

Burchfield, Charles (1893-1967)
Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio

EDUCATION/INFLUENCES

- Cleveland School of Art

BIG IDEAS/THEMES

- Uses landscape to convey own moods/feelings-Transcendental-probing mysteries of nature to reveal his inner emotions. Early works show sketching in pencil then fill in with watercolor. Later works-brushed color directly onto paper with a more free, lyrical style. Some works overtly spiritual, others more mystical.
- Artist suffered sharp mood swings, was a declared agnostic for most of his life although drawn to spiritual writers and certainly had his own inner spiritualism.
- Kept small notebook called “Conventions for Abstract Thoughts”-pencil renderings representing 20 darker states (imbecility, fear, fascination of evil, etc)-essentially his personal system of symbols.
- Known for romantic, often fantastic depictions of nature. Developed unique style of watercolor painting that reflected distinctly American subjects and his profound respect for nature. Depicted all 4 seasons throughout his career-but especially liked winter.



KIA WORK-*Street Vista in Winter*, watercolor on paper, 1957-60

- Linwood Avenue in Buffalo, New York-winter day-snow beginning to melt
- Imaginative journey down an actual street-corridor of trees that arch over like a vaulted cathedral ceiling, leading to a lighter area in the background of the painting-a mysterious, spiritual or perhaps mystical experience? Gothic arches-dominant motif in many Burchfield works.
- One-point perspective-foreground/middle ground/background-how else does an artist make objects look close or faraway to us?
- Limited palette-white of snow is white of the paper.
- Melancholy mood-how is that portrayed by the work?
- Artist's thoughts on work, “I’ll probably be ridden out of town on a rail for saying this, but I think Buffalo in the wintertime is especially beautiful. I hope this picture proves my point.” (from *The Sites of the City: Charles Burchfield’s Buffalo*).