

## Art reviews

## New gallery at Villa Julie

By JOHN DORSEY  
SUB ART CRITIC

It's not often that the community gets a handsome new gallery with an ambitious and well-

thought-out schedule of exhibits. So the debut of the new art gallery at Villa Julie College in Stevenson, Baltimore County, gives reason for considerable celebration. And it's off to an auspicious start with

the show "Baltimore Collects: George Ciscle."

The gallery, in the new academic center and theater complex designed by architect Steve Ziger, is a clean, modern, cube-like, 700-square-foot space that serves as a good background for art (though super-large works might look cramped in it).

The exhibitions director, Peter Bruun, is himself a painter and a graduate of the Maryland Institute, College of Art. He wants to

accomplish several things with the gallery: to support the Baltimore arts community, to build a bridge between city artists and the potential county audience, to collaborate with other arts institutions, to make a connection between living artists and the past, and to show important local collections to the public.

The 1997-1998 season he has planned looks as if it aims to do all those things. There will be a one-person show by Baltimore artist Allyn Massey, an installation created especially for the Villa Julie gallery; a novel juried show bringing together the work of three artists selected by the jurors and examples of the jurors' own art; a show of Baltimore scenes by 19th-century artist Alfred Jacob Miller and by two artists working today; and a show of works from the American Visionary Art Museum. Quite a good schedule, that.

There could hardly be a better way to launch the gallery than with a show of works from the collection of George Ciscle. This remarkable local figure is a former art teacher and dealer, a friend of many artists here and elsewhere, the founding director of The Contemporary Museum, and a collector who combines a sure eye with a breadth of sympathy for different kinds of art.

Instead of dictating which works from his collection would be shown, Ciscle, with typical generosity of spirit, encouraged Bruun to curate the exhibit and pick what he liked. The result is a show that combines diversity and unity. The 29 works include paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, collages and ceramics. There are works by present-day

and former local artists, including Keith Martin, Ruth Pettus, Doug Baldwin and Gerald Hawkes. There are works by artists from elsewhere, including Georges Rouault, Alison Saar and Paul Etienne Lincoln. The works date from 1935 to 1996.

But through the show as a whole, one can sense Ciscle's sure judgment as well as certain characteristics that appear to reflect the collector's individual sensibility. There's a sense of solitude in much of the work here — not necessarily loneliness, but aloneness. It's as true of Sally Kearsley's multiple-figure untitled drawing as of her single-figure untitled drawing. And it's as true of Keith Martin's "Chariot," a completely unpeopled painting of a car, as it is of Ruth Pettus' painting "Man in a Raincoat" and of Duane Michaels' "He Closed His Eyes ...," a devastatingly sad photograph and text work about desire and death.

These works also possess a sure sense of craft, combined with a sense of order that makes itself felt through clarity of composition. That sense of order is there in

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**What:** "Baltimore Collects: George Ciscle"

**Where:** Villa Julie Gallery, 1525 Greenspring Valley Road, Stevenson

**When:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays (to 8 p.m. Wednesdays), 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays; through Nov. 14

**Call:** 410-486-7000



Ruth Pettus: "Man in a Raincoat"

Garry Mitchell's untitled abstract painting and in Charles Springman's "Widow's Lips," a photograph of clothes hanging on a line in front of a wall. It's there in Ed Nadeau's "T30 Middle Division," a painting of a deforested hill, as well as in Ione Haney's striking hand-painted photograph, "Brooklyn, Ruby Series."

Ziger has installed the exhibit with sensitivity to the works individually and to the possibility of relationships between them. Bruun has written a perceptive essay for the show and intends to accompany every exhibit with an essay by himself or someone else.

This gallery, in short, doesn't have to learn to walk, or talk, or read, or write, or be polite to its elders. It has sprung to life fully formed and mature.