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Contact: Anna Farneski; afarnesk@ramapo.edu

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**MAJOR HAITIAN ART EXHIBITION MYSTICAL IMAGINATION OPENS AT
RAMAPO COLLEGE**

(MAHWAH) – “Mystical Imagination: The Art of Haitian Master Hector Hyppolite” opens in the Pascal Gallery at Ramapo College on Saturday, February 6 and continues through April 21.

The exhibition features 29 paintings by Hector Hyppolite (1894-1948) who is widely considered to be the greatest artist of the period known as the Haitian Renaissance. This traveling exhibition is drawn from the larger 2009 Art Museum of the Americas showing in Washington, D.C., which was organized by the Waterloo Center for the Arts in Iowa. Included at Ramapo are loans from prestigious private collections which are unique to this venue, including many rare pieces borrowed from film director Jonathan Demme.

Hector Hyppolite was by trade a shoemaker, house painter and sometimes voodoo priest. He painted postcards for the American marines visiting Haiti, and his decorative architectural painting brought him to the attention of DeWitt Peters, founder and director of the Centre d’Art in Port-au-Prince.

Using chicken feathers and his own fingers as well as brushes, Hyppolite produced an estimated 200 to 300 paintings during a prolific three-year period up until his death from a heart attack in 1948. His work captured the eyes of Cuban artist Wilfredo Lam and Surrealist poet Andre Breton, who purchased five of his paintings, after which Hyppolite’s work was featured in the 1947 UNESCO international exhibition in Paris. The UNESCO exhibition sparked global interest in Haitian art.

Hyppolite depicted images of everyday life, national history, and politics, Haitian voodoo iconography, and classical Christian imagery. His style embraced a free-form approach for which subject matter held a far greater significance than linear precision. His work is in museum collections including the Smithsonian Institution, the American Folk Art Museum, the Musee d’Art Haitien du College Saint Pierre in Port-au-Prince, and in noted private collections. In 2008 the Government of Haiti issued a decree establishing June 2008 – June 2009 as the year of Hector Hyppolite as a testimony to the impact he has had on the art world.

An opening reception will be held Saturday, February 6, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Additional events and educational programs in the Spring will be announced at a later date. Pascal Gallery Hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 1-5 p.m. and Wednesday from 1-7 p.m. Special hours on Saturday, February 6 only are from 3 – 6:30 p.m.

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. Please note that the gallery will be closed during the College's spring break, from March 14-21.

For more information about the show call Sydney Jenkins, director of Art Galleries, at 201-684-7147.

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