses her works of this period, from whimsical chickens to a still life of a toilet, perhaps an ode to the readymade Fountain urinal (1917) of Marcel Duchamp who she befriended one summer at the MacDowell Colony.

And how did Michel’s six-decades worth of work finally come to light? A representative of Childs Gallery, as well as several art historians and curators, visited her New York City apartment to purchase or borrow an Avery painting after his death in 1965. There on the floor in the background were works of equal talent, vitality, and originality.

It took some convincing, but Michel slowly began showing her own work publicly in the 1980s, with success and acclaim quick to follow. She is currently represented in museums across the country, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, The National Museum of Women in the Arts and The Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C., and The Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut. *TINA SUTTON, Arts & Style JOURNALIST*





27

**27**  
**House Plant**  
**1961**

Oil on canvas board

14 X 10 INCHES

Signed and dated lower left. Signed lower right. Signed, dated, and inscribed verso.



28

**28**  
**Reflected Grove**  
**1966**

Oil on canvas board

24 X 36 INCHES

Signed and dated center right. Titled and dated in pencil verso.

From the estate of the artist.



29

**29**  
**Old Orchard**  
**1953**

Oil on board

17 7/8 X 24 INCHES

Signed and dated in pencil lower right. Inscribed verso.



**Sally Michel** American (1902-2003)  
**Bayside Palms**  
**Circa 1950**

Oil on board

24 X 18 INCHES

Signed with scratching lower left.

# CHILDS GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1937

FINE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
PRINTS, DRAWINGS, WATERCOLORS AND SCULPTURE

169 NEWBURY STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116  
617-266-1108 INFO@CHILDSGALLERY.COM CHILDSGALLERY.COM





**Sally Michel** American (1902-2003)  
**Blue Vase, Red Blooms, 1963**

Oil on board  
24 X 30 INCHES

## CHILDS GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1937

FINE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
PRINTS, DRAWINGS, WATERCOLORS AND SCULPTURE

169 NEWBURY STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02116  
617-266-1108 INFO@CHILDSGALLERY.COM CHILDSGALLERY.COM