

Slow Burn

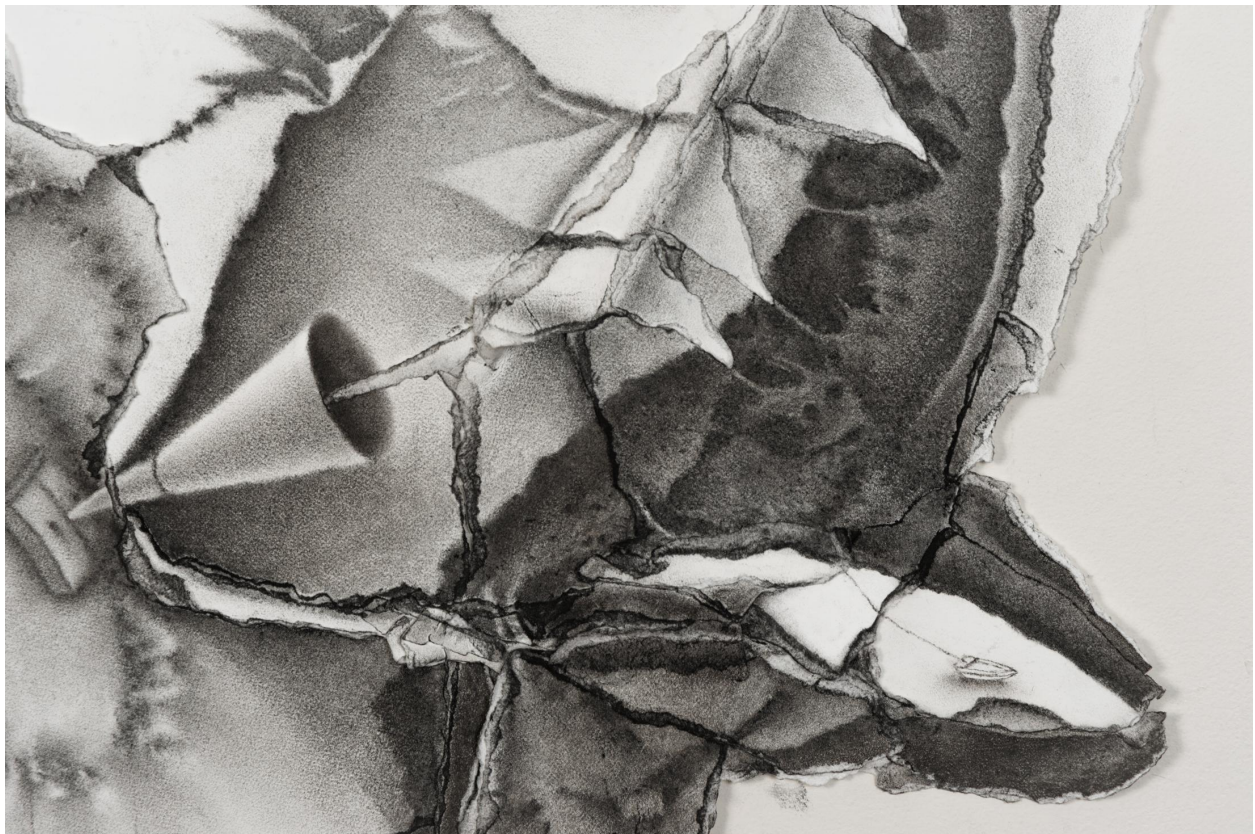
Portent in the Drawings of Charlotte Schulz



Hanging from binder clips on her studio wall, a not-yet-titled drawing by Charlotte Schulz is a harbinger. At the start of this new year, with the promise of a course correction from dark times, the artist's work holds an urgent message.

Schulz draws in miniature scale with sharpened charcoal, rendering overlapping atmospheric landscapes, sometimes populated with just a single animal or tree. She builds out her compositions in an additive way, attaching scraps of paper to expand them from the middle out. The torn paper, when reassembled, provides an undulating and textured base for Schulz to mimic topography with her deft drawing ability. While the ponds, shorelines, and mountain ranges are minutely scaled, the drawings themselves are up to three by four feet so that each one is made of a network of interlocking diminutive vignettes.

In her newest work an old fashioned megaphone appears to extend out from the paper itself. Schulz has drawn it so that the speaking end is poked into the surface ready to amplify the drawing's voice. A ring around the tip looks like scar tissue, as if the megaphone is a painful prosthesis, inserted in vain effort to make the drawing heard. Perhaps at the start of a new year in a world rattled awake, there is an audience ready to listen.



For twenty years, Schulz has knitted together bits of familiar landscapes, but ones salvaged after some cataclysmic event. Pieced and overlapping, the seams where they meet are dark scars. These fragile worlds are born from media images and news stories filtered through her

psyche and imagination--a car trunk packed with explosives, land mines, a whale gone off-course. And in more recent years, her drawings show a warming planet that leaves creatures stranded, rendered helpless, and alone.



None of Schulz's drawings are a quick read. She crafts each piece over a period of months, and exploring one requires us to spend the time to visit it fully. We start by taking in the drawing's shape from some distance away. And from afar, this new drawing looks as if it might have blown

in through the window from the street outside--bent, torn, and blackened but with an overall shape of a diving bird.

The middle distance (an ordinary viewing distance of 4 or 5 feet) is akin to looking at a map with Schulz's drawings. It is a diagram and an invitation to come closer. The deeper experience requires you to be near enough to the paper to be drawing it yourself, like admiring the pages of an illuminated manuscript.

We choose an entry point into the work--the sheep in the center cradled in a sling. It is without legs, soft and powerless. Its artificial support is giving way, as punctures in it leak into the space below. The sun above is veiled by an atmosphere thick with smoke. The detail of the drawing is exquisite, the folds of fabric and grains of falling sand, softly sculpted in monochrome like the drawings of Georges Seurat. Below is a landscape that combines multiple viewpoints. It is at once snow melting to expose bare ground, a floating sheet of ice breaking in two, and a far off mountain range. At the top of the drawing, birds flee from spores (contagion?) being released into the air.

If you turn away and then back to the drawing, what at first looked like a jagged wound is now a bleached coral reef. The drawing has changed, you think. In Schulz's work you cannot see everything at once. Like an Escher drawing, one view can preclude another. This work takes time and in 2021, we should give it.

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All images from the same drawing:

Charlotte Schulz, [title to come], 2021. Charcoal on paper. Courtesy of the artist

<https://www.charlotteschulz.com/>