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## Museum exhibits work of alumnus

By [Johnathan McGinty](#) | July 11, 2005



*Suburban Journals: The Sketchbooks, Drawings, and Prints of Charles Ritchie*, an exhibition that brings home one of the University of Georgia's most innovative artists, will be on view at the Georgia Museum of Art through Aug. 14.

Charles Ritchie, a contemporary Maryland artist, has spent much of the past two decades filling journals with written notations and watercolor studies of subjects he has encountered from his suburban home. The exhibition comprises a collection of his works from journals from 1983 to the present and is divided into three thematic sections—still lifes, landscapes and self-portraits.

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 paintings and prints he derives from his sketches are small, often the size of a postcard. 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 resulting process.

"The pictures begin with the scene but aim to move deeper," Ritchie says. "Over years of scrutiny, my subjects have accrued greater meaning and mystery for me."

One of the most telling examples of this is Ritchie's 1983 work *Rocking Chair*. Originally it began as a journal study in black watercolor, and it became the basis for a drawing done in watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink. It was translated into a mezzotint print more than a decade later, and Ritchie eliminated almost all detail to accentuate space.

Ritchie, who is currently a curator at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., typically observes his subjects in the early morning hours. The dawning of a new day helps illuminate his subjects in a unique and beautiful way.

Ritchie earned his B.F.A. from the University of Georgia in 1977 and immediately embarked on his career as an artist. He earned an M.F.A. from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh in 1980 and is a three-time recipient of the Maryland State Arts Council's Individual Artist Award. Some of his work is now part of the public collections of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; and the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.