Enrique Chagoya

GEORGE ADAMS

In Enrique Chagoya's dynamic paintings and prints, it's not unusual to find Superman going face-to-face with an Aztec warrior or Elvis meeting the Virgin of Guadalupe. Whether the characters clash or peacefully coexist, they represent some of the forces that inform Chagoya's own cultural identity as a Mexican American. With a satirist's critical eye and a vivid, humorous Pop-art style, the San Francisco–based Chagoya is eager to mix things up in his imaginative scenarios.

Chagoya likens his art making to cannibalism; he ransacks history for material. He works with appropriated images—taken from ancient Mexican manuscripts, 16th-century Flemish engravings, contemporary American comic books—then transfers them to amate, a bark paper associated with Mexican folk art. Onto this he may hand-paint figures and forms. What results is a boisterous mix of Indians and conquistadors, pre-Columbian gods and Catholic saints, American pop-culture icons and international political figures.

In *Dream* (2002), boundaries are variously crossed when a Mexican bandit with a panicked expression on his face appears next to text taken from a book titled *Border Patrol*, and a small black African with a large lip plate looks hungrily at an Old Master rendering of a well-fed Madonna and Child.

For this show, Chagoya took the idea of cannibalism to its Pop-art conclusion while poking fun at the art world's tendency to feed off its own. Deviating from his usual collage method, he assembled a group of what at first appeared to be Campbell's soup cans and arranged them into a pyramid. The signature red-and-white labels, however, have the word Cannibull's printed as the brand name, with assorted flavors that include Curator's Liver, Collector's Broth, and Critic's Tongue. Artist's Brains with Rice is perched at the top of the culinary ensemble, dubiously titled *Enlightened Savage* (2002). —*Katie Clifford*

Enrique Chagoya, *Dream*, 2002, acrylic, water-based oil, and ink on amate on linen, 48" x 48".