



Black Void, 1917. Watercolor and gouache on paper,
39 ¾ x 54 in.

CHARLES BURCHFIELD

Solitude

January 9 - February 8, 2020

Opening Reception
Thursday, January 9, 6–8 pm

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to present **Charles Burchfield: *Solitude***, an exhibition highlighting 15 works created between 1917 and 1960 that give visitors a remarkable opportunity to examine the artist's vibrant landscapes, which reveal his luminous, spiritual interpretations of the world. Over the course of five decades, Charles Burchfield (1893 – 1967) created paintings that were inspired by the seasons, natural world, and small-towns around him. Many decades later, the works continue to intrigue the contemporary art world in their intensely personal and almost mystical approach. Taken together, this selection of paintings shows the breadth of Burchfield's artistic vision. A keen observer, he found evidence of the divine in the natural world, and of the universal in the particular. He felt strongly that his identity was bound up with his relation to nature, and, in many ways, his empathy with his environment defined both his life and his art.

From 1915 to 1919, Burchfield created landscape paintings to express what he felt were the fleeting moments and moods of nature. In *Black Void* (1917), Burchfield has painted the woods at night. There is a dense, dark sky hanging behind rolling hills, which are animated by angular trees in almost theatrical slants throughout. His long walks in nature left lasting, sometimes melancholy impressions on him. Inscribed on the verso of the work, Burchfield writes "An attempt to express a vague feeling rather than a fact. It is the feeling of black north woods, or perhaps the void of North itself. It comes to a boy in remembrance, or can almost be seen out of the corner of his eye; but if he looks directly, it is gone." Burchfield was interested in capturing the memories and fantasy from being a youth in nature, and he would continue to weave different moods into his paintings throughout his career.

During the 1920s to the early 1940s, Burchfield somewhat moved away from his lyrical expressions of the landscape, and began to favor depictions primarily of small-town life. He concentrated on exteriors of homes, and industrial sites, such as railroads, scrap iron piles, and grain elevators, revealing his interest

in architectural forms, at times desolate and dilapidated. Though he was moving towards realism at this time, while working predominantly on these scenes, he still at times created highly imaginative landscape compositions, continuing the thread of the isolated experience in nature. He preferred the medium of watercolor, finding it allowed him a versatile and lively expressiveness in his work. Burchfield developed an unorthodox way of working with the medium, overlaying dense strokes, sometimes abrading the paper, that gave the work a drama and strength.



Winter Sunburst, 1960. Watercolor, charcoal, and white chalk on joined paper, 33 x 39 ¾ in.

By the mid-1940s, Burchfield was largely creating landscapes again, with a meditative, introspective approach to the spiritual potential found in nature. Burchfield increased the scale of his works, and combined realism and expressionism, culminating often in fantastical scenes, elevating nature to wild and supernatural realms, a departure from the lyrical naturalism of his earlier landscapes. These works also reveal Burchfield's newer feelings of uplifted spirituality that he found in nature. In *Winter Sunburst* (1960), he depicts an afternoon in winter with radiant rays of sunlight bursting through a cloudy sky, and bold yellow lines animating icicles on the roof of a lone house and the trees around it. By this time, Burchfield was often painting from memory and imagination, with no preparatory sketches as in earlier years, which explains the dreamlike, hallucinatory quality of some of his later compositions. In a letter to a friend he writes, "I find myself being drawn almost inexorably into a dream world. It is not that I am trying to escape real life, but the realm of fantasy offers the true solution of truly evaluating a situation."¹

DC Moore Gallery is the exclusive representative of The Charles E. Burchfield Foundation.

Charles Burchfield has been the focus of numerous museum exhibitions, including an exhibition of early watercolors at the Museum of Modern Art in 1930, the Whitney Museum of American in 1956, 1980 and 2002, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1990, and the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio in 1997. The latter exhibition, titled *The Paintings of Charles Burchfield: North by Midwest*, traveled to the Burchfield-Penney Art Center in Buffalo, New York and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. and was accompanied by a monograph by Nannette Maciejunes and Michael Hall. Recent exhibitions include *Heat Waves in a Swamp*, curated by the artist Robert Gober, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2010); and *Charles Burchfield: The Ohio Landscapes*, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH (2019). Burchfield's work is represented in every major collection of American art in this country.

This exhibition runs concurrently with *Mary Frank: ¿Or Was It Like This?* (January 9 – February 8, 2020). DC Moore Gallery's next show will feature monumental paintings by Romare Bearden in ***Abstract Romare Bearden***, which will be on view from February 13 – March 28, 2020.

¹ Letter to Theodore Braasch, February 12, 1960; quoted in in John I.H. Baur, *The Inlander: Life and Work of Charles Burchfield, 1893-1967* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982, 1984), p. 239.