ENRIQUE CHAGOYA WHEN PARADISE ARRIVED

NOSE JOB 1987 80 x 80 inches charcoal and pastel on paper

ALTERNATIVE MUSEUM March 11—April 29 1989

ENRIQUE CHAGOYA
WHEN PARADISE ARRIVED

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The Alternative Museum is a non profit museum dedicated to a pluralist approach to the arts and cultural activities of New York on a national and international level. Our primary concern is to present professional exhibitions and performances with socio political content while maintaining the highest standards of aesthetics. Particular emphasis is placed on exhibiting the works of mid career artists. The Museum welcomes participa¬tion in its events from other artists, curators and the community. It is the goal of the Museum to build a true artists museum that is sensitive to both the needs of artists and the public alike.

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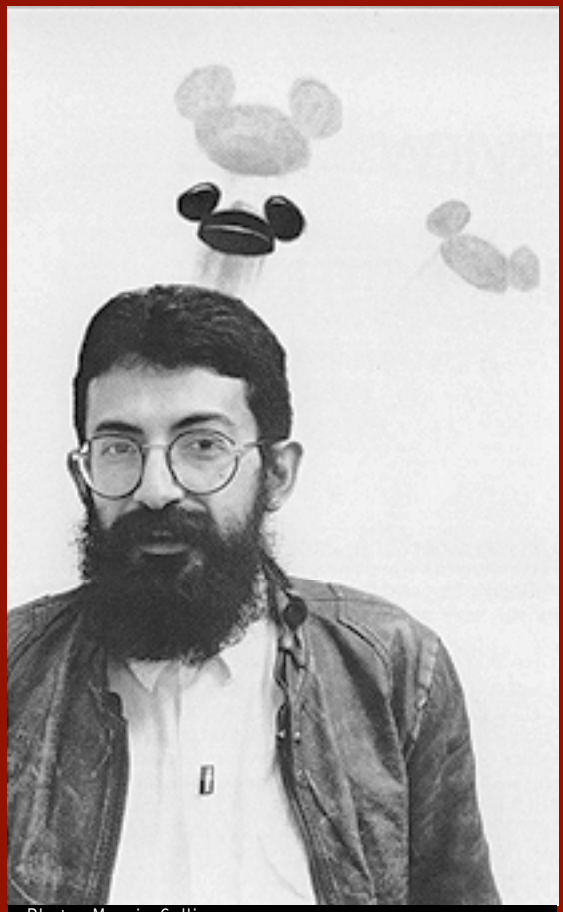

Photo: Marvin Collins

On a wall of his brightly lit studio kitchen, Enrique Chagoya has placed a print of his 1984 "Conversation with Coatlicue." In it, he shows himself in profile—small, seated, bespectacled, bearded, scholarly and attentive—looking up comfortably at the powerful and exuberant figure of Coatlicue who looms above. Skulls and animals—a serpent spitting out a devil, a dog leaping after a frightened bird—spring from her head, mouth and fingertips. Chagoya describes the conversation between himself, a Mexican-born, Oak-land-based, 36-year old artist, and Coatlicue, the pre-Columbian goddess, whose domains include war, death and filth-eating: "We were drinking beer and having a nice chat about how the world was five hundred years ago". Here, and in other works, Chagoya juxtaposes his two worlds. In 1988, in When Paradise Arrived, one of his most poignant cartoons, he placed a child beneath the Mickey Mouse-like hand (holding a small sign that reads "English Only"), which is about to flick her carelessly and literally "out of the picture." Describing the intense stare of this barefooted Indian child, he says: "I wanted to make her eyes like some of the pre-Columbian sculptures where the eyes look off into the distance. They express a deep concentration, a different state of mind."

Amalia Mesa-Bains recently spoke evocatively of a "Theater of Memory" in describing certain early cultural experiences and values from which she drew the substance and form of her art. In Chagoya's "Theater of Memory," the presences arid voices of Coatlicue and Mexican Indian culture collide with those of Franz Kafka, the Czech novelist, and European modernism, and the ruined spaces of Teotihucan blend with those of ancient Egyptian cities. Narratives drawn from Aztec myths are interwoven with Marx's political treatises.

Born in Mexico in 1953, Chagoya grew up in the modern, cosmopolitan

world of Mexico City together with an awareness of ancient Indian belief systems, imagination and history. He credits his Nahuan nurse for his early empathy with the Indian side of Mexican culture. He sees the late 1960s' explosive politics and tensions of Mexico City—that triggered off radical activities among so many young high school and college students, and workers—as the springboard of his later community involvement, first in Mexico and now in San Francisco. At the same time, Chagoya was attracted to the writings of Kafka and Marx, to the art and theories of Kandinsky and the Russian Constructivists, and to the Zurich of Lenin and Tzara, that rare and magical World War I conjunction of art and politics.

Now based in the Bay Area (by choice, he has lived in the United States since 1979), Chagoya draws from his Mexican "Theater of Memory" and from his reactions to contemporary American life and politics to create the images and narratives of his huge black and red cartoon drawings, delicate assemblage boxes and elegantly grotesque Homage to Goya prints. He makes art devotedly and intricately using the time leftover from his work as the Artistic Director of the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco's Latino Mission District.

I visited Chagoya one afternoon this February in his Oakland studio, a space lit by large skylights. On the wall next to a narrow stairway, which traverses the three floors, is most of his Homage to Goya prints mounted in old, cheap, half-painted, scratched and corroded frames. The bookshelves are crowded with writings by Lenin, Castro, Marx and Jung, together with books on Francis Bacon, Andy Warhol, Diego Rivera, Philip Guston, and the Codex Mendoza. Mexican folk art covers the living space walls and floors: masks, sugar skulls, sculptures and paper cut-outs.

Large cartoons, some still unfinished, are pinned on the walls of the ground floor, intermixed with various newspaper cuttings: photographs of Bush and Reagan, and fashion advertisements. Chagoya, wearing a mask to protect him from the spray fumes, is working quickly, alternatively rubbing, sketching, and erasing, on a large charcoal drawing of a Calaveras, the fashionably dressed female skeleton originally created by Posada. Restlessly he changes her brooch back and forth from a tiny "smile" image, to a rose, which he finally colors red-working from a Macy's fashion plate that contained such a "rose brooch." Beside the Calaveras, Chagoya places a small figure as he holds up a book on Posada to help him outline the figure's skullmask.

Nearby is another seven-by-seven foot cartoon, which shows a huge contorted hand grasping a fragile crown of thorns; below is a small bound figure that sits on a stool staring ahead. From a distance, the figure appears to be waiting indifferently, almost politely, for his photograph to be taken. A closer reading reveals his stunned, vacant look. Near the threaten-

ing hand above are markings, as if made by victims on a prison wall who are trying to escape. Whose prison? What crime? Is the tiny crown of thorns a final act of torture, or is it symbolic of some strange bond between the prisoner and his oppressor, a ghastly wedding band?

What are the messages of Chagoya's "political art?" Is it "political art" in the genre of Sue Coe and Leon Golub? Is it more akin to Rivera and Posada? Are his cartoons collectively beginning to form some strange inverse play on the Codex Mendoza (the accounts of contemporary Aztec life and customs which the new Spanish rulers commissioned shortly after the Conquest of Mexico)? When placed next to one another, these large drawings act, as Chagoya has phrased it, as "a huge comic strip that narrates a kind of story." But what story?

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of Chagoya's art is that it works on a twofold level, one almost subliminal and one clearly, albeit sometimes elusively, topical. His choice of forms and images—his Mickey Mouses and Calaveras—conjure up the recurring subject of colonialism and oppression of cultures as well as people. The current one-person exhibition at the Alternative Museum also reminds the viewer, metaphorically but pungently, of the immediate world outside the museum walls, the America of 1989 in the first few months of the new Bush administration with its continuation of the attitudes and policies of Reagan years.

Moira Roth

January 22, 1989, Oakland, California

MOIRA ROTH: Can we begin talking about two works from 1984—your collage "Van Gogh's Ear" and the print "Conversation with Coatlicue"—in terms of how you work and your sources?

ENRIQUE CHAGOYA: The title for "Van Gogh's Ear" came out of nowhere. Originally, I had a drawing that I was not happy with, so I glued another piece of paper on top, and then made cuts through it to form dotted lines embossed from the drawing underneath. At that time, I was playing with collage so I stuck on a picture of the "Queen from England"—I didn't really know who she was—and put a Mexican mask on top of her with a snake coming out of the mask. Then the ear. I used the idea of the ear alone in some of my earlier drawings where I put parts of the human body floating around rooms. In this drawing, the ear came out jumping. Didn't know what to name it so I thought of Van Gogh. That was the way I often used to work, and I really had fun. From that period of time, 1981-1984, while I was studying at the San Francisco Art Institute, I developed a lot of new playful ways of approaching art.

I also did "Conversation with Coatlicue" at the same time. She is a pre-Columbian goddess whom I was reading about in some books by the Mexican anthropologist Miguel Leon Portilla—incredible descriptions of this goddess of everything: the earth, war, love, the monster of the night, a flying obsidian butterfly that shredded people at night. She's the one who forgives your sins. When you talk to her, she eats your sins, and that's why she is called the "filth eater," "the trash eater." There is a representation of her in our anthropology museum, and it's one of the biggest sculptures in the entire museum. So in my print, I just developed a picture of this character with a feather snake on top of her head.

MR: Talking to you?

EC: Yes, the print includes a profile of myself. So we were drinking beer and having a nice chat about how the world was five hundred years ago. Somehow we were on the ceiling of the room rather than on the floor, so there are a couple of chairs and the door being opened up there. That's why I sometimes hang the print upside down.

Here is another work from that time, my first box, "La Paz." (1983).

MR: The boxes always have glass over them?

EC: Right, all of them. This one is made of two ceramic pieces. On the loft hand side, there's a square with the shape of a bone that I found on a beach in Mexico. This came out of a magical experience that I had in La Paz, Mexico in the desert in 1982 with a couple of friends of mine. We had seen a strange light in the sky late at night. A very straight, thin line of light among the stars suddenly appeared and began to open itself as a cone shape and

started to move very slowly. Then it stopped and got bigger and bigger. The bigger it got, the more translucent it became until it was very hard to see. The whole phenomenon lasted between three and five minutes. We didn't know what it was. It was like a science fiction image.

That night we went home and when I went to bed, I began to hallucinate. When I closed my eyes I began to see a little cow walking among the cacti. She had a woman's face and transparent horns and white feathers all over her body and pink chicken feet. She was beautiful. She was smelling the grass among the cacti and just going around the desert. I closed my eyes and looked at the image as if I were changing channels on TV, and then I opened my eyes and it was in the room with the same clarity as with my eyes closed. It was an incredible experience and it stuck in my mind for months. This box was the first attempt to try to recall that experience. I put elements of the desert in it dry bones I had found in the desert, horns made of clay, and I put some silica sand in the box.

Right after that I began to do other boxes, cigar boxes with political connotatations—for instance, a triptych entitled "South Africa." It was included in a 1985 show, "Art Against Apartheid," that I had helped organize at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Mission Cultural Center. At that time there were a lot of riots in South Africa, which we heard about. For the first time in years the news spread out even through the regular media. I was very upset at those happenings and I related it to the racism in this country as well. I didn't see them as separate issues.

MR: So the imagery here refers to South Africa. In one of the boxes, you have put a miniature tennis racket and a Coca-Cola bottle, and then on the back of the box is what looks like rubbings of three figures.

EC: Right. Actually, it's a photograph in the background. The circles are surrounding the signs. On one side it says, "Non-whites Only" and on the other side "Whites Only." There are two black people going downstairs and one white person on the other side of the same building. I used the words from the top of the cigar box "White Owl" and altered the tiny letters so it read, "Whites Only."

MR: Concealed on the back of the box is a photograph with the caption, "White students and black workers demonstration, Johannesburg, 17th June, 1976", and real barbed wire above. You often put imagery on the back of these boxes. Why?

