

CAROL COREY FINE ART

The Watercolors of John Marin and Charles E. Burchfield ***Masters of the American Medium***

March 19 – April 24, 2022

Carol Corey Fine Art is delighted to *present The Watercolors of Charles E. Burchfield and John Marin: Masters of the American Medium*. The exhibition will include a selection of watercolors by these two artists, ranging in date from 1915 to 1937.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, watercolor painting—once considered a medium best suited to amateur artists and preliminary studies—developed into a significant force in American art. By the turn of the century, the increasing popularity of watercolor painting – its boldness and directness –led many critics to proclaim it to be the “American Medium. Working in a wide range of styles and motifs, artists produced watercolors of technical brilliance and captivating beauty that pushed the boundaries of the medium and positioned watercolor at the leading edges of American art. In the 20th century, the next generation of watercolor artists – Charles Demuth, Edward Hopper, John Marin and Charles E. Burchfield among them – adopted and furthered the remarkable reputation of watercolor and played a pivotal role in the progress of American modernism.

Charles Ephraim Burchfield (1893–1967)

Born in Astabula Harbor, Ohio, in 1893, Charles Burchfield grew up in the small town of Salem, in central Ohio. During his youth, he spent countless hours in the nearby woods, developing a deep and life-long empathy for the natural world. In 1912, he enrolled in the Cleveland School of Art, graduating four years later. While there, he was introduced to major trends in European and American modernism, as well as Chinese and Japanese art, and contemporary design theory. His early work included modernist views of Salem and the surrounding countryside, along with imaginative landscapes grounded in a personal visual language of fantasy. Around 1920, he adopted a more realist approach grounded in the austere imagery of industrial development, and the local architecture of Midwestern cities and towns.

In 1921, Burchfield moved to Buffalo, New York, to work as a wallpaper designer for the H. M. Birge Company. He married and started a family, eventually raising four daughters and a son. Around this time, he began to receive critical acclaim for his focus on what he once called the “great epic poetry of American life.” He had several exhibitions at the Montross Gallery in New York starting in 1924.

Burchfield gained major national recognition in 1930, when the newly formed Museum of Modern Art organized an exhibition of his early work. It was the first single-artist exhibition held at the museum. A year earlier he had joined the Frank K. M. Rehn Galleries in New York, which continued to represent him for the rest of his life.

In the early 1940s, Burchfield returned to a bolder, more expressive approach. He was initially inspired to develop what he called “reconstructions” or “two-period pictures,” composites of smaller, early works, mainly from 1917 and 1918, which he enlarged with strips of paper to create grander, more complex compositions. 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 early 1960s, his paintings were increasingly dreamlike. He continued to paint with his full creative powers until the end of his life. His final exhibition at the Rehn Galleries was in October 1966, three months before he died.

Charles Burchfield has been the focus of numerous museum exhibitions, including an exhibition of early watercolors at the Museum of Modern Art in 1930, and retrospectives at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo in 1944, the Whitney Museum of American in 1956, 1980 and 2002, the University of Arizona Art Gallery, Tucson in 1965, 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. Burchfield's work is represented in every major collection of American art in this country. [DC Moore Gallery]

John Marin (1870–1953)

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, Marin was raised by his maternal grandparents in Weehawken, just across the Hudson River from New York City. He took up drawing as a young child, and as a teenager, made quick, expressive watercolor sketches of the landscape around his grandfather's farm in Delaware. He developed an early appreciation for the outdoors, as well as a talent for the demanding medium of watercolor, which remained his favorite mode of expression for the rest of his life.

Marin is a pioneer in American modernism and abstraction. His contributions to the canon are becoming more widely recognized amongst an international audience, some 70 years after he became the first American to exhibit at the Venice Biennale in 1950. Marin enjoyed continued critical and commercial success throughout his career which was instigated by his meeting Alfred Stieglitz in 1909; a pivotal moment for the artist as Stieglitz championed Marin's advancements in abstraction and in watercolor as a medium.

Perhaps most enticing, however, from the perspectives of both visual iconography and emotional response to the artist's work, are the 'bursts' of energy with which Marin paints, which he miraculously sustained throughout his career. When we examine an early watercolor from the artist's first summer in Maine in 1912, or a late oil painted in 1952, we experience the same fervor, the same restless and relentless energy with which Marin sought to capture the natural world. It is in the translation of this experience from Marin's eyes to our own, in which the artist's brilliance and impact is at its best. [Menconi + Schoelkopf]

The exhibition is presented in association with Menconi + Schoelkopf and DC Moore Gallery, New York.