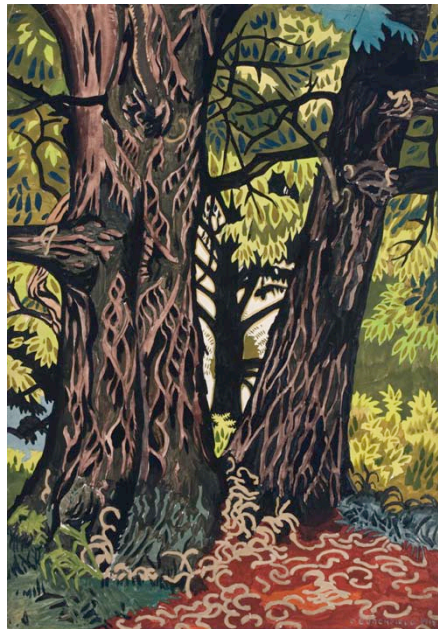


CHARLES BURCHFIELD

The Nature of Seeing

May 1 – June 13, 2015



Chestnut Trees, 1916. Gouache, watercolor, and pencil on paper, mounted on board. 20 x 13 7/8 inches.

Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) had an intensely personal, spiritualized view of the world. As highlighted by the exceptional group of watercolors and drawings in this exhibition, he was a keen observer of his surroundings, depicting scenes with which he was familiar, often imbuing them with a visionary sensibility that was deeply felt.

Among his earliest works are modernist views of his hometown of Salem, Ohio, and the surrounding countryside. After graduating from the Cleveland School of Art in 1916, he created many imaginative landscapes and developed a personal visual language of fantasy.

In *Chestnut Trees* of 1916, he transformed the natural world into an expressive pattern of abstracted, stylized forms in heightened color. Curling shapes cover the ground at the base of two large tree trunks, while intertwining lines enliven their bark. Buried deep in the center of the composition is a circular form that appears to be vibrating or emitting energy, linking the painting to what Burchfield once called his “rhapsodic fantasies” of the period.

Burchfield was also drawn to the urban landscape. In the 1920s and 30s, he often painted the austere imagery of industrial development and railroad yards, as well as the local architecture of towns and villages, including many views of his home in Gardenville, near Buffalo, New York. While he was striving for increased realism, he was not after literal depictions of the world around him. He was instead working towards a clarity of structure and design that was almost classical in form, while also poetic in feeling. In 1940, he wrote that he preferred to be known as a “romantic-realist,” adding that, “It is the romantic side of the real world that I portray. My things are poems—(I hope).”



Moonlight in a Flower Garden, 1961. Watercolor and charcoal on joined paper. 48 x 30 inches.

In the early 1940s, Burchfield returned to a bolder, more expressive approach. Much of his later work reveals two complementary sides of his artistic personality—from exuberant views of sunlit fields and atmospheric skies to more introspective meditations on the profound depths of nature. By the last five years of his life, his paintings were increasingly dreamlike.

In *Moonlight in a Flower Garden* of 1961, he envisioned a nocturnal world animated by the effects of a full moon. A multicolored, haloed moon illuminates a pale sky, below two large, colorful moths that hang on a band of green and yellow plant forms. The energized flower garden in the bottom half of the painting is mysteriously attuned to the moonlight, with vibrating bushes and trees, and flowers with markings that resemble human faces, giving them an almost anthropomorphic quality.

In both his life and art, Burchfield saw the universal in the particular, and nothing was too small or insignificant to capture his attention. He felt strongly that his identity as an artist was bound up with his relation to nature. “I feel impelled to embrace the earth,” he wrote in his journals. On another day spent in the fields and woods, he found that, “My spirit was in complete harmony with the world of nature and absorbed every sight and sound with a completeness that has not been my lot for many a month.”

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

Also on view in the project gallery: MILTON AVERY: SELECTED PAINTINGS

DC MOORE GALLERY specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information, for photographs, or to arrange a viewing, please call 212-247-2111 or email Lily Zhou at lzhou@dcmooregallery.com.