



**Suburban Journals: The Sketchbooks,
Drawings, and Prints of Charles Ritchie
March 17 to June 26, 2004
Marsh Art Gallery,
University of Richmond Museums**

Rocking Chair, 1983
watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink on Fabriano paper
image: 4 3/8 x 2 3/8", sheet: 4 3/8 x 2 3/8"
collection of the artist, 1983.1.1

On March 17 the Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond Museums, opens *Suburban Journals: The Sketchbooks, Drawings, and Prints of Charles Ritchie*. The exhibition will remain on view through June 26.

Since 1978, contemporary Maryland artist Charles Ritchie (American, born 1954) has filled intimate journals with written notations and watercolor studies exploring subjects drawn primarily from his suburban home. Dating from 1983 to the present, the sketchbooks, drawings, and prints in the exhibition trace Ritchie's creations from journal conceptions as watercolor and pen and ink studies, through independent sheets in various drawing media, to a range of possibilities as prints. The forty-eight works are arranged into three thematic sections: still lifes, landscapes, and self-portraits.

In a recent review in the magazine *Art on Paper*, writer and critic Faye Hirsch observed, "Ritchie's very ordinary suburban house and yard are becoming, in the hands of this artist, a subject as loaded with expressive potential as the most sublime landscape." *Suburban Journals* highlights the process by which the artist translates moments of inspiration into abstracted accumulations of events and experiences from everyday life. For example, the earliest image in the exhibition is a journal study for *Rocking Chair* in black watercolor from 1983. This was the basis for a drawing of

the same year done in watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink. When *Rocking Chair* was translated into a mezzotint print thirteen years later, the artist eliminated almost all detail to accentuate spare, luminous elements isolated against an inky background.

Working primarily in black and white, Ritchie places emphasis on dark and light contrasts. Shadows engulf his compositions, obscuring details and evoking a sense of subtle drama. The artist states, "The pictures begin with the scene but aim to move deeper. Over years of scrutiny, my subjects have accrued greater meaning and mystery for me." In each of the small-scale works, Ritchie invites the viewer to participate in an intimate scene from his environment, and in this exhibition to understand the process from which it results.

Charles Ritchie received his B.F.A. from the University of Georgia, Athens, in 1977, and his M.F.A. from Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh in 1980. His awards include the Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council in 2004, 2002, and 1998, the MacDowell Colony Fellowship in 1999, and the Individual Artist Fellowship from the Arts Council of Montgomery County, Maryland. Ritchie's artwork has been featured in numerous exhibitions, and his work is in many public collections including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums; and the University of Richmond Museums.

Organized and circulated by the University of Richmond Museums, the exhibition was curated by Richard Waller, Executive Director, University Museums, in collaboration with the artist. It is made possible in part with the generous support of the University's Cultural Affairs Committee and funds from the Louis S. Booth Arts Fund. Published by the University of Richmond Museums, an illustrated exhibition catalogue with essays by Marjorie Cohn, Peter Turchi, and the artist is available.

Programming for *Suburban Journals: The Sketchbooks, Drawings, and Prints of Charles Ritchie*:

Wednesday, March 31, 2004, 7-9 p.m.

7 p.m., Lecture, Cousins Studio Theatre, Modlin Center for the Arts

"Private Astronomies," Charles Ritchie, artist

8-9 p.m., Artist's Reception and viewing of the exhibition

Booth Lobby, Marsh Art Gallery, Modlin Center for the Arts

The events are open to the public and free of charge.

<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/cultural/museums/maginfo/ritchie.html>