EC: It is hidden away from the viewer when attached to the wall, but if you could put it on a pedestal, you'd be able to see it. The idea of hiding things in my boxes comes from pre-Hispanic sculpture where things were hidden behind the sculpture or on the base—incredible carvings, especially in Aztec sculptures. I happened to discover that one day when I was walking among the ruins of the main temple in Mexico City which had been recently

uncovered a few years before. From that experience I developed a lot of ideas about how to make other boxes, like this one. For instance, this 1987 diptych called "Monument to the Missing Gods," which consists of two boxes—one of pre-Columbian ruins and the other with miniature CocaCola bottles—has some hidden parts including the painting on the back. In the pre-Columbian box, there is a mini-fresco painted inside the box, which I copied from a reproduction in a book on Mayan art. And then I put lots of dirt inside and scratched it, put it in water and then placed it under the sunlight to fade. And it turned out like that. So from outside the box, it looks actually filthy. It also has a piece of glass on the front on which I painted the symbol of time on the right hand corner.

MR: Can we go back to your earlier studies in Mexico? You said that you preferred economics for the most part to art?

EC: Yes. I had briefly gone to some art schools in Mexico, but they were very structured, so I quit. Then I went on to study economics and I liked that a lot better. I even worked in rural development programs in the countryside. I lived for about two years in Vera Cruz. When I moved to this country finally in 1976, I wanted to finish my studies in political economy but I didn't like the programs here. They seemed very much oriented toward training for a big corporation. This didn't excite me so I looked for an art school instead. I'd been painting all my life. Even when I was studying economics, I shared a studio space with a friend of mine. We painted non-figurative painting based on Russian Constructivist theories and some of Kandinsky's. We were discovering all of that material.

MB: From books or actual art?

EC: There were some exhibitions in Mexico City, but mainly we were reading a lot. And just reading from the books made us think of a lot of ideas and, in away, perhaps it was better not to see any pictures. We were fascinated by the idea of integrating painting, sculpture and architecture in a single structure, as they wrote about in the Constructivist manifestos. We also read a lot of Tristan Tzara from the time he was in Switzerland with Lenin who was a refugee there in World War I There were some stories about them playing chess together. These times were very romantic in a way.

MR: The magic conjunction of art and politics?

EC: Right. I was doing that reading during the time I was going to the art school in Mexico, and I guess that's why I was so disappointed with the schools in Mexico, because they were just figure oriented. In Mexico there's a strong tradition in figurative imagery. There's nothing wrong with that, but at the time it just didn't fit with the things I was excited about. So, when I finally came to the Art Institute, it was wonderful because it opened doors to do

anything and I already had a lot of projects in mind.

MB: When you were looking at the ideas of Kandinsky and the Constructivists in the 1970s, were you also interested in Mexican history and mythology rather than its actual art?

EC: Both. I began to look at pre-Columbian times as being very much integrated in the same manner that the Constructivists had described ancient Egyptian cities. There they had painting, sculpture, religion, philosophy and everything integrated into their buildings and cities. The same with the Nahuas. But the Mayans were doing that as well and the ancient Olmecs, too. There was great integration with the universe because their cities were oriented toward the same direction as the Milky Way or the direction of the sun going from one side to another. To me, all of that created an idea of integration not only with the arts but also society—the human beings with the universe, and the surroundings with nature, with everything. What the Constructivists were talking about in a way was going in the future toward a similar place, and to me that has been one of the most fascinating ideas yet to be executed.

MB: What sort of background did you have as a child in terms of Mexican culture and history?

EC: Well, my parents took us all the time to the museums, the anthropology museum and to visit many ruins like Teotihuacan. We used to go once a month to Teotihuacan and play there on the outside of the pyramids with my cousins and everybody. Those ruins are very close to me. They really remind me of my childhood and my family.

Also, when I was in primary school, they made us study a lot of Mexican histotry. We used the official books on history, the ones the government printed, but they were very liberal and progressive at the time and still are. They were accurate about the perspective of our history—that is, the point of view of the Indians being integrated into the history books. So it is history seen through the eyes of the people who lost the battles more than of the people who won the wars.

MR. Scrupulous history?

EC: Yes. Through my childhood, I was exposed to different things. Not just Mexican culture but also Mickey Mouse and Coca-Cola bottles. I remember collect ing miniature bottles from the trucks that used to go around the grocery stores. They usually would trade with you.

MB: Looking again at your "Monument to the Missing Gods," it must have reminded you of this because one box contains miniature Coca-Cola bottles.

EC: They usually traded with you for the tin caps from the bottles, half a peso for one miniature bottle. Time passed and I never saw those little bottles again. They just had disappeared, but a few years ago I found some in a flea market in Mexico

City so I decided to make a box. I had already made the first box with the pre-Columbian references in "Monument to the Missing Gods" and I felt that a box of miniature Coke bottles would form a nice contrast.

MR: What about the symbolism of the two colors in this diptych, the black and the red?

EC: The black and the red are the two pre-Columbian colors that were used in the books and they represent knowledge. The ancient books were written in black and red. And there are mythological stories for instance, the story of the discovery of corn by Quetzalcoatl. One day the god saw a black ant carrying a grain of corn so he turned into a red ant and asked the black ant where she got the piece of corn. The black ant told him from the Mountain of the Sacred Meal. Then Quetzalcoatl made rain to strike that mountain until it overflowed and exploded, and the corn scattered to all directions of the earth. That story involves those two colors, and it's just one example of many other situations in which red and black were represented as symbols of knowledge. I decided to use it in the background of my box, and now, of course, I use red and black as the colors of my large cartoon drawings.

MR: It must have been curious for you to come across black and red as such significant colors in the Constructivist palette.

EC: Oh, that's true. But also those were the colors of a lot of political groups in Europe, the anarchists, for example, and in Mexico they are the colors for the strikers. The Sandinistas are using them today too. So that reference here could relate to Central America in a way also. By the way, "Monument to the Missing Gods" was first shown at the Day of the Dead show at Galeria de la Raza.

MR: Then there is also your Catholic background—family and schooling—that seems to produce some of the imagery of your other boxes. Were your parents ardently Catholic ?

EC: Both grandmothers were, but my parents less so. To me it was very boring going to church. The only thing I liked was the feeling of the space, the huge ceilings in some of the churches, and they were heavily decorated. Sometimes I imagined things happening. Things flying from one place to another in the church like some of the saints flying from one side to another as in the circus. That aspect of Catholic churches really stimulated my imagination. But Catholicism certainly works its way into my thinking. For instance, in this piece called "Retablo."

MR: This is a two-part painting with a dark figure to the right in a turquoise background and a red square on the left framed by...?

EC: It's a tin frame found in the dumpster that a friend of mine gave to me. I was drawing one of the religious saints I have at home (I collect such old saint statues) and this is one of my favorite ones. It's actually the bust of the Virgin but it looks something between a woman and a man. In Mexico, people who are bisexual are

called" Bicicletas," which means bicycles. So this to me is Santa Bicicleta. No offense to bisexual people among whom are some of my best friends. The name just sounded very, funny to me.

MR: And that curious, white, halo-like effect on top of her/him?

EC: Well, that came afterwards because I was thinking she looked too serious; so I made the outlines of a Mickey Mouse hat glowing in the dark.

Santa Bicicleta appears again in the 1988 installation of my eight-foot tall Day of the Dead altar that I made at the San Francisco Art Institute. She is right there in the middle of this fire-clay missile in a box with a glass covering the sculpture. On top of the box, and scattered around on the floor, are the traditional Day of the Dead marigold flowers. And on top of the whole thing, there is a Mickey Mouse hat again. Unfortunately the gallery didn't have the time to install a black light because the hat should have glowed as if radioactive. The piece was like a nuclear missile altar with Mickey Mouse on top.

MR: Could you now talk about the two series that began around the same time as these early boxes—the "Homage to Goya" prints and your large charcoal seven-by-seven foot cartoon drawings—both of which will be in the Alternative Museum exhibition.

EC: In 1983 I made the first Goya print, Against the Common Good (the Spanish, *Contra el bien general* is the original title that Goya gave to the print). I already vaguely had this idea of making Reagan one of Goya's demons before I took a history of printmaking class at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum in the Achenbach print collection with its curator, Robert Johnson. In that class Johnson showed us masses of prints from many ages. They passed through our hands, and that was an incredible experience. It was the first time I saw Goya prints. Then I made the connection between my trying to make Reagan as a Goya demon and actually doing a print that would look like Goya's print with Reagan as the central character. It was a very exciting feeling when I thought of that.

I did the print as my final project for that class because the teacher had told us that we should either write a paper or make a print related to what we saw. So I made this one and, by the way, I signed my name Enrique Cha Goya to make a pun on Goya's last name. I took it to the last day of class and Johnson laughed a great deal. He bought two pieces, one for himself and one for the collection.

MR: And the red stamp?

EC: The red stamp is something I designed and it's a sign of an insult in Mexico. It is the equivalent of "ass" in English, but in Spanish we use the sign of the ox, for someone who is very rude or stupid or a combination of both. When you're driving in the street and you make a mistake, sometimes they don't even use

their horn; they just put up their hands and go like this [gestures] to mean you're stupid as an ox. And so I used that symbol in the center of the stamp and put a sign around it that says, "Museum of Absurd Antiques." I made the stamp because I learned that in the Prado, the Franco government had put the government stamp on Goya's prints, and I felt that was such an insult to Goya's integrity because he would have been so opposed to Frarico, who was a fascist. And I looked for a frame that was sort of tacky to put around the print. It was the first piece that I did that followed an idea so tightly in that way.

MR: You mean everything? Not only the Goya style and the Reagan demon but then the official stamp and the play in your signature at the end?

EC: That was a final pun actually. I thought of it as I was signing it so I just did it.

MR: And you also studied the technical side of the Goyas closely—size, technique and all?

EC: Yes. I measured them at the Legion of Honor, and took notes on how long should I leave them in the acid for the thickness of the line and things like that.

MR: How large was your edition?

EC: I did forty prints of each. I have now run out of this one. This first one was done in 1983, and then I let the project rest for a few years, but it really stuck in my mind. It was one of my favorite pieces. Then in 1986, I decided to do a few more. In 19871 actually ended up doing eight more of this "Homage to Goya" series—for instance, this one of the Pope on a tightrope entitled "Look the Rope is Breaking."

MR: Does that come from "The Disasters of War" rather than Goya's Proverbs ?

EC: Yes. It looks somewhat like an image from the other series but all my *Homage* prints are variations on "The Disasters of War."

In Look the Rope is Breaking, I show the Pope trying to be good with everybody, with God and the Devil. In the original Goya version of *Strange Devotion*, the donkey was carrying a body in a coffin instead of here where I have a safebox. And I then took the next one in the series, whose title, This is Not Less Curious (in Spanish, *Esta no lo es menos*) is a continuation of the previous one. It's about another kind of devotion—the Goya print shows people saving saints from the destruction of war, but I changed that. I used Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a new icon that they are carrying. I decided to put the painting upside down because I wanted to show that they don't care much about the picture but just about its value. Then there's Troupe of Charlatans. In the original print of Goya there was a priest with a parrot head and it was a charlatan addressing the crowd and he had a parrot on the top corner. In my print, the image is about the media and how things are distorted in the media. Then I did Consequences (*Las Resultas*) where vulture bats are attacking corpses.

In my print, there is a space shuttle and these bats are coming out of it.

MR: And how did you show the prints and how did you select the Goya images?

EC: I just showed them all together in tacky frames and put dirt on the frames and roughed them up a little.

I tried to pick the Goya images that would give me room for something funny. There were some that were so raw, that had such incredibly strong images, and I liked those a lot, too. But I wanted to do something funny at the same time, and some of those Goya prints, for instance, when they are castrating a person or when there are figures of people who are headless, or the head is hanging from a tree. I found them a little more difficult to make ajoke about. Though I still think I could use them, I might use one of the heaviest pictures of those. Right now, I have an idea for that and I might develop it as soon as I have time to get into my etchings again. There's a picture of trees and on the trees there are pieces of the human body—arms, legs, a head. And I think I'm going to put a little Mickey Mouse wandering around the pictures, and that's it.

And then in my "Homage to Goya" there is this invention of my own, Goya Meets Posada, a scene of Goya and Posada meeting each other for the first time.

MR: Isn't there a Diego Rivera painting of him - self, Posada and Posada's calavera creation, the fashionable skeletal lady?

EC: Yes, there is one with them altogether on a Sunday in the Alameda Park with Jose Marti in the background—a lot of heroes, and Frida Kahlo is there, too. So, I just borrowed this and put Posada with Catrina introducing him to Goya, and the bull "rain" that comes out of a Goya print, *Fools Folly*.

MR: What's that curious skating figure on the right?

