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### **SELF-TAUGHT ARTIST MR. IMAGINATION EXPLAINS WHAT MAKES BOTTLECAPS ART**

(Mahwah) – Mr. Imagination, who is exhibiting a number of his unusual bottlecap pieces in an exhibit, *Collection Parallax*, at Ramapo College of New Jersey, will give a presentation about his work Wednesday, December 12 at 3 p.m. in the Kresge Gallery on campus. He will be available for photos with visitors on one of the works in the show, a royal throne made of bottlecaps.

The self-taught artist began using bottlecaps in 1988 when Lisa Stone, then director of the Carl Hammer Gallery, gave him barrels of beer bottlecaps. The first object he made was a costume for a Halloween party, winning top prize. Today, bottlecap clothing, sculpture, staffs and the royal throne are just a few of his productions. He continues to also work with discards found on the street, including cement and sandstone.

In 1978, prior to gaining fame for his bottlecap creations, the artist was mugged and shot. He spent months in the hospital in a coma. He measures his life experiences against the benchmark of the mugging. Several years after the shooting, he dubbed himself Mr. Imagination, a name given to him earlier by someone whom he can't remember.

The irony of rescuing and reclaiming what has been overlooked and thrown away is not lost on the artist, an African-American who lives in Bethlehem, PA. Indeed, he relishes the process of resurrection and reempowerment, creating art with the discards of the so-called dominant culture.

Mr. Imagination's artwork can be found in the Smithsonian, the Carl Hammer Galleries, and the House of Blues located in both Chicago and Orlando. He created a

piece for the Coca Cola Olympic Salute to Folk Art at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and was featured in an exhibit at the Terra Museum in 1993.

This program is made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Kresge Gallery is located in the Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts at Ramapo College. For more information, call 201.684.7147.

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