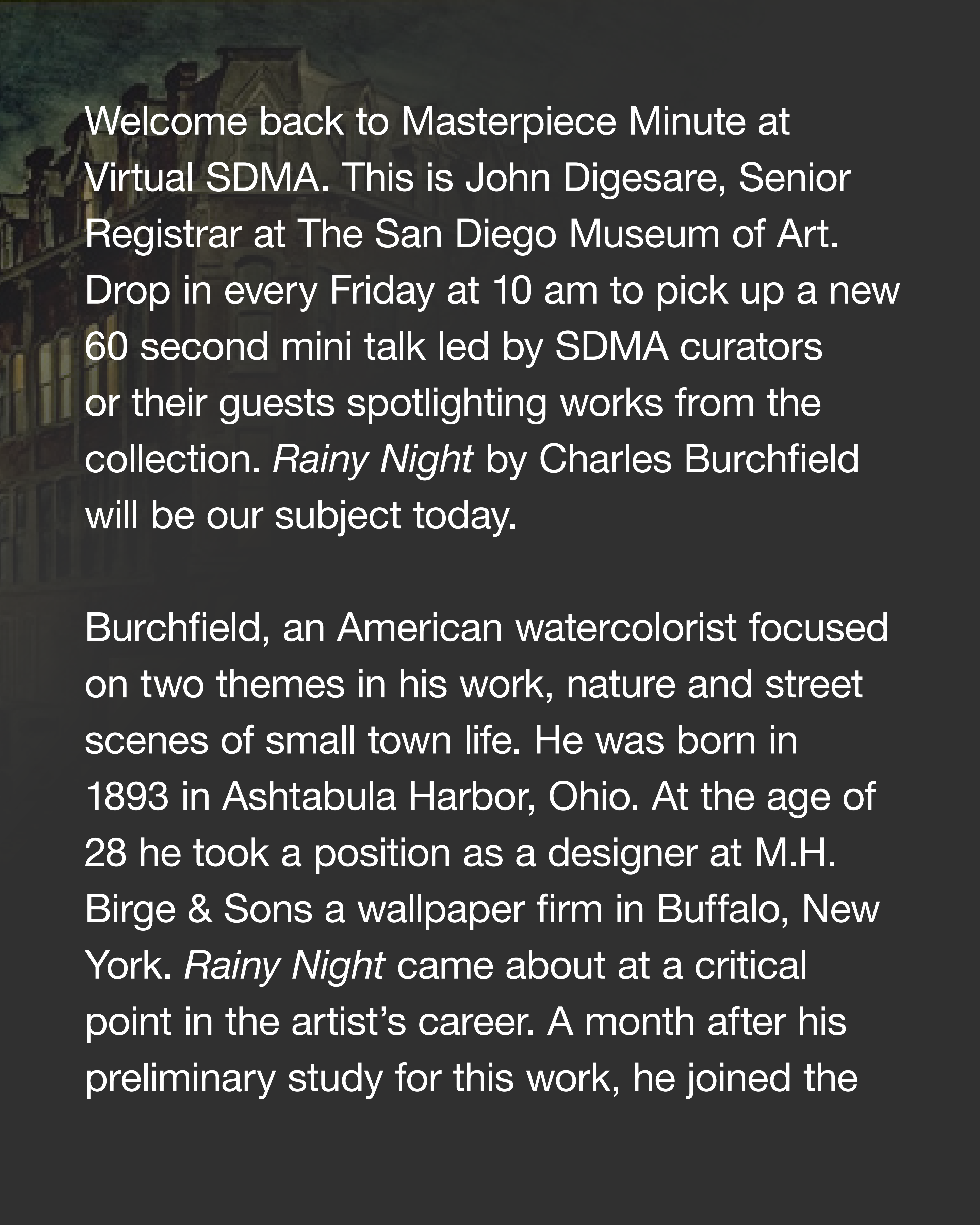




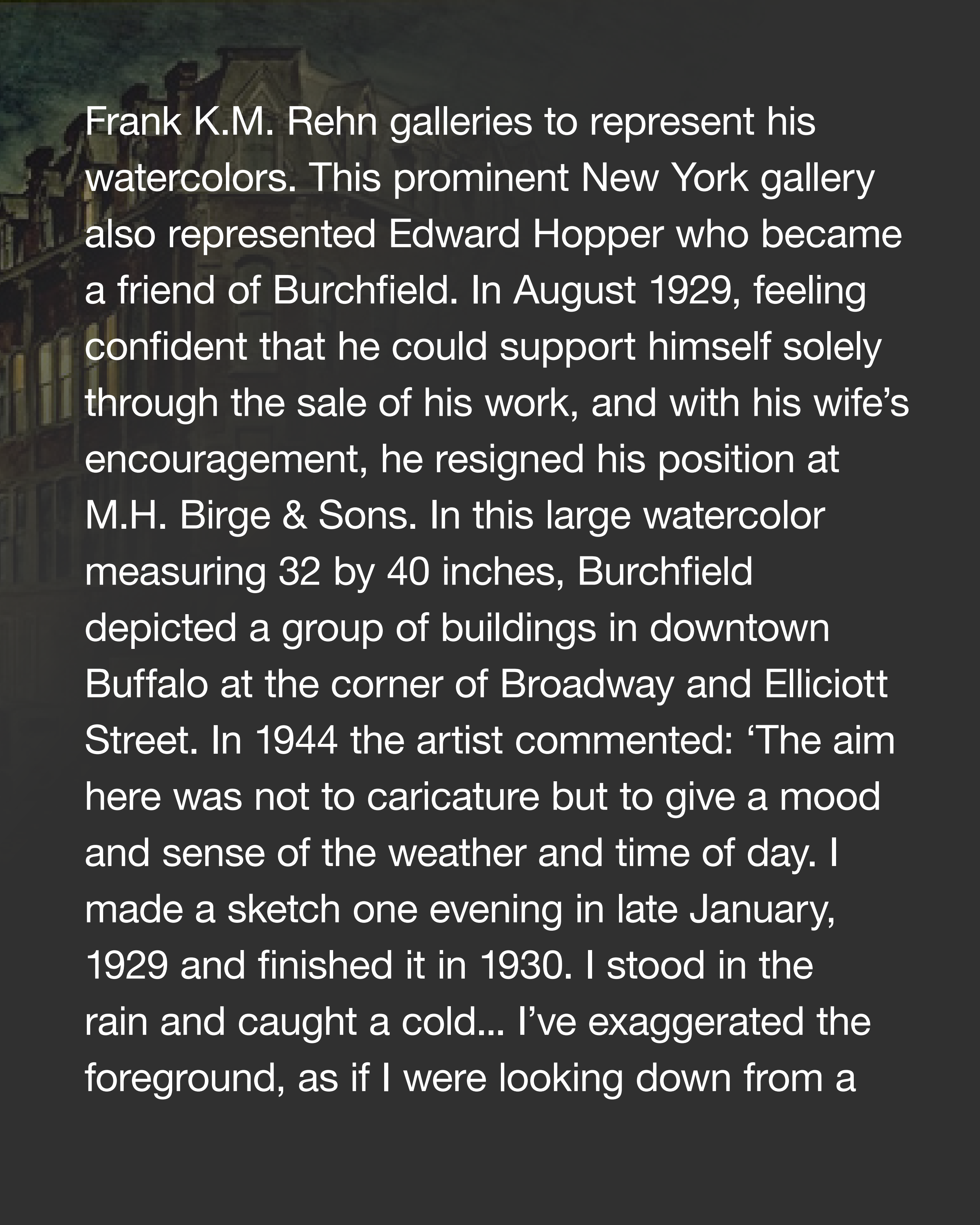
