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By ROBERTA SMITH

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Art in Review; Charles Burchfield

Paintings, 1915-1964 D. C. Moore 724 Fifth Avenue, near 57th Street Through Dec. 23

Charles Burchfield (1893-1967) was a down-home visionary, a painter of the American Scene who saw right through it to the inner life of natural forms and landscapes and even man-made structures. Close in age to Stuart Davis and Norman Rockwell, Burchfield was the temperamental caboose of the Stieglitz circle — younger by a generation than Marin, O’Keeffe and Hartley, but similarly transfixed by nature. The world was for him a pervasively animate place where everything was vibrating with light, energy and even sounds, and all were best captured in the thin, translucent hues and jittery marks of watercolor.

At a moment when painting often lurches toward other disciplines, and bright colors and hallucinatory distortions have a certain cachet among younger painters, Burchfield fits right in. His watercolors are strongly decorative — they might almost be textile designs. (He supported his family of five designing wallpaper in Buffalo.) This exhibition, the most generous offering of Burchfield’s work to be seen in New York in recent memory, follows the circular path of his career, beginning with the ecstatic landscapes he made between 1915 and 1920, through the more dour, realistic images of his Buffalo years, back to the large, trippy watercolors of his last two decades. These were influenced by the innovations of the Abstract Expressionists, which also brought out Stuart Davis’s final greatness. ROBERTA SMITH