



Two Houses in Winter, 1918. Ink and graphite on paper,
8 3/8 x 5 1/4 inches

Charles Burchfield *Doodles & Sketches*

Sept 9 – Oct 9, 2021

“One of the greatest joys of an artist’s working life is producing drawings, probably because he enjoys greater freedom in drawing than he does in what he considers his major work.”

Charles Burchfield (1967)

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to present *Charles Burchfield: Doodles & Sketches*, on view in our project gallery from September 9 - October 9, 2021. Best known for his watercolor paintings, Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) also had a deep practice of creating doodles and sketches throughout his career with subjects varying from landscapes to pure abstraction. Some served as studies for paintings, while others were a means for Burchfield to quickly capture inspiration and motifs. As one of the most innovative artists of the 20th century, Burchfield continues to intrigue viewers and inform the contemporary art world. His intensely personal, spiritualized view of the world resonates and his deeply felt, almost mystical sensibility has inspired curators and artists to revisit and reassess his many accomplishments.

Burchfield’s sketching practice dates back to 1915, while a student at the Cleveland School of Art. Within his sketches, “general observations gave way to more imaginative means of representing nature.”ⁱ In 1917, Burchfield created an album of drawings, entitled *1917 Conventions for Abstract Thoughts*, in which he created his own abstracted language to express certain feelings and emotions, including morbid brooding, the fear of loneliness, and surprise. According to Burchfield, “Altho these ‘conventions’ seem on first glance like pure inventions, most of them actually evolved from a visual experience.”ⁱⁱ Gradually, the pictogram-like symbolism became less prominent in Burchfield’s work, though he never abandoned it entirely, embedding it within his landscapes and other scenes.

Burchfield’s commanding use of line to create depth, texture, and movement in his sketches is evident in *Two Houses in Winter* (1918). In this work, the artist uses horizontal lines in a multitude of ways - from adding texture to the tree bark to shingles on the house to emphasizing the piles of snow on the ground. Burchfield’s use of the monochromatic combination of black ink and grey watercolor further highlights his skill, showing how he is able to add depth by changing the density of his materials.



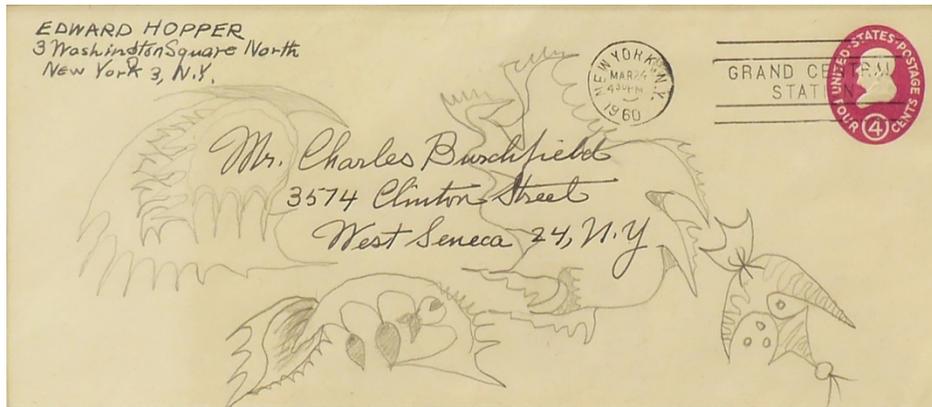
Doodle 10, n.d. Pencil on paper, 8 1/4 x 5 1/4 inches

Winter to Spring (n.d.) demonstrates Burchfield's adept use of drawings as studies for his paintings. Dispersed within its patterned undulating lines is a numbered key allowing the artist to make notes to himself for the final composition. For instance, the number one indicates areas in which the artist would like to have a "warm lavender glow," personifying the heat rising from the land as the seasons change.

Doodling was also an ever-present part of Burchfield's artistic practice and was a part of his lifelong compulsion to create. As the artist explained, "Doodling is a form of subconscious thinking expressed visually, and some of my most useful abstract motifs come from such seemingly idle diversions."ⁱⁱⁱ Burchfield would doodle with quick and unmediated fervor on whatever leftover pieces of paper were on hand, such as envelopes and market lists. As demonstrated with Doodle 2 (n.d.), the subconscious movement of the artist's pencil creates sweeping marks, vibrating lines, and lush botanical shapes.

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).



Also on view is *Katia Santibañez: Lumens Anima* from September 9 – October 9, 2021.

DC Moore Gallery specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-6pm. For more information, photographs, or to arrange a viewing please call 212-247-2111 or email Sabeena Khosla at skhosla@dcmooregallery.com.

ⁱ Nancy Weekly, "Conventions for Abstract Thoughts," in *Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield*, ed. Robert Gober (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2009), pp. 21.

ⁱⁱ Weekly, pp. 25

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles Burchfield, "The Place of Drawing in an Artist's Work," in *The Drawings of Charles Burchfield*, ed. Edith H. Jones (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 8.