



Slate Gallery

136 Wythe Avenue • Brooklyn, NY 11211 • Tel: 718-387-3921
www.slategallery.com • kim@slategallery.com

NEWS RELEASE

JANUARY 2007

MR. IMAGINATION has New York Debut at Slate Gallery

January 19 - February 18, 2007

Artist will be present on Saturday, January 27, 4-6 pm, with reception from 6-9:30 pm

Mr. Imagination will have his first New York exhibition at Slate Gallery, located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, from January 19, 2007 until February 18, 2007. A reception for the artist will be held on Saturday, January 27, 2007 between 6 and 9:30 PM at the gallery.

Born Gregory Warmack into a large religious family in Chicago in 1948, he began collecting and making art as a child and received his first commissions from his church. Throughout his teens and twenties, Warmack made earrings and decorative pins from old jewelry, carvings from tree bark, canes and hats that he sold on the street and in local restaurants and bars, while supporting his family and self by working odd jobs. The pivotal moment in his life occurred in 1978 when he was mugged and shot at point blank range and left to die on the street. While doctors worked to save his life, Warmack had an out of body experience where he traveled through time and observed ancient civilizations. His near-death experience gave him the vision to dedicate his life to a regenerative art that makes people happy and heals them. Around 1980, he began calling himself Mr. Imagination, or Mr. I, and to cultivate his charismatic and flamboyant artistic persona. He discovered two of his signature mediums – sandstone, an industrial castoff material that was free and easily carved into sculptures, and bottle caps, another throw-away material that he ingeniously transformed into sculpture, clothing, and furniture. In the mid 1980s, he began showing with the Carl Hammer Gallery in Chicago, a leader in outsider art, where he had ten exhibitions over the next decade. By the mid 1990s, Mr. Imagination was showing in galleries and museums around the world, executing important public commissions, and holding community and children's workshops. Around 2002, Mr. Imagination found that the slower pace of small town life was very appealing so he moved to Bethlehem, PA where his work continues to evolve in theme and medium in the form of wire mesh dresses and dolls.

Images of Egyptian kings, African tribal masks and regal thrones in Mr. Imagination's art came to him while in his coma where he saw himself as a king. These favorite subjects are reworked through a variety of medium including discarded paint brushes, brooms, bowling pins, nails, red velvet, paint, wire mesh, plaster of Paris, wood putty, chairs, in addition to sandstone, bottle caps and anything else he finds on the street. A prolifically creative artist, he works intuitively in a painstaking process of nailing and hand sewing his unconventional materials, transforming these ordinary throw-away objects into thrones, staffs, and scepters; clothing and jewelry; portrait heads and fetishes; metal fish, birds, and insects; button trees and flowers, to mesmerizing effect that turns his environment into a magic domain. Mr. Imagination believes that the creative spirit springs from the imagination, a force that lies within everyone if they would just use their imagination.

Mr. Imagination has been featured in numerous museum exhibitions: among them, the 1994 ground-breaking show, *Reclamation and Transformation* at the Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, IL; The Banana Factory, Bethlehem, PA in 2000; *Treasures*, The American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY, 2002; a traveling exhibition organized by The Smithsonian Institute, 2002-03; the Zoeller Arts Center, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, 2004, and the American Visionary Museum, Baltimore, MD, 2007. *Art/Life/Spirit*, a major retrospective of Mr. Imagination's work curated by Professor Norman Girardot, opens on January 13 until March 1, 2007 at the Goggle Works Factory in Reading, PA. Public art commissions include installations at The House of Blues, Chicago, Orlando, Las Vegas and Milwaukee; a LANTA bus station in Bethlehem, PA; the Millennial Folk Arch at Lehigh University; and the Elliot Donnelly Youth Center in Chicago. Mr. Imagination's art is in the collections of the American Visionary Museum in Baltimore, MD; The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; the Museum of American Folk Art, New York, NY and other institutions.