

presenter's collection. In addition to the craftsmanship and aesthetic value of woman's handwork, the personal, social, economic and political meanings of these domestically rooted art objects will be discussed.

## **Burchfield-Penney Art Center**

*Nancy Weekly, Burchfield-Penney Art Center, and Ann R. Brown,  
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**Bulger Communication Center East**

### **"The Wallpaper Designs of Charles E. Burchfield"**

American watercolorist Charles E. Burchfield (1893–1967) moved from his native Ohio to Buffalo in 1921 to work for the M. H. Birge and Sons Wallpaper Company as a wallpaper designer. By studying Burchfield's life during this span of time, we can better understand the influence his early paintings had on his wallpaper design work and how his work at Birge influenced his paintings during this eight-year period.

Burchfield attended the Cleveland School of Art. Although he did not take any classes in commercial design, he was quite adept at design work, copying patterns and even designing a series of alphabets. In his journal, he writes: "Design was my especial field in which I excelled." In art school, he devised a method for applying colors to his painting, comprised of twelve colors plus black and white. Burchfield's journals report his attraction to Art Nouveau illustrators and Japanese and Chinese painting styles. Burchfield was unwittingly preparing himself for his first paying job.

The Birge Wallpaper Company in the 1920s was internationally known as a top-of-the-line manufacturer of decorative wallpapers. It employed a small group of designers with backgrounds in photography, painting, or sculpture.

Much of Burchfield's Birge designs can be divided into two categories: those based on his earlier watercolors, and those specifically requested by the firm. In the latter category fall two papers: *Riviera* and *Country Life and the Hunt*, large limited-edition scenics.

During this session, we will show examples of Burchfield's wallpaper designs, his design methods, influences to his designs, and how his work at Birge affected scenes he chose to paint in his off-work hours during this period. In addition, we will discuss recent restoration work to one of his major scenic designs, *County Life and the Hunt*. This restored wallpaper will be on exhibit at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center from April 6 to October 6, 2002.