

Ramapo College of New Jersey

Office of Communications and Public Relations

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UNIQUE EXHIBITION OF HAITIAN PAINTINGS FROM JONATHAN DEMME COLLECTION OPENS AT RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

(MAHWAH, NJ) – *A Sense of Place: Cap-Haitien Paintings from the Collection of Jonathan Demme* opens in the Kresge Gallery at Ramapo College of New Jersey on Wednesday, September 17, 2014 and continues through November 21, 2014. An opening reception will be held on Wednesday, September 17 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. with a curators' talk at 6 p.m. All events are free and open to the public.

The exhibition features more than 60 works from the collection of noted film director Jonathan Demme, one of the world's leading collectors of Haitian art. The exhibition breaks new ground by exploring particular styles of art which developed in and around the city of Cap-Haitien in northern Haiti.

Ramapo College is home to the largest concentration of Haitian art collections in any academic institution in the United States with more than 500 works. The late poet and critic Selden Rodman donated the core collection in the early 1980s.

A Sense of Place showcases art from "the Cap-Haitien School" and differs from stereotypical expectations about the look and subject matter of Haitian painting, which often centers on Vodou subjects and symbols. Cap-Haitien artists are more likely to feature other themes including historical and civic events, military scenes and everyday life. Other characteristics may include architecture rendered with traditional perspective and pictorial details demonstrating delicate modeling and coloring skills. The exhibition includes 20 items on display which Demme is donating to Ramapo's permanent collection. *A Sense of Place* is curated by Jose Zelaya, with Jonathan Demme, Sydney Jenkins, director of art galleries at Ramapo, and Wael Qattan.

The legendary Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince opened in 1944. The phenomenal success that followed sparked the establishment of a satellite school in Cap-Haitien. Under the direction of the great master Philome Obin, this new organization in northern Haiti enabled many artists to pursue making and selling art. Many members of the Obin family participated and eventually became known for their own related styles. *A Sense of Place* does not prominently feature Philome Obin but instead highlights his followers and other compelling artists.

"Many of the rare works on view have never been presented in a public venue," said Jenkins. "Due to significant donations to the Rodman Collection in recent years, we have fewer Cap-Haitien works than

one would expect to find in a comprehensive collection. The wonderful pieces donated by Jonathan Demme balance collection gaps and strengthen our ability to serve the public.”

The Art Galleries receive many requests to loan items from its Haitian art collection to museums, universities and institutions worldwide. Additional events and education programs related to *A Sense of Place* will be announced at a later date. A catalogue will be available later in the exhibition as well.

The Kresge Gallery is located in the Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts. Kresge Gallery hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. This program is supported 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.

For more information, contact Sydney Jenkins, director of art galleries, at (201) 684-7147 or sjenkins@ramapo.edu. Visit the galleries online at www.ramapo.edu/berriecenter/art-galleries/.

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Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as sixth in the Best Regional Universities North category for public institutions, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,000 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers seven graduate programs as well as articulated programs with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.