

FOCUS ON:
Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon (1965)
Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967)





TRANSFORMING A MASTERPIECE INTO A SOCIAL STATEMENT:

Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon is a phenomenally beautiful mystical painting created by Charles E. Burchfield in his later years.

Have you ever gazed at the moon a warm summer's night? Or peered through a gauzy gossamer curtain of dandelion seed heads?

Burchfield did, and in doing so he saw a world that exists just a breath beyond reality. He saw a moon encased in rings, flashing colors of yellows, blues and grays. He saw fragile little seeds breaking away from their flowers, drifting upward, as if each had its own miniature parachute to carry it off to a faraway land. He saw the seeds morph, changing magically into fairies (Or... are those mayflies?) each catching light from that moon.


If we suspend reality, if we enter into this work, we'll find ourselves lying beside Burchfield, seeing the world as he saw it.



AN ARTIST'S INTERPRETATION...

In this work, the artist has recreated the painting *Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon* with a critical difference. Here, instead of seeds becoming fairies and mayflies, it's the seed heads that have changed, morphing into the image of the corona-virus, an image we've grown far too accustomed of seeing in these difficult times.

Can you communicate your own message by recreating a work of art?



HERE IS HOW IT WAS DONE:

A piece was selected.

Much time was spent observing the work of art.



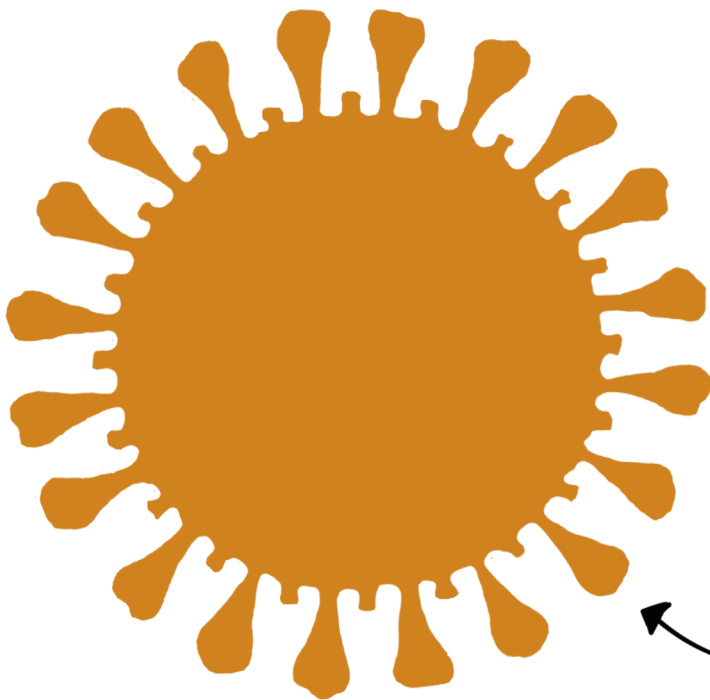
Charles E. Burchfield (1893-1967), *Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon*, (1965); watercolor, gouache, charcoal, and sgraffito on lightly textured white wove paper faced on 1/4-inch-thick laminated gray chalkboard, 56 x 40 inches; Karen and Kevin Kennedy Collection

The basic shapes, the edges of things, were noted

Using tracing paper, the image was drawn, and transferred onto watercolor paper.

(This can be achieved by turning the back of the tracing paper into carbon paper by rubbing its surface with a soft pencil.)

The corona virus makes its way into the work... as it has made its way into our lives.



It's called a coronavirus because **"corona"** means **"crown"** in Latin. And the virus looks like it's wearing a spiky crown.





The shapes were redrawn using watercolor pencils*.

Colors were extended through those shapes with water and a variety brushes.

Once the painting dried a bit, it was layered with additional watercolor washes, creating value gradation... always working light to dark.



* THE MORE YOU KNOW:



* Watercolor pencils are a medium that give the artist the best of both worlds of painting and drawing. They are similar to colored pencils, but behave differently when water is added.

The painting dried further, then additional layers were added

With a small brush, details we brought into focus

A dry brush technique* was used to create textured shadows.



* THE MORE YOU KNOW

Dry brush is a painting technique in which a paint brush that is relatively dry, but still holds paint, is used. The resulting brush strokes have a characteristically scratchy look that lacks the smooth appearance that washes or blended paint commonly have.



The shape and contours of the corona virus fully replaced the dandelion seed heads.



In His Own Words:

Charles E. Burchfield's Writings about Dandelions and about the Moon

Charles E. Burchfield, *Journals*, March 30, 1911

...I imagine all kinds of things. So far these pastimes have taken me everywhere, all over the world...My imagination has carried me to the moon, where I saw strange people; it has enabled me to carry on intimate conversations with animals and flowers, and take deep-sea expeditions as a diver...

Charles Burchfield, *Journals*, May 29, 1916

Today – A Cool windy rainy day – sunlit rainy day – sunlit rainy day sky & meadows chock-full of white dandelion seed heads –

Charles E. Burchfield, *Journals*, May 21, 1945

The full beauty of the dandelion is lost to the majority of people because of its infinite numbers. They like rarity and bow down before some obscure orchid because it may happen to be rare. God's greatest gift to me, is the ability to be astonished anew each year by the almost incredible beauty of a dandelion plant in full bloom. Surely no other plant is so full of the Glory of God, and His creation. Seen singly, or in myriad numbers, it is beyond all comprehension. It is as difficult to take in all the glory of the dandelion, as it is to take in a mountain, or a thunderstorm.

Charles E. Burchfield, *Journals*, Volume 59, May 12, 1958, p. 9.

A little cooler today but out for a little stroll before dinner. All at once the world seems incredibly beautiful. Dandelions have come into their full glory, and wonderful also are the various trees in all stages of coming into leaf – It seemed as if I were once again seeing things in the first time, with a renewed sense of wonder.

WHY DO WE SOMETIMES SEE RINGS AROUND THE MOON?



Remember when we looked at the painting, *Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon*? Now we are going to look at how Charles Burchfield created them.





This ring surrounding the moon is caused by the refraction of moonlight (which is really reflected sunlight) through ice crystals suspended in the upper atmosphere.

Moons in the Museum



We see a rainbow because the moonlight is broken up into colors as its light is refracted at slightly different angles while passing through the clouds surrounding the earth. The clouds that produce this effect are the cirrus clouds. These clouds, so thin that they are often difficult to see, are made of ice crystals.... When the moon's light (or the sun's reflection) passes through their ice crystals, the light rays bend, creating the rainbow colored rings seen around the moon.



Activities!

Make your own Moon:

Materials: Colored Pencils, Circle template (you can use items around your house: mugs, bowls, paper towel rolls, etc.).

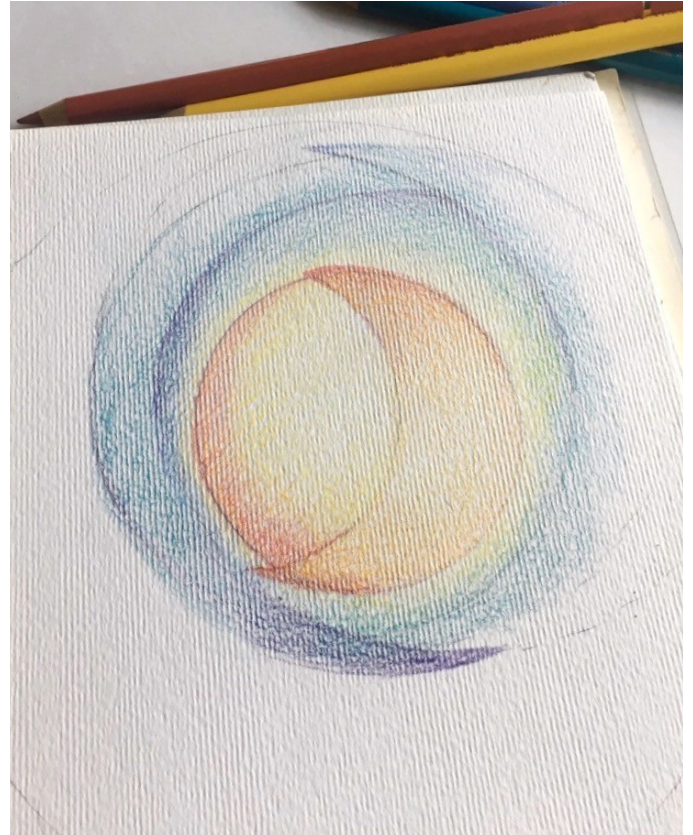
Make your own Dandelion Seed Head Painting:

Colored paper, White & Yellow paint, Scissors, Cardboard roll and a paper plate to mix colors on.

Make your own Moon



Start by using your circle template to trace various sizes on your paper.



Use your colored pencils to color in the different rings around your moon.



Continue to color the rings using different colors or alternate colors.

Make your own Dandelion Seed Heads Painting



Cut multiple slits partially down the side of a cardboard roll. Spread out the cardboard "spokes" creating a paper fringe. Place a dollop of paint onto a paper plate. Dip the fringed end of the cardboard roll into the paint making certain the paint reaches the all the way up to the uncut part.



Once loaded with paint, pounce the cardboard roll onto the colored paper, creating dandelion seed heads shapes. Scatter them across the paper.

Try it on different colored paper!



Once you're satisfied with the results, dip a bit of paper towel in the yellow paint.

Dab the yellow into the center of the seed heads.

BURCHFIELD CONNECTS

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