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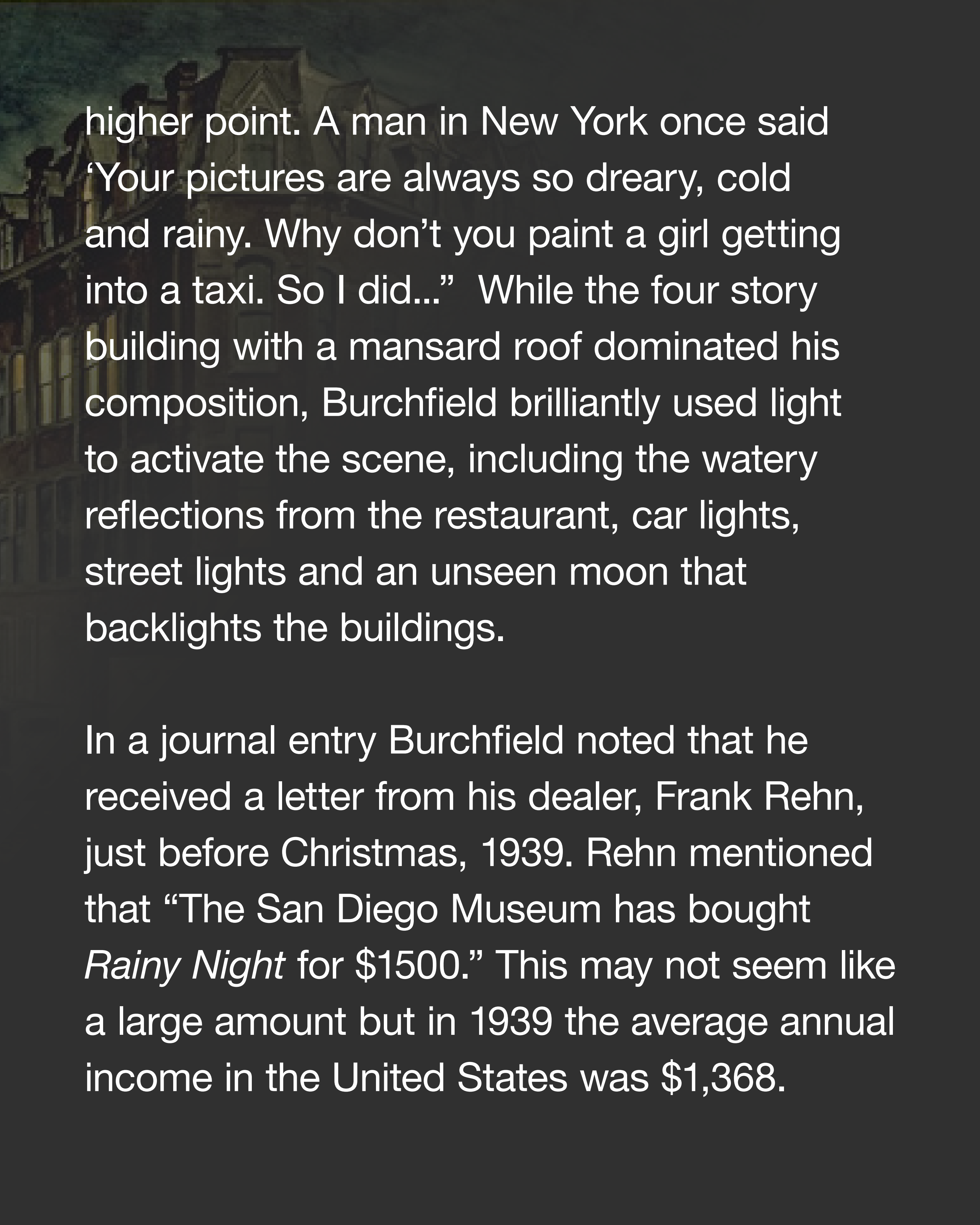


Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute at Virtual SDMA. This is John Digesare, Senior Registrar at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every Friday at 10 am to pick up a new 60 second mini talk led by SDMA curators or their guests spotlighting works from the collection. *Rainy Night* by Charles Burchfield will be our subject today.

Burchfield, an American watercolorist focused on two themes in his work, nature and street scenes of small town life. He was born in 1893 in Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio. At the age of 28 he took a position as a designer at M.H. Birge & Sons a wallpaper firm in Buffalo, New York. *Rainy Night* came about at a critical point in the artist's career. A month after his preliminary study for this work, he joined the



Frank K.M. Rehn galleries to represent his watercolors. This prominent New York gallery also represented Edward Hopper who became a friend of Burchfield. In August 1929, feeling confident that he could support himself solely through the sale of his work, and with his wife's encouragement, he resigned his position at M.H. Birge & Sons. In this large watercolor measuring 32 by 40 inches, Burchfield depicted a group of buildings in downtown Buffalo at the corner of Broadway and Ellicott Street. In 1944 the artist commented: 'The aim here was not to caricature but to give a mood and sense of the weather and time of day. I made a sketch one evening in late January, 1929 and finished it in 1930. I stood in the rain and caught a cold... I've exaggerated the foreground, as if I were looking down from a



higher point. A man in New York once said ‘Your pictures are always so dreary, cold and rainy. Why don’t you paint a girl getting into a taxi. So I did...’ While the four story building with a mansard roof dominated his composition, Burchfield brilliantly used light to activate the scene, including the watery reflections from the restaurant, car lights, street lights and an unseen moon that backlights the buildings.

In a journal entry Burchfield noted that he received a letter from his dealer, Frank Rehn, just before Christmas, 1939. Rehn mentioned that “The San Diego Museum has bought *Rainy Night* for \$1500.” This may not seem like a large amount but in 1939 the average annual income in the United States was \$1,368.

As a final note, Burchfield wrote Reginald Poland, the Museum Director on March 13, 1940 and stated: “I feel it has an excellent home now.”

Thank you for listening, this has been John with Masterpiece Minute, here at Virtual SDMA.

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