EC: Oh, that's a self-portrait with a Nahua mask so you won't see my face. I'm hidden as a child on roller skates because I used to roller skate a lot. So, I felt like putting in a miniature character there that could be almost like a midget, but he actually has perfect proportions. And the shadow behind is a mistake I made. It was a little too big, and I decided to make it a little smaller. But I left the mistake—I liked it as an afterimage. I wanted to put a tiny little bull on the floor but it looked a little too bloody, so I didn't.

MR: Can we now talk about the large charcoal cartoons?

EC: They began with my involvement in the 1984 San Francisco exhibitions for the nationally organized Artist's Call against U.S. Intervention in Central America. I had already wanted to do an exhibition before that that would address what was happening in Central America as I, like so many people, was very upset about it. Because I used to do a lot of political cartoons in the 1970s in Mexico for union

newsletters, I decided I wanted to make a cartoon. I felt that the regular cartoon scale would get lost in a gallery space so I decided to make a giant cartoon of Reagan.

I showed Reagan as Mickey Mouse painting graffiti that read "Ruskies and Cubans out of Central America." He was painting with red paint from a bucket, but when you looked closely, you discovered that in the paint bucket was afoot coming out, so he was really painting with blood. I put more red paint dripping on the gallery floor itself. And then I put a small Mickey Mouse on the left lower corner. I usually do that: a big figure on the right hand side and a small figure on the left. On the left is this small Mickey Mouse of Kissinger and he was painting, "By the way, keep art out of politics." He has a tiny little bucket and there's a finger coming out of the bucket; it is also dripping. And I painted on the walls of the gallery too.

And blood was coming out of the drawing into a little bucket that I found in the market. So it was a funny but really very scary Mickey Mouse.

Afterwards I felt that it was very effective to use the good face" of the system like Mickey Mouse, something that represents corporate culture, the industry that sells Mickey Mouse all over the world and that sells it as a nice face, a nice character. For Latin America or the other non-industrialized countries, it represents cultural imposition in many ways. I grew up with Mickey Mouse myself and went to see all the Disney movies. Somehow it created an impact on me, too. So I wanted to show characters like Reagan, not as the evil monsters as they are usually portrayed in political caricatures. I wanted to make Reagan nice looking, sort of cute, not with a lot of sharp teeth. And it worked. I felt great because actually reality is very much that way.

You usually see all these super-sharp dressed up people in the financial district in downtown San Francisco or in New York City, looking like nothing could be perfect enough for them. They look like very decent people, well educated and polite, and yet many of them are probably investing in or working for companies that invest in South Africa, that help the governments of South Africa or Chile, that hold up the regimes there. So many of these people couldn't care less; they are just making money, and whatever the profits are, they will go there no matter if it's hell. To me, that's the "nice" face of something that is actually socially destructive. I'm using that kind of imagery to represent that side of all society.

After this I did a second drawing, The Sorcerer's Apprentice Strikes Again. It's a picture of Reagan with a missile and the missile is going out of control.

Following these two drawings I created other images including 4-U-2-C. This emerged as an enlarged drawing of a skeleton I had in one of my boxes and thought of as something sort of funny but scary. It was two images of power looking

at a nuclear disaster and also being destroyed by the accident. But I didn't want to use the image of a nuclear "mushroom cloud" so instead I used arrows in opposite directions as if they were indicating a short circuit. At the end, the drawing is not necessarily about a nuclear disaster; it could be any kind of holocaust created by a 'mistake" of a powerful character unaware of the consequences of his/her politics, so they also become victims of their actions. Although there is a cowboy's hat often associated with Reagan—this image is not necessarily about him.

Here is another cartoon, La-K-La-K (1986) is almost the complementary of "4-U-2-C." The title means the female skeleton or the "she-skeleton. It originated with the idea of Coatlicue, the pre-Columbian goddess, and a little bit of the Posada calavera character, and a pre-Columbian mask inthe front. She's painting with a companion, who is Mickey Mouse or someone wearing a Mickey Mouse mask. I needed something small on the left corner to play a contrast to her, so I did that other figure. So I work pretty much out of just visualizing different things. This was the first piece that I did that didn't quite have direct political references. And as I said earlier, I'm pretty anarchistic in terms of where I'm going..

MR: Isn't that less true of the origins of "Slippery When Wet" (1986)?

ER: Not really. Slippery When Wet shows shoes slipping on blood. So it could be politicians who are committing apolitical crime. It could be an agent. It could be anybody who's involved in a political crime, or it could be a diplomat or congressperson who votes for war. It could be many things. I don't really want to narrow the meaning of it but, right, I did do this drawing after the killing of Olaf Palmer, the Swedish Prime Minister, and I used the way the crime was committed. Nobody knew who killed him specifically. It was so secretive. It made me think about how fragile anybody's life is, no matter who you are. But it's not really Olaf Palmer's shoes and it's not Reagan's shoes. It could be a Kafkaesque reference. I don't have any specific meaning for that shoe. It could be anyone's shoes. The actual shoe image comes out of my collecting miniatures. I have miniature shoes that I really liked, and I had always kept in my mind that I had to make a drawing of them sometime. So I stored that in my mind for months, until it came to this point of hearing about the killing of Olaf Palmer. The more I thought about how people were running in the snow after killing him, it became more relevent. I had these scenes in my head , these scenes of somebody dead on the snow in the streets or maybe it wasn't the real scene because I never saw a picture of the murder. It's something that pulled at my imagination—how they killed him. I was thinking that someone was just running, maybe somebody had stepped on his blood and it could be very slippery. So I had this idea of a shoe that was sudden-

ly slipping on blood. Then I thought what kind of shoe and then I thought, that's my miniature shoe. Then I just enlarged, it by copying it. Finally, I glued the actual shoe onto one side of the drawing and itworked really nicely as an echo. It's a tiny little shoe against a huge drawing.

MR: Rather like that tiny little bucket that collect - ed the blood in that first piece?

EC: Exactly. And in the other drawings, too, they all have real live objects. For example, in Paradise Arrived, I put a Mexican lottery card that has a heart crossed by an arrow. That was outside of the drawing. Every drawing has an object that goes outside as an afterthought or an echo of the picture. And I usually paint something on the gallery walls—the other half of the shoe, for example, the footprint

MR: What is the story of the 1988 "When Paradise Arrived?" By the way, do you usually have that black framing line on either side?

EC: Yes, that's where I put the titles. These are seven-by-s even foot drawings. Everything is drawn in black charcoal and a little bit of pastel for the red.

When Paradise Arrived refers to the fact that we Mexicans originally didn't arrive in this country; rather it was really the other way around—this country came to us. And suddenly, while you are in your house, it's not yours any longer, and you find yourself an intruder in your neighbor's house. So in this drawing, there is this huge hand of a cartoon character. It could be any cartoon character, but let's say it's Mickey Mouse's hand, and it is about to flick this little girl, who is levitating a heart between her hands. In very tiny letters in the finger that is about to flick her, it says "English Only." The girl has an Indian face and she's barefoot, and I wanted to make her eyes like some of the pre-Columbian sculptures where the eyes look off into the distance. They express a deep concentration, a different state of mind. I've seen eyes like that in religious paintings made by the Indians in Mexico. A lot of the cherubs in the churches have eyes like that—they look as if they took peyote or something, and they are looking at the horizon in ecstasy.

Here's another big cartoon, Old Toy (1986). It's a space shuttle being thrown by a hand, another powerful hand that is just playing with a new toy. But it's actually an old war game, and that's why I put in the space shuttle. This was made after thinking about that space shuttle tragedy of the year before, and how the government capitalizes on such things in order to gain consensus and to keep the military projects going in space. It was a very, very manipulative campaign, playing with the feelings of the people, for example, like the teacher who got killed. The politicians play games all the time, just like the 49ers. War games are as irrational as toy games.

MR: What object did you have outside this one?

EC: That's a fly, a plastic fly. And here is a painted fly that is crossing the whole drawing in a straight red line.

MR: Like a catapult?

EC: Right. Like a bullet fly. I used it to show that sometimes flies fly a lot better than space shuttles especially when space shuttles collapse. So I just made that as a sort of funny element to contrast to the more dramatic part of the accident.

MR: Ideally these drawings would be next to one another so that they'd give the sense of a cartoon narrative.

EC: Yes, like a giant comic strip. When they are seen together in a gallery, all the squares are the same size, seven-by-seven foot, one right next to the other. They work like a huge comic strip that narrates a kind of a story. I don't want to be pretentious about these drawings,though, so I look for the cheapest materials I can find, like the paper and charcoal. I didn't want to make an oil painting.

MR: Yet people bought these?

EC: Yes. Unfortunately!

MR: The work that you thought wouldn't sell. When did you start selling things.

EC: Last year.

MR: So it suddenly happened. How does it feel?

EC: It's something that I didn't expect. Paule Anglim called me and invited me to show in her San Francisco gallery. Paule is a special person, partly because she has a Masters in sociology and being from the French part of Canada also makes a difference. She's very sensitive to social issues. She showed Sue Coe, and when Coe was out here she saw my work at the Berkeley Art Center and I met her. We talked to each other, and she really liked my work—we traded prints. She introduced me to Paule and Paule saw my work; then Paule called me a year after to put me in a show at her gallery. So I accepted, expecting that I might not sell much, and I just did it for showing the work mostly. Before that I had the attitude that I would never sell my work. I would survive by working at the Galeria de la Raza or doing graphic design, but I would not produce something in order to sell it. And so far I still haven't done that. It happens that I'm selling my work, but I hope that's just a happy coincidence. I want to keep that integrity. And sometimes I don't sell something because of its political connotations. And the portraits of Reagan or Bush are usually the pieces that I don't sell and I think that is a success.

MR: Can we move away from the present back into your childhood. What was your life like as a child in Mexico City?

EC: I grew up in downtown Mexico, and it was a very rough place. Kids were fighting with each other all the time. I used to fight in the streets constantly. It was violent but, on the other hand, very communal. People helped each other all the time. There were parties that all the neighbors organized. Football in the streets was one of the favorite games for us. My parents had an Indian "nanny," Natalia, to take care of me at the time, and she spoke

Nahua. She had moved from the countryside to live in Mexico City at my parent's house. I used to go out with her every time she had to do any shopping. She took me with her and she usually wrapped me around her back. She was a very strong young woman—she had begun to work for my parents when she was eighteen or nineteen years old. Whenever she worked in the house, she would carry me on her back and sing songs to me. I developed a great affection for her. She was like my second mother.

MR: What did you learn from her?

EC: Attitudes, I think. She was humble, mild, and very kind.

MR: Which area do Nahua Indians come from?

EC: They come from Central Mexico and they are the ancient Aztecs who mixed with the Spaniards. Most people in Mexico are half Indians and half Spaniards. It's a mestizo culture, although the Indian part is actually the strongest. That's what makes the difference between Mexico and Spain. I feel myself much more identified with Indian culture—the food, the sense of humor too that laughs at death, has some kind of smiling face when you are faced with terrible circumstances. During the horrible earthquake in Mexico City, dozens of jokes were made about the disaster that were really funny. You will never hear jokes about tragedies here. So that kind of humor comes from Indian roots.

MR: Did your parents come from a mixture of Spanish and Indian?

EC: Yes. My father looks very Indian and my father's mother was also Indian looking. My mother looks more Spanish, though, as she's light skinned and has light eyes. On my mother's side, they're more Spanish-looking, even though they come from the countryside too, from a small farmer's family in Zultepec. My mother's mother had about fourteen miscarriages living in the countryside. She was married when she was fourteen years old, and she was a widow when she was about forty. Since then she always dressed in black. She was very religious; she went to church everyday and said the rosary at night.

MR: As an adolescent, did you have a certain period when you started to read a lot of novels, poetry, political texts?

EC: Yes. That was in high school. First I began to read Hermann Hesse.

MR: Steppenwoif?

EC: Right. Actually, that was the first one, and then I read Demian . A friend of mine had a cousin who had a huge collection of books in his house and we would borrow books from him. He was a political activist as well. He went mad later on. He had all kinds of books, and we began to read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

MR: Kafka?

EC: Yes, that's when I began to read Kafka. The first book I read was the

Metamorphosis, and then I read different collections of Kafka's short stories and interviews with his friends. I was very fascinated with him.

MR: Why?

EC: His world sounded very magical to me. That was what was so attractive about Kafka—magical, yet very real, very close to reality due to the fact that he describes very ordinary authoritarian situations, yet where it is hard to understand the 'whys" of that situation and the bureaucratic characters who serve such mysterious goals and mysterious businesses that nobody sees. Everybody is just doing their job and they don't know why they are killing someone, but it's nothing personal they are just doing their job. So, to me that was very real, even though there were not that many logical explanations in the books. In Mexico, we have an incredible and strange Kafkaesque bureaucratic system.

At the same time, I also began to read Marx. The first book I read was the Communist Manifesto, which I discussed with friends.

MR: Was this all when you were in high school?

EC: Yes, between sixteen and eighteen years old, I began to read a lot. One of the things that made me read so much was that I used to love to challenge my teachers in the classroom. I enjoyed that so much. I used to read a lot of different things. Marxian theories and even writers like Marcuse. We read Rosa Luxemburg, though that was a little later when I was in college. At the time I used to challenge my teachers of history about the way they were teaching history to us. I had great fun just challenging their concept of history shaped by individual heroes instead of history being created by social explosions of people or massive movements that are in constant crisis. And, also, we used to argue with priests and we used to love to do that. That was the time I became an atheist.

MR: What drew you to the study of economics?

EC: I had studied sociology at the Autonomous University of Mexico and then I reached the conclusion that I should study economics as a base to understand other social processes. I studied economics and I never regretted it. I really liked it and, besides, the school of economics in Mexico was great at the time because we had professors who were refugees from South America. One of my teachers was a Panamanian who studied in the Patrice Lumumba University in the U.S.S.R. There were also a lot of more traditional economists who brought in different perspectives than those of Marx or the Latin American schools. There were always really intense discussions in the auditorium all the time between different teachers and groups. It was very crowded and everyone was very much into what should you do in Latin America, what use will economic theory have in the transformation of Latin America. We were sent to the countryside

to work in rural development programs as part of our training. It was great. I loved it and and I learned a lot. I studied all kinds of theories, not just Marx. So, we studied a lot, but with a focus on how to use it in reality. It was an incredible growing experience, and that, combined with the political activism outside school, made me form strong views on what was happening outside in the world. It's an experience and time that I will never forget. I learned a lot, especially attitudes from workers and from peasants. Just the way they were so clear and so humble with no pretensiousness at all, yet being the most wonderful people you could ever meet, the kindest people, who would give their lives to do something for you without even announcing it. So,to me, thatwas a great period of time, and it's a period of my life that I missed when I came to the United States.

MR: Did your move here affect your work, your thinking?

EC: Oh, yes, lt gave me a distance from what l was doing in Mexico and really gave me a great deal of freedom to do almost anything I wanted. In Mexico, I had already developed a strong will to take risks because you are tested in Mexico in that way. In Mexico, you constantly risk your life for things you are doing. It could be as an activist or just walking the street and being afraid that the police might rob you because in Mexico the police are the ones that rob you sometimes due to the corruption. You might even have to risk your life, and that's a very scary feeling to think that you might die for something that you believe in. Those were the feelings I developed in Mexico through my years of being very active in the student movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I was very much a supporter of the workers' strikes and their demands for education that was oriented toward the needs of the people, and not toward the needs of the wealthy groups of the country. A lot of the students joined them in demonstrations, and I participated in organizing with many other schools—I was just like a grain on the beach. A lot of students from many places got together and began to organize the first demonstration after the massacre of October 2, 1968, right before the Olympic Games. That's when they killed about five hundred people. And after that there was not a single demonstration in Mexico for any reason whatsoever for the next three years. Those were three long years of unrest, and, at the time, there was a guerilla movement in the mountains and the government was sending the army everywhere.

In the schools, there were secret police, paramilitary groups who acted as students, very young, very strong and very well trained, armed with guns. That situation created in you a really clear image of who were your friends and who were not your friends, how to be really careful about what you were doing. We almost didn't speak politics in school with anybody. We didn't speak politics among our families.

Some of us at some time were considering leaving our homes. Most of us were dependent on our parents. A lot of my friends were from the upper middle class or the middle class.

Many of us began to participate in study circles; we began to look for political parties to join. Basically we created our own party, wrote a newspaper every week, and it was extremely efficient. We had news before the official newspapers. It was an incredible experience. And for the first time in my life, I got a great sense of community among a lot of people. There were really intense moments when all these things were happening. It developed in me this attitude of taking chances for whatever you believed in or wanted to do. So, I translated that into art. It made me feel that I should do anything I wanted with any idea that came into my mind, whether or not it would be sold, whether or not it would be accepted in the art community, a gallery, or art market place.

MR: It's strikes me as curious that when you lived so intensely politically in Mexico, you were working basically with abstraction in your painting—I know you did political cartoons too, though—and only when you came here did the political material begin coming out in the art. Am I making it too simple?

EC: In Mexico, my non-narrative works were related to an idea of integrating all aspects of society, like the idea of the Constructivists integrating art, architecture, painting and sculpture to the creation of a new world. Here in this country there are other circumstances that have affected me, like the need to express my views and feelings on Central America, just to give you an example.

MR: When did you get involved with the Galeria de la Raza in San Francisco?

EC: That was around 1984. I began to visit the galleryand to chat with the people there. Later they invited me to some shows, and I helped do installations. Generally, I was a volunteer. We liked each other a lot and, finally, they decided to invite me to be on the board of directors in 1986. I was afraid of taking that responsibility because it would be a lot of time and commitment, but on the other hand, I really liked it as a project. So I accepted. A few months after that Rene Yanez quit. He suggested that I replace him and the board agreed so I became the interim artistic director in 1987 and a little later I was confirmed as the permanent artistic director.

So far it has been very good, and I really like it because it's away of being away from the elite, and being in the community. In a way, it's an effort to join art and life, and that's something I believe in, keeping the art somehow related to the society that produces that art instead of putting it away in mausoleums of art. The Mission neighborhood is violent at times, but I think that is why we should remain in the neighborhood because we are, hopefully, one of the many elements that will help to change it for the better. I think the

Galeria plays a role here, and gives an opportunity to artists who haven't had opportunities to show their work—especially minorities. That was the origin of the Galeria. It was born out of the necessity to create a space for Chicano artists who didn't have any place to show their work due to discrimination.

With the 1988 Jeff Jones report, it has been shown that not much has been changed. The fact that the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has a 100% white board of directors and 96% white staff, that the 4% who are people of color are janitors or security personnel, that they receive 80% of the money to be given to arts organizations by the City, and more than 50% of the population of San Francisco itself is non-white—that makes a statement in itself. All those things speak about who runs the institutions and who are they approaching for funding. The Jeff Jones Report really blew my mind—just the the fact that some of the multi-cultural events bring broader audiences than those of the opera or the ballet makes a statement about the arts in the city. So, I think that it is great that a space like the Galeria de la Raza exists. ■

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A PERSONAL REACTION TO THE WORK OF ENRIQUE CHAGOYA

There are probably few places in the world where Mickey Mouse is not recognized. Images of the endearing rodent adorn the flannel lining of a child's vest I recently purchased which was made by Chinese peasants in remote Shaanxi Province. And my teenage son remarked on the familiar presence of "Topolino" in comic books, on clothing and decorating other kitsch items when he visited Italy several years ago. For Enrique Chagoya Mickey is almost a personal logo.

Growing up in Mexico City in the 1950s and early sixties Enrique Chagoya was well acquainted not only with this enduring American icon, but also with the entire Disney pantheon. By the time he was an adolescent he had seen all the Disney movies and had absorbed a large dose of American culture in comics and advertising, as well. Naturally he, along with his contemporaries worldwide, was unaware of the cultural hegemony implicit in this material. As a child Enrique accepted Mickey and his cartoon associates, as they were presented: cute, innocent creatures—humorous and appealing. At its most Machiavellian, America could not have selected a better cultural ambassador than Mickey Mouse. In the same casual way, Enrique absorbed Mexican history and culture —on family outings to such places as Teotihuacan or Chapultepec Park. These visits were not presented as 'educational opportunities," but as family fun, like visits to Yosemite or to Disneyland for a North American child. He was also strongly influenced by a young Indian woman, hired by his family to care for him, who taught him songs in Nahua and told him strange and wonderful stories.

Chagoya, as so many of his contemporaries world-wide, was shocked into political awareness by the tumultuous events of 1968. As in Europe and the United States, waves of student protests swept over Mexico. The reaction of the police to the student demonstrations was particularly violent and repressive in Mexico City. Enrique, fifteen at the time, and his family witnessed acts of extreme brutality, including the killing of a child and a massacre of student protesters by the army. These events affected him deeply and provided the basis for his political maturation. He began to understand the role that the United States has played in the economic and political subordination of Mexico and most of the world's developing nations. Mickey was unmasked.

Among Chagoya's primary thematic concerns is the dialectic of appearance and reality, the contradiction of essence and phenomena. In fact, he believes that the appearance of a thing often conceals an opposite reality. In his work terror lurks beneath the innocent looking mouse ears, death is concealed in the flaccid Mickey Mouse glove ("La Kalaka," "4-U-2-C,"

"When Paradise Arrived"). Mickey Mouse, the "Happy Face," is metaphors for the cute disguising the hideous, for pop culture which helps to conceal the evils of "the system." Chagoya calls this "the nice disguise," and tries to make even his villains' (Reagan, Kissinger, Bush) "real" faces look "nice," because he says, evil is not obvious. If Reagan is a "freedom fighter," Hitler is, perhaps, "a unifier." The disguise, the Mickey Mouse hat, the "Have a nice day" happy face, makes the perpetrator of horrors appear harmless. This is the harmlessness of "clean nuclear power," the "green revolution through chemicals," (witnessed courtesy of Union Carbide in Bhophol, India), or the Orwellian concept of "peace through strength." In "When Paradise Arrived"—the title of the piece is an ironic counterpoint to the image the cartoon gloved hand becomes inflated to enormous proportions and is poised menacingly over the small ecstatic child. The shift in scale renders Mickey's (or is it Donald Duck's, or Goofy's or Bugs Bunny's?) little, harmless, four-fingered hand an instrument of terrorism, and the hand's gesture, as if flicking away a fly, emphasizes the utter indifference of that omnipotent power. Piling irony on irony, the middle finger ('digitus imputicus") bears the phrase "English Only." The piece comments directly and forcefully on the colonization of America and the continuing presence of state terrorism, and its disguises.

The etchings share some of the devices of the large charcoal work, but the context is more circumscribed. Conceived as an exploration of Francisco Goya's ideas and techniques, Chagoya started the series by asking himself, "What would Goya's *Disasters of War* have looked like if he had drawn them today?" Studying the Goya etchings, Chagoya was struck by how few differences there are socially and politically between the two historic periods. Goya's disgust with the hypocrisy of the clergy and the government, and his abhorrence of war makes him a political, as well as an aesthetic kinsman of the Mexican who, along with a similar disgust, shares half a name with him. The major difference between our era and the period Goya depicts in "Los Desastres de la Guerra" is our current capability to destroy the world. As Chagoya began developing the ideas for his "Homage to Goya," the reverse of the original proposition occurred to him as more interesting: "What if some artifacts or political figures of late twentieth century culture had existed in Goya's time?" Consequently each of the etchings in this series, contains amusing anachronisms which emphasize both Goya's and Chagoya's point of view: a cassette player and microphone is placed in the claws of the chicken-headed priest in, "Farádula de charlatanes," while a stealth bomber hovers over the vulturous, batwinged monsters in, "Las resultas." A television set replaces the falling chair in "Estragos de la guerra." A safe is substituted for the corpse in a glass coffin in"Extrana devocion." Picasso's "Demoiselles d' Avignon," in "Esta no 10 es

menas," immediately following in the series, is the contemporary artifact replacing the religious statue in Goya's original. Reagan's face is substituted for whomever it was Goya was originally lampooning in "Contra el bien general," and if one looks very carefully, a spectator wearing a Mousketeer's hat can be seen in the crowd in "Que se rompe la cuerda." Goya's generic priest is replaced by the archpriest, Pope John Paul II, whose benign face betrays no worry since, according to Enrique; he seems to have managed to keep on the good side of both God and the Devil.

Chagoya says he decided to introduce the rubber stamps as an ironic comment on Franco's government, which asserted ownership by stamping all of Goya's etchings in the Prado. Goya was fastidious in numbering his drawings and etchings in chronological order. Chagoya has retained Goya's numerical system, thus each print is designated as referring to a specific work of the Disasters of War.

Enrique has obviously learned a great deal from the master. His etchings have the feel of Goya's; they are skillfully drawn and printed, though not slavish copies of the Disasters of War. Chagoya's stroke is different from the Spaniard's, but the main difference is in his outlook. Goya's work became darker and darker as he matured. The monsters in the Disasters of War are not the monsters of classicism; they are not based on myth or legend, but spring directly from Goya's twisted genius. While they operate as allegory, they are more clearly read as manifestations of the artist's psychology. Essentially tragic, this later work inspires pity and horror in the viewer. Doubtless, the bitterness Goya felt was, at least in part, a result of the horrors he witnessed during the nationalist insurrection against the French, but it may have been as well a reaction to the turns of fate in his personal life (his deafness, the failure of a love affair, perhaps). Goya uses irony and satire to convey his disgust with the world. Chagoya, a young man, also has been witness to horrors, but his is a more playfully ironic, response; his monsters are disguised as nice guys, or are the nose thumbing depictions of cavorting skeletons from Mexican tradition. These humorous "*muertos*" ridicule death; they do not inspire fear, but laughter. The calaveras are perhaps the most perfect synthesis of the Spanish and Indian traditions. In them the mordant irony of Goya's worldview combines with a fatalism to which the only possible response seems to be laughter.

Two prints which are tangential to this series, not derived directly from the "Disasters of War," deal with the artist's relationship to his two spiritual and artistic mentors, Goya and Posada. Chagoya has assigned his own numbers to these, #1 and #3. The first is a kind of portrait of the artist as Goya (he uses the coincidence of their similar names in the title) but Goya's hat is too big for Chagoya and he can't fill

the master's shoes. The second portrays an imagined meeting between Goya and Posada, spanning an ocean and two generations. If Goya and Posada had been writers their genre would, perhaps, have been called "reportage." They created some of the most trenchant documentaries of their respective eras, but unlike Daumier or Hogarth, their works lack the slightest trace of sentimentality. Wit and irony are the instruments they use to make their visions palpable. Here the two major influences on Enrique's art, both chroniclers and critics of their time, meet on a plain surrounded by some of their creations, while little Enrique self-consciously slinks away.

José Guadalupe Posada, the great Mexican printmaker, had enormous influence on Mexico's great muralists, Rivera and Orozco, and graphic artists such as Leopoldo Mendez, and his associates in the Taller de Gráfica Popular. Posada's work continues to shape the consciousness of younger artists, and Chagoya is no exception. Posada's "La calavera catrina" (The skeleton of the fashionable lady) figures prominently in Rivera's mural in the Hotel del Prado, "Sueño de una tarde en la Alameda Central," and is also the model for "La Kalaka." Her hat is derived directly from "La calavera catrina." Posada, a self-taught, working class, lithographer and engraver produced thousands of chap'books, book covers and broadsides from 1868 until his death in 1913. Besides the highly imaginative calaveras produced for the Day of the Dead celebrations for which he is most well-known, Posada documented the events of his time: the Revolution, the Zapatistas, the executions under Porfirio Diaz, epidemics, accidents and grisly crimes. During a time when photographs were not yet widely used to record current events, his livelihood depended on these sensationalized depictions of the news of the day. His sympathies were always with the poor and abused; he depicts their lives with angry passion, underscored by fatalistic humor characteristic of the Indian outlook of Mexico. The similarities with Goya's world view are not merely a conceit of Chagoya's. A broadside entitled "Very interesting news of the four murders committed by the unfortunate Antonio Sanchez who after the horrible crime ate the remains of his own son," is strongly reminiscent of Goya's "Saturn Devouring his Children," one of the terrifying "dark paintings" which Goya chose to hang above his dining table. Posada's type metal and zinc engravings of firing squads share the immediacy and pathos of the "Disasters of War," and Posada's attitude toward the hypocrisy of the clergy is clearly analogous to Goya's. Sanctimonious priests smile blandly as they hold their crucifixes above a garroting or death by firing squad.

Enrique Chagoya's abiding connection and attachment to Mexican culture, Pre-Columbian, colonial and post-colonial, resonates in his work and fills his life.

His studio is a riot of Mexican dance masks, retabalos,toys, and pre-Columbian sculpture. He is attracted to the intensity of the ancient religions, Aztec and Maya, and their art which reflects deep passion. Even Christian art, especially as it was transplanted in Mexico, reflects a similar passionate intensity, an intensity that has been largely lost with the commodification of art in late capitalist society. Much of the work created for churches in Latin America was fashioned by Indians or Mestizos and shows the vital influence of indigenous religions, with the saints becoming Christianized versions of pre-Columbian deities. The eyes in the saints' faces, according to Chagoya, stare into space; they have an ecstatic quality which seems to see beyond the personal or temporal. This is the look, he says, of Pre-Columbian sculpture or folk art masks. The small figure in "When Paradise Arrived" wears this look. She is a "mini-Virgin of Guadalupe," the metamorphosis of the old Aztec goddess Coatlicue. Now she displays the bleeding heart so popular in the religious art of colonial Mexico.

"In art there is no need for color;" Goya is reported to have said," "I see only light and shade. Give me a crayon, and I will paint your portrait." This is the proud graphic tradition to which Chagoya has apprenticed himself. In Goya and Posada he has selected two of the most powerful exponents of that tradition in Western art. Graphic, rather than painterly, Enrique's work displays color (almost always red) simply for its emotional and symbolic value. Perhaps the most effective such use is in "Slippery When Wet." Here again we have big and little, now the shoes of a businessman or politician, seeming to spin in the art in a comic pratfall, the soles and the pavement under them drenched in slippery blood. So much blood can be dangerous to the bloodletters the artist suggests. Red strongly reinforces the dialectic.

Disconnected body parts appear frequently in Chagoya's iconography (e.g. "Double Agent"). The imagery immediately calls to mind the little, silver Milagros, arms, legs, hearts, etc. which many faithful offer as thanks or propitiation in the Catholic church. Enrique tells more disturbing stories of their possible origins in his work, suggesting they are associated with dismemberment. He particularly remembers two atrocious crimes, widely publicized in his youth. Their sensationalism renders their description gratuitous, but they involve tamales containing whole fingers and boxes found in the street containing body parts. These crimes held a certain fascination for Chagoya, and indeed his description of them years later is tinged with grim humor. Blood and body parts symbolize atomization and contain not a little suggestion of the macabre. But they also symbolize magic and power, perhaps the most dramatic example being the handprints, which appear in many of the large charcoal drawings. These marks are not merely

symbolic; they also trace the history of the drawing. This concretizing of the process, the history of the work, is important to the artist. It unmasks the work as it were, and for this reason he also allows changes, or as he refers to them, "mistakes," to remain visible. The device reinforces the appearance/reality duality. This is the artist's actual hand print, its real size and shape, not distorted, not drawn, but another reality outside the pictured image. It introduces an element which is an ironic reminder of the dialectic between art and reality, which his work explores.

As it was for his artistic progenitors Goya and Posada, humor is a major tool for Chagoya. In this work the comic force operates both as anodyne and humanizer. Chagoya makes his intention clear, often quite obviously, sometimes more ambiguously, through the use of irony, satire, paradox, and puns. Among the methods he employs are jokey titles, and the introduction of additional commentary outside the picture, both visual and verbal. Enrique's titles, usually playful or outright puns, are visually imbedded in the piece. Puns occur within the work as well, for example,"an arm and a leg" pictured and inscribed in "Double Agent" juxtapose that figure of speech with imagery which exposes its more macabre meaning. This playfulness is also reflected in the use of rubber stamps as additional commentary in the etchings ("This is not a Test"), or in the small items pinned to the wall near the large works. The Chinese "Tongue" card hangs next to "Nose Job" creating a dialogue with the drawn "ear" and "nose" cards. This device provides us with a glimpse of the source of Enrique's imagery, the *object trouvé*, the flea market find, but primarily it suggests the viewer's and the creator's derision. Similarly the tiny plastic fly pinned to the wall next to "Old Toy" blurs the distinction between the interior reality of the picture and the real world of its setting. Enrique created "Old Toy" in response to the Challenger disaster. Instead of the crocodile tears to which the media treated us, Chagoya addresses the amorality of the space program and its hypocrisy. The omnipotent hand of government, industry, the military, treats civilians as expendable toys in its disastrous, capricious and meaningless games. The fly, according to Enrique, is a superfly, because as he explains, the red line indicates that it flies in a straight line which no real fly can do, while the rocket follows an ordinary fly's trajectory to its destruction. The little fly on the wall reinforces the message that reality is often more strange than fantasy, a frequent Chagoya theme.

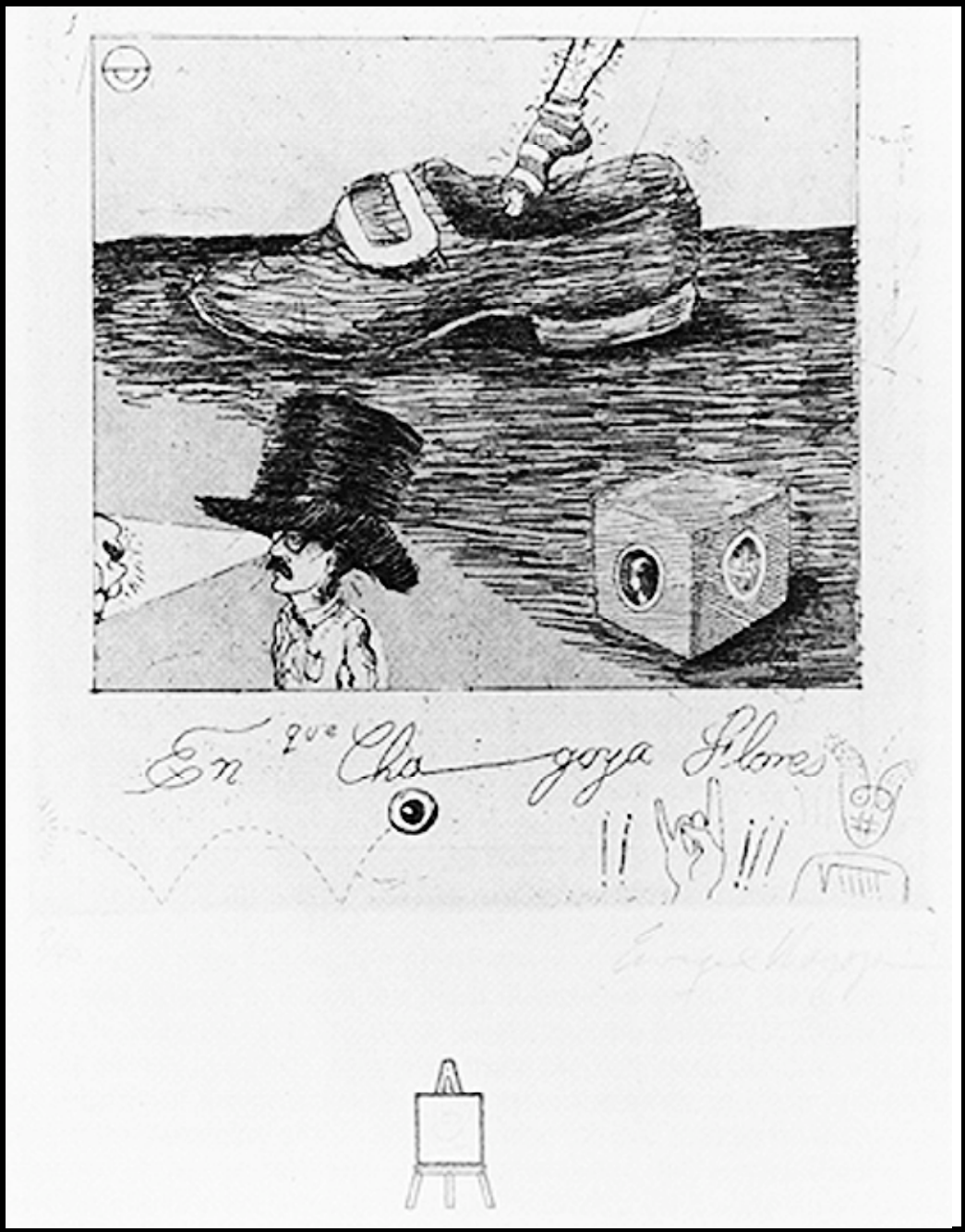
Dramatic shifts in scale and juxtapositions of big and little are additional seriocomic devices. The big skeletons in "La Kalaka" and "4-U-2-C" wear enormous symbolic hats. The cowboy hat symbolizes U.S. notions of "good" power—John Wayne or Ronald Reagan strong, silent frontier good guys. According to Chagoya, the inward pointing arrows indicate some-

thing like a short-circuit while the figure witnesses a nuclear explosion. The face, abstracted to chevron-like bars, suggest a connection with the military. "Lakalaka," a more ambiguous figure, wears the enormous middle class, Victorian era hat from Posada, but instead of the traditional skull, she is further masked. The abbreviation produces a truly mysterious and terrifying figure. Chagoya says that she developed from his imaginative representation of Coatlicue, the Pre-Columbian goddess of death and rebirth, war and fecundity—the duality of existence. As the upstart Apollo opposes Dionysius in Greek mythology, Coatlicue is opposite to Quetzacoatl and a more ancient deity. The duality she personifies, is imbedded in the Mexican worldview, and is a persistent element in Chagoya's work.

The big skeletons in the two works represent insane power. The little Doppelgangers both undercut and reinforce this image of terrible power. They seem to ridicule the dominant figures, as the Mickey Mouse hats suggest, but they are also diminutive clones whose duplication threaten to overwhelm us, multiplying and spreading the evil which emanates from the larger figure.

It is perhaps humor which accomplishes the synthesis in Enrique Chagoya's work. Known among his friends as an engaging raconteur, Enrique has the ability to seize upon the ironies inherent in the rhetoric and actions of the powerful and to expose them with biting wit. Underlying the satirist is a passionately involved and committed individual. Far from cynical, he is nevertheless aware of the excess and hypocrisy of our leaders, and combats their corruption with sarcasm and subversive humor. ■

ROBBIN LEGERE HENDERSON is a painter, a freelance writer and an independent curator. She was curator of the Berkeley Art Center and formerly director of both the Intersection Gallery and the Southern Exposure Gallery in San Francisco. Ms. Henderson lives in San Francisco.



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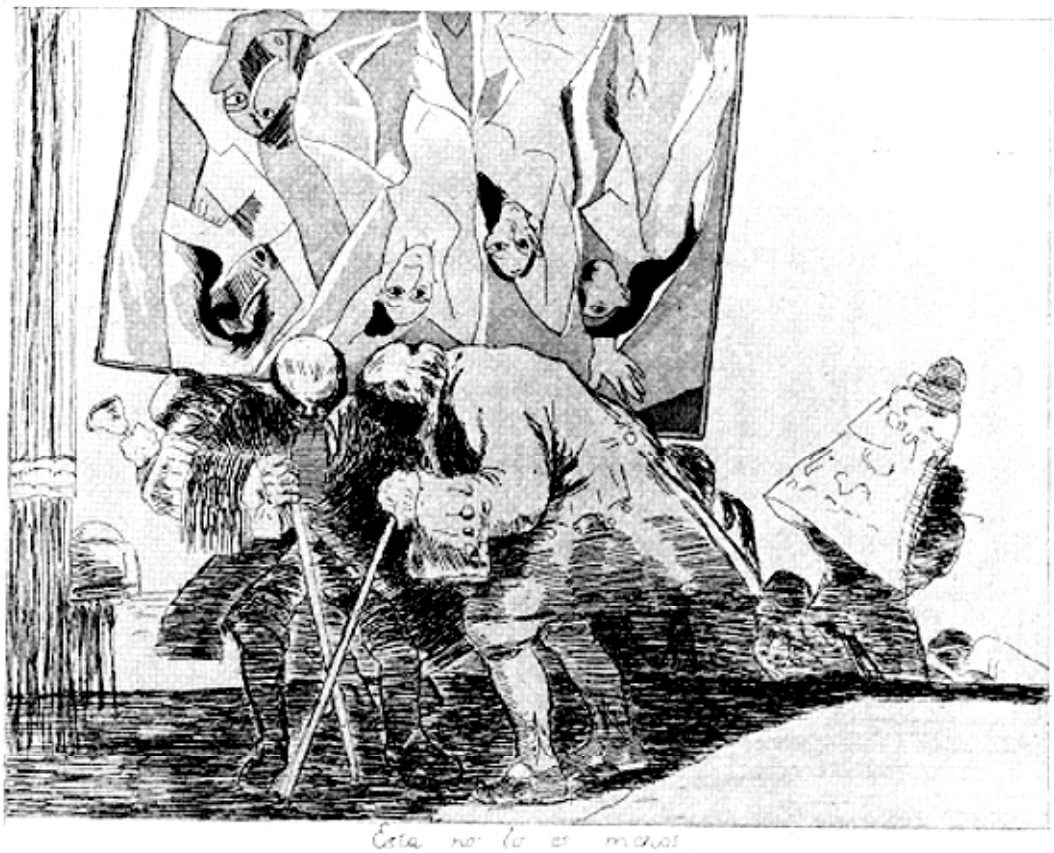

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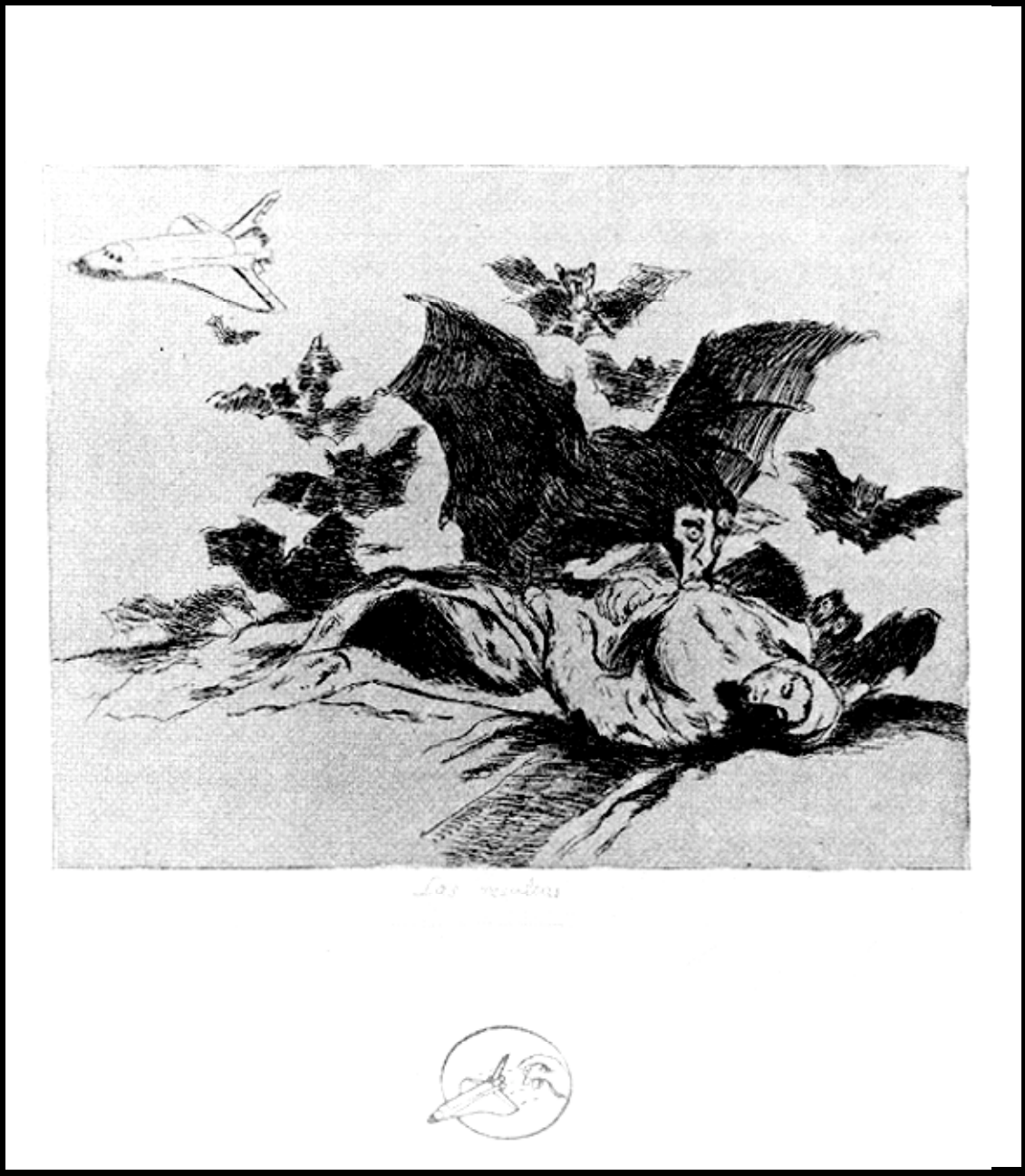

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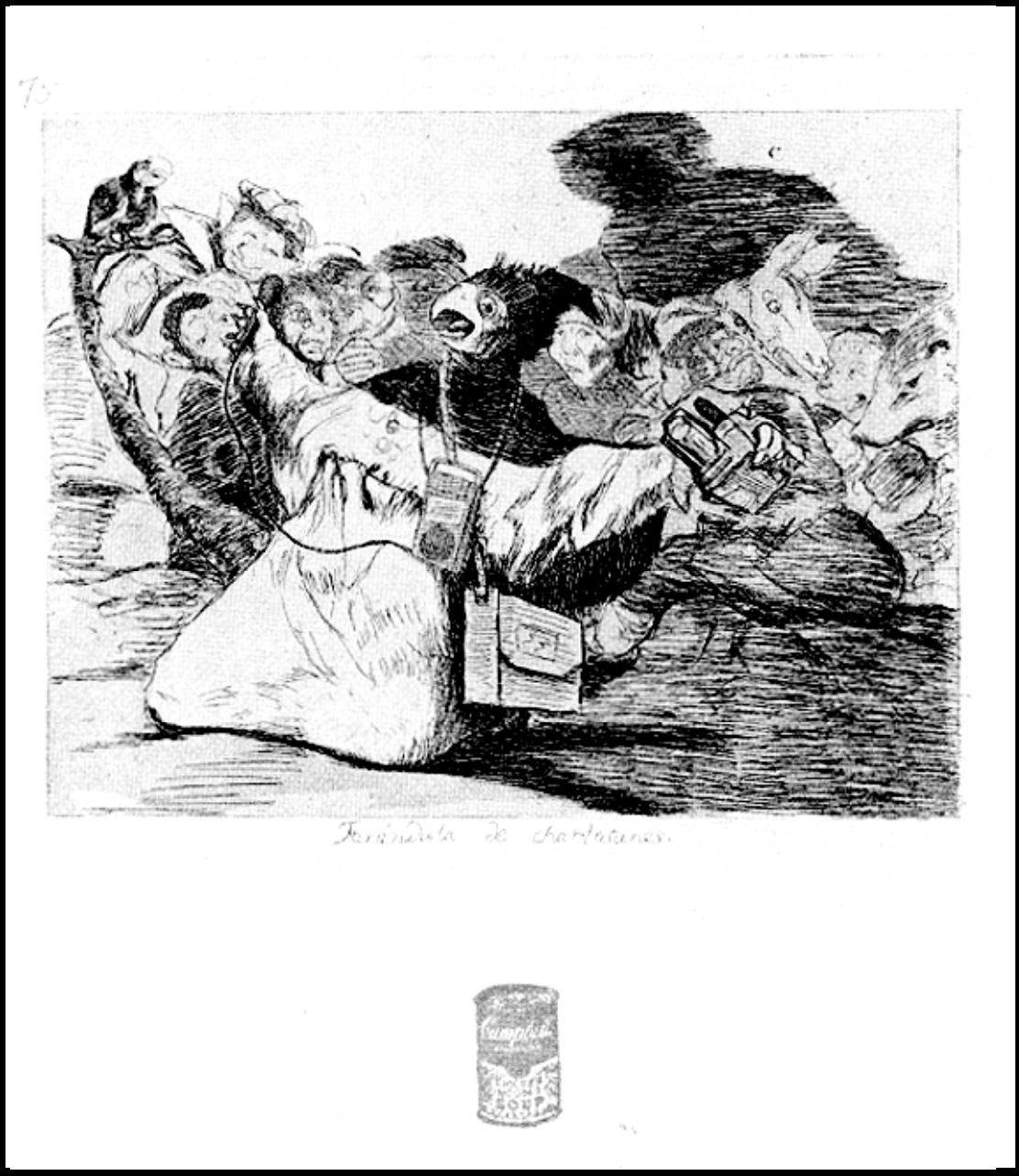

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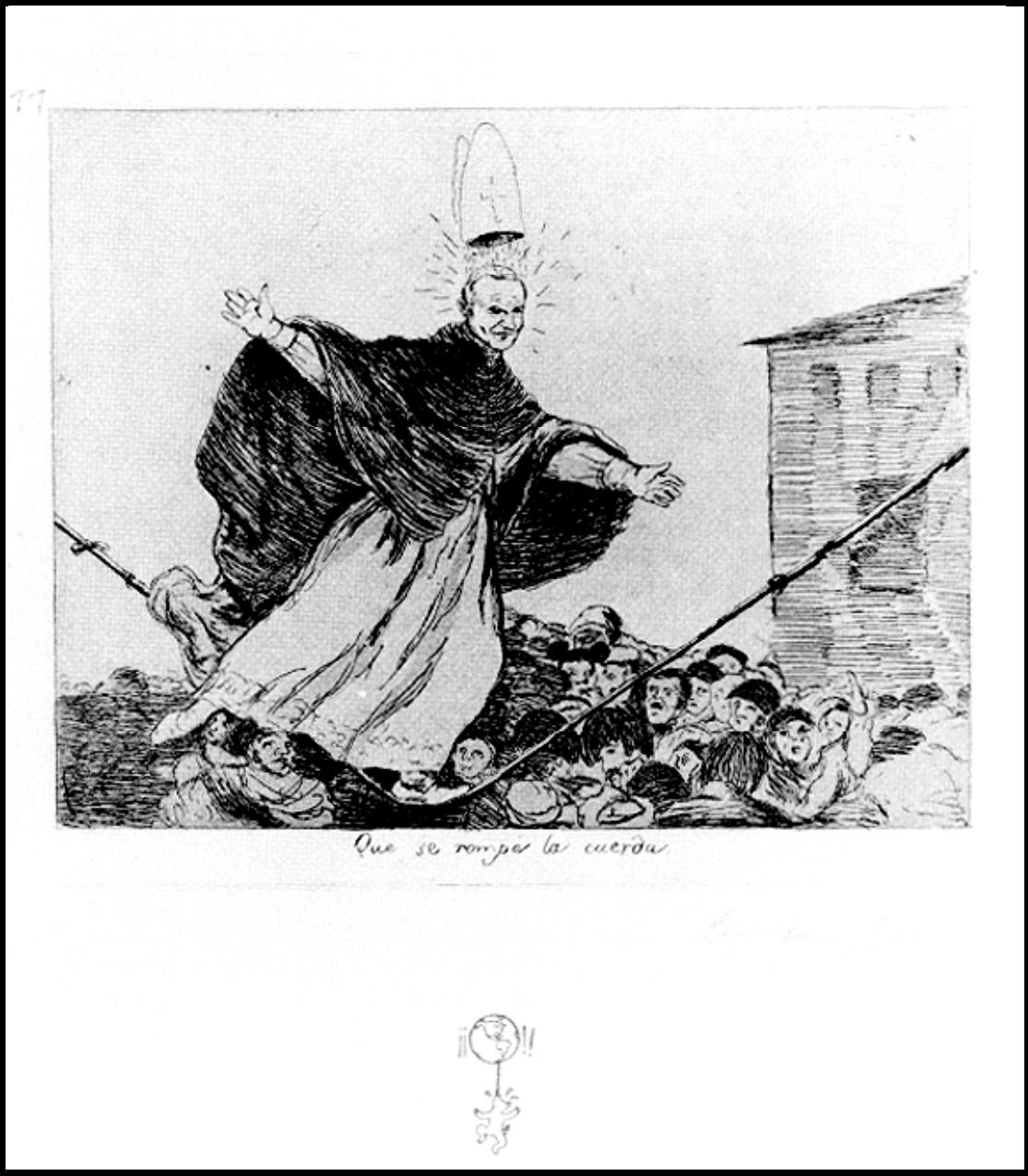
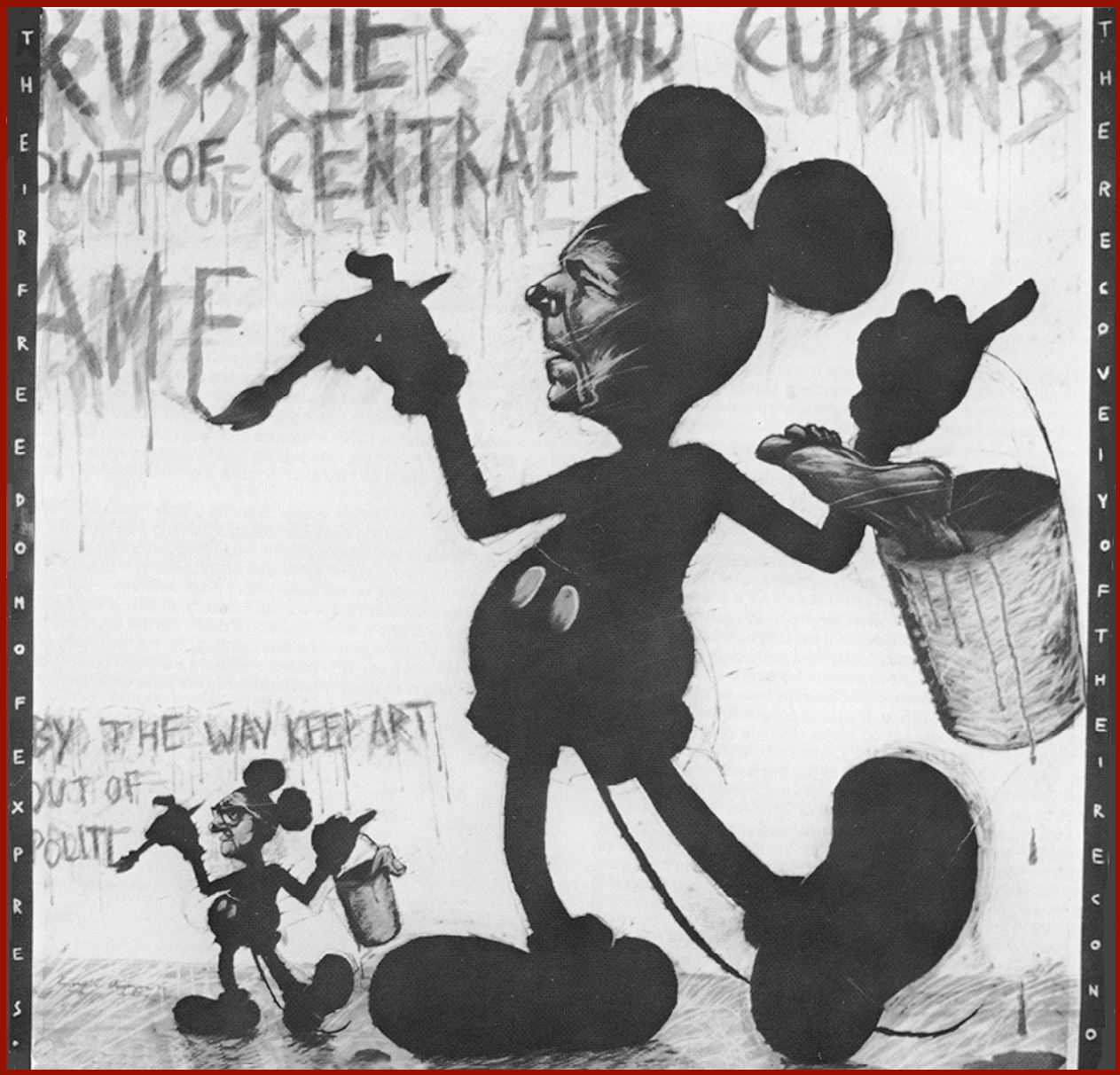


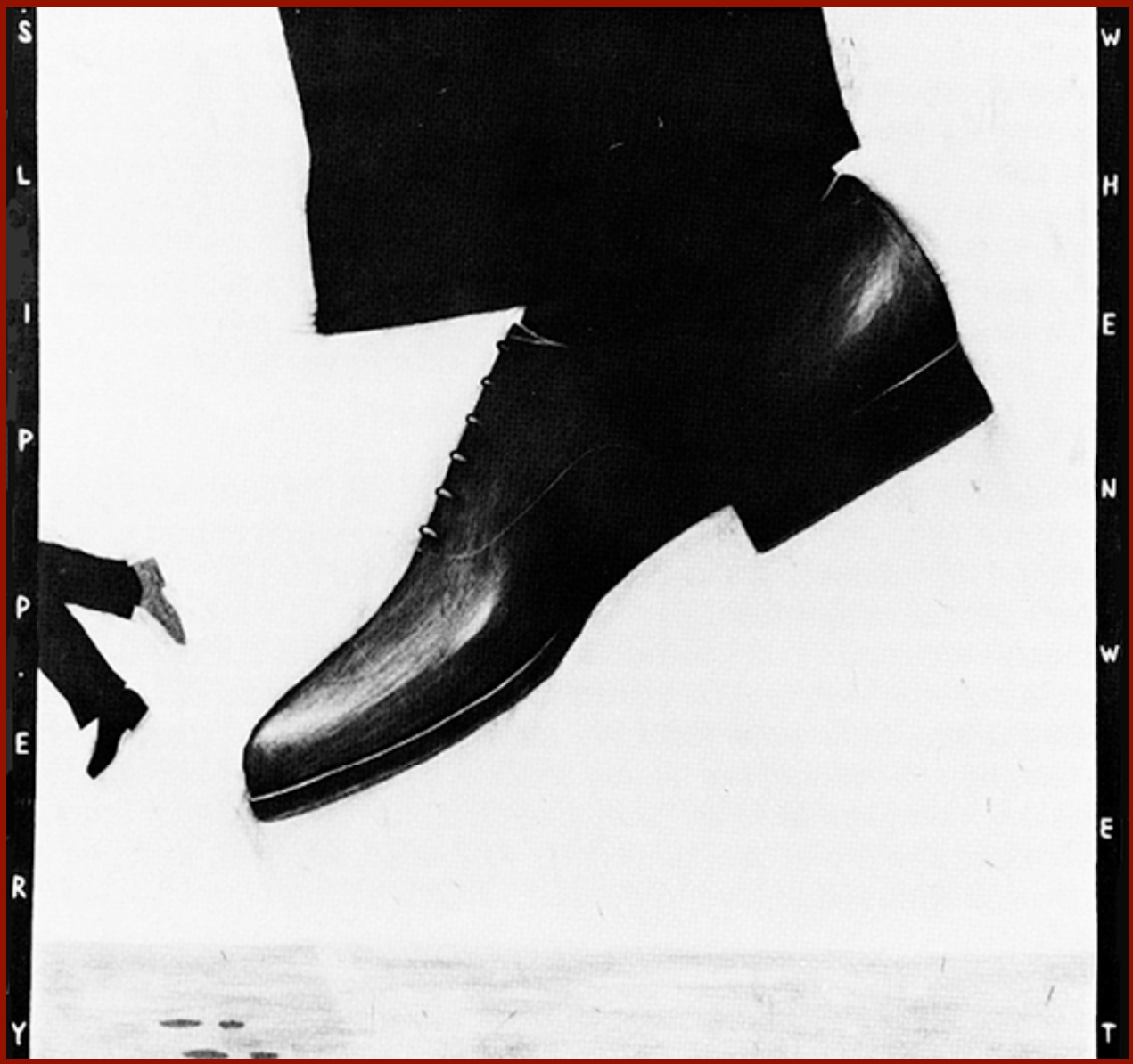
13 x 15 inches Etching aquatint with rubber stamp

7 x 7 feet charcoal on paper. Photo: Bobby McGee

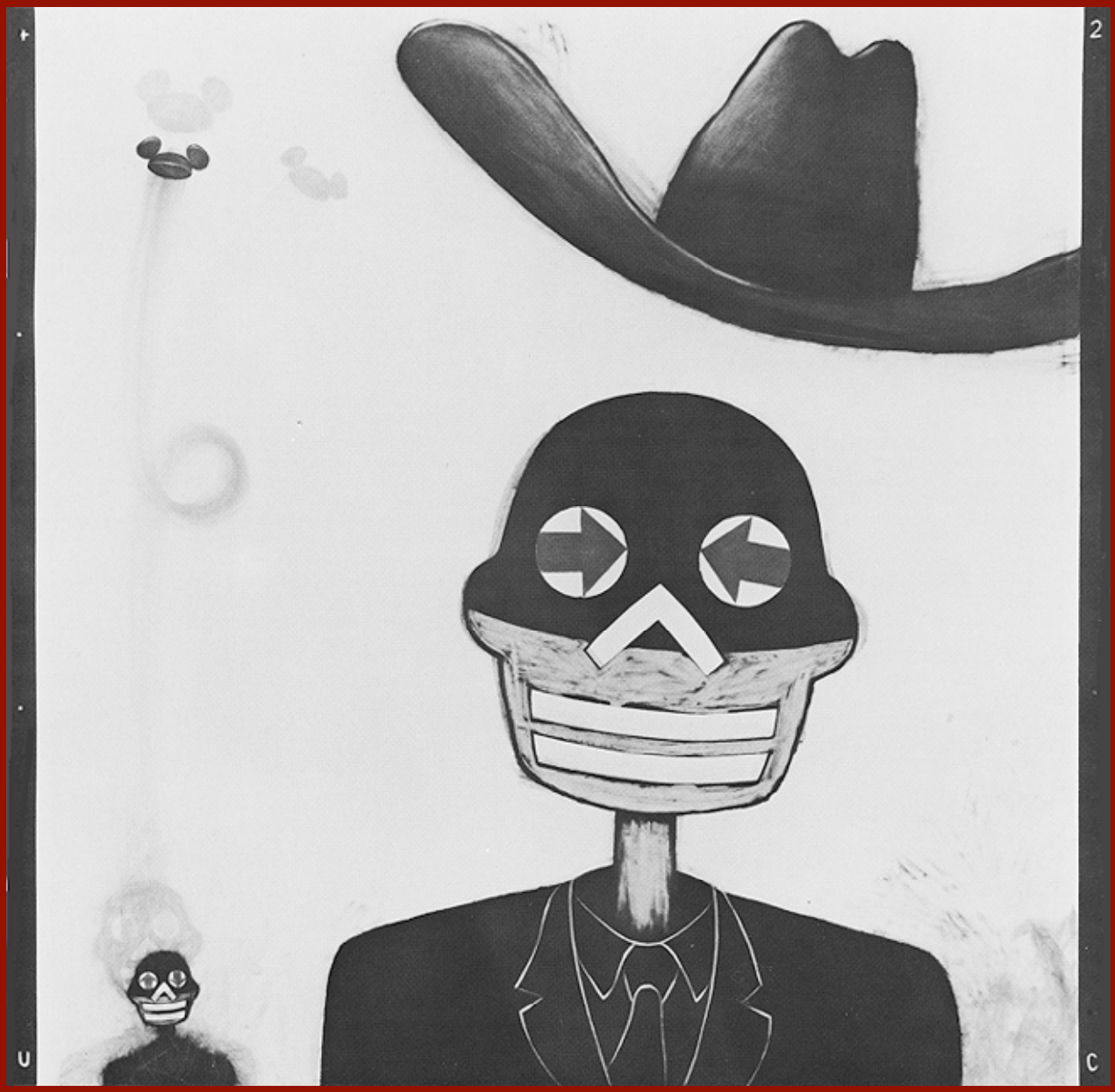


80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper



80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper. Collection of Allen Evens



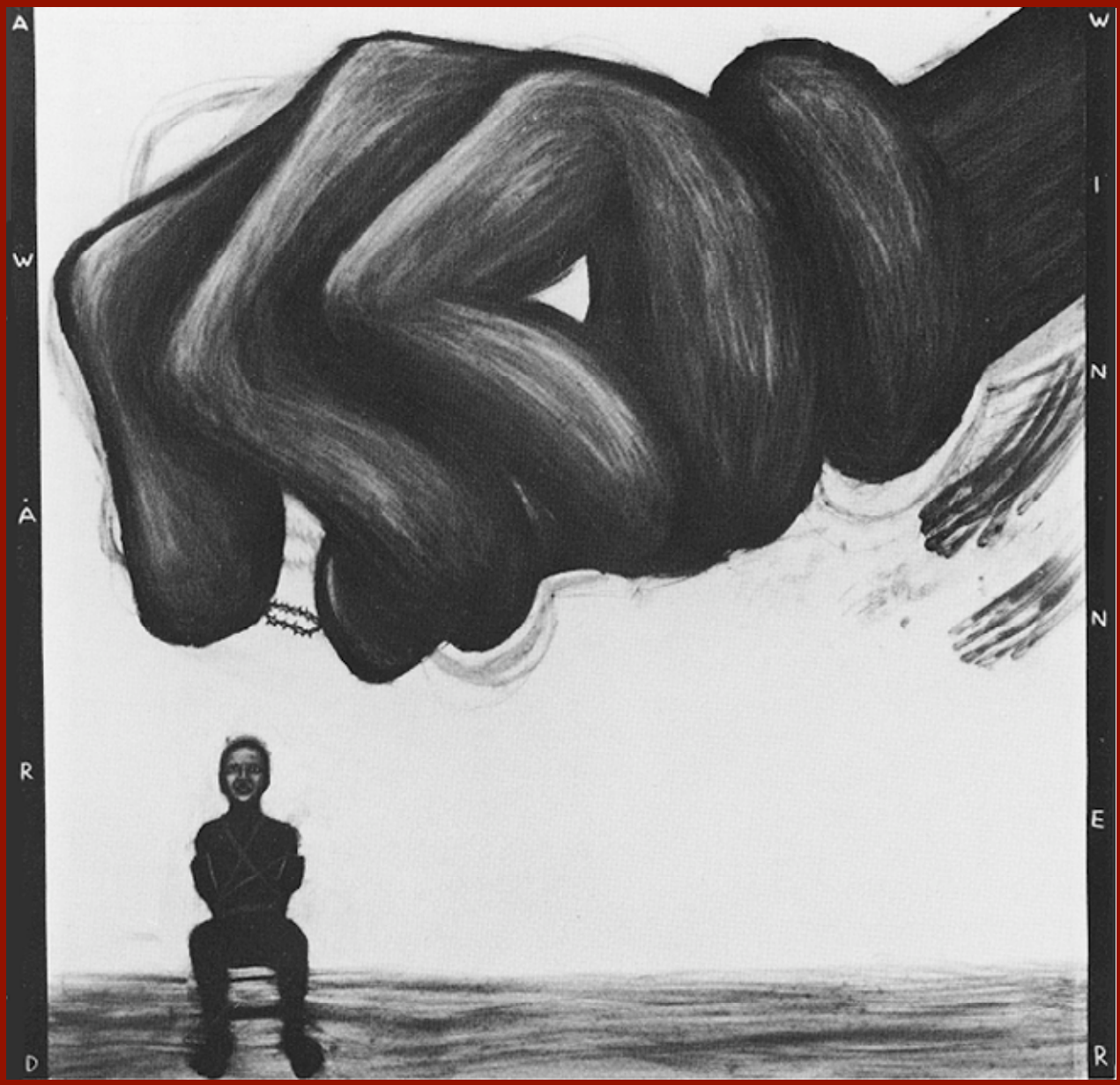
80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper. Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Kavan

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper. Collection of Di Rosa Foundation

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper



80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper

80 x 80 inches, charcoal & pastel on paper

NARRATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF ENRIQUE CHAGOYA by Moira Roth*

*Statements by the artist are drawn from an interview, January 22, 1989

1953-1968
Born in Mexico City, August 26th, 1953. Parents and grandparents had moved to Mexico City before he was born, but other relatives remain in the countryside. The extended family is a closeknit one, and there are

many visits to the country during Chagoyas childhood. Has three sisters, one of whom is older than he. Father, Enrique Chagoya Galicia, studied art but makes living first as firefighter and then works for the Mexican Central Bank. At age 8, Chagoya is taught to draw by his father. Mother, Ofelia Flores Sanchez, runs a sewing business at home. 'She had six or seven sewing machines so we had quite a lot of people working at home for a period of time. That was when I was growing up. Eventually my parents were in better shape financially." Chagoya is brought up partly by a nurse, Natalia, a Nahua Indian, who acts as his second mother, and with whom he becomes very close; he credits her for his empathy with the Indian side of Mexican culture. Is taken regularly on family outings to major museums in the City and to the famous ruins, including Teotihuacan, 50 kilometers northeast of the city.

1968-1970
Between ages 16 and 18, reads voraciously and is particularly drawn to the ideas and writing of Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Marx. In art is attracted to the writings and theories of the Dadaists, Kandinsky and the Russian Constructivists. This is a turbulent time in Mexican history, with much student unrest, that comes to a head on October 2, 1968 when 500 students are killed by police at the Tlatelolco Plaza in Mexico City. Chagoya and his friends are actively engaged in politics as are thousands of high school and college students throughout the country.

1973-1976
Attends Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (National Autonomous University of Mexico); studies economics after having briefly studied art, anthropology and sociology. Classrooms full of intellectual ferment due to large numbers of diverse voices among instructors and politically explosive situation in Mexico. Students are sent to the countryside to work in rural development projects. Chagoya remembers

this time as 'an incredible growing experience, which combined with the political activism outside of school, made me form strong views on what was happening outside in the world." While studying economics, he also does cartoons local and international subjects for various union newslet ters. Is particularly involved with the powerful Mexican Electrical Workers Union.

1976-1977
Does not finish degree, but leaves university to work on a project in the countryside in Vera Cruz. Marries Janine Craemer, an American who is researching immigrant labor in Mexico. "We identified with each other and our beliefs about society." Together they come to the United States in 1977. (They divorce in 1988.)

1977
Lives in McAllen, Texas for about eight months while working with farm workers Chagoya and his wife move to Berkeley; continues to be politically active around Central America issues

1979
Begins work as freelance illustrator and graphic designer for publication sand organizations such as Mother Jones magazine, University of California Press, Children's Book Press and Wilsted and Taylor, Oakland; over the years designs several posters and books.

1981-1984
Attends San Francisco Art Institute where he experiments in wide range of media printmaking, sculpture, drawing and ceramics. Carlos Villa is one of his instructors. "He helped me to develop the attitude that when something is not working, I can go in the opposite direction the freedom to flip any way you want in order to create something visually exciting." Is also influenced by the teachings of Michi Itami, Howard Smagula and Dorothy Reid ("She helped me develop a lot of freedom through the way she mixed media")

1983
Creates first box, La Paz; and subsequently often uses this assemblage box construction. Takes class in printmaking history with Robert F. Johnson, curator of the Achenbach Foundation for the Graphic Arts at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor; is shown original prints from Goya's The Disasters of War series. In response makes Against the common good, the first of nine prints in his Homage to Goya (as of 1989, the

series is not yet completed). Johnson buys one for the Achenbach Foundation

1984
Helps organize local exhibitions at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco as part of the national organization 'Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America." For this, he creates his first big cartoon drawing which shows Reagan as Mickey Mouse painting a graffiti sign that reads "Ruskies and Cubans out of Central America." Receives B.F.A., San Francisco Art Institute.

Participates in group shows including "What's Happening:Contemporary Art from the west Coast, Alternative Museum, New York and "1984" Pro Arts, Oakland Has oneperson exhibition and participates in group exhibition, Galeria de la Raza, San Francisco (founded in 1970 in San Francisco's Mission District, the Galeria is a major center for Latino artists). Begins to do volunteer work for Galeria including work on installations. Begins three years work as artistinresidence and art instructor, San Francisco County Jail; in 1986 cocurates "Art from Jail," Western Addition Cultural Center, San Francisco.

1985
Is given Distinguished Alumni Award, San Francisco Art Institute; in acceptance speech states," There are still a lot of things [that must] develop in order to break up the distance between the world of art and the world outside, and an artist by him or herself will have a hard time breaking up this distance. We artists need to work together [so that] we can become more aware and involved in the real world." Has one-person exhibition, Martin Weber Gallery, San Francisco. Participates in group shows "Chain Reaction," San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, and "Three Rounds on Short Notice," Galeria de la Raza. Cocurates "Art Against Apartheid, "San Francisco Art Institute and the Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco. 19851987 Attends graduate school, University of California, Berkeley; particularly enjoys working with Boyd Allen, Christopher Brown, Joan Brown, Robert Hartman, Sylvia Lark, and Mary Lovelace O'NeaI. Receives M.A. in 1986 (and the prestigious U.C. Berkeley Eisner Award), and M.F.A. in 1987.

1986
Does more large cartoon drawings LaK LaK, Slippery When Wet. and 4-U-2-C. Participates in group shows including "Lo del Corazon: Heartbeat

of a Culture," Mexican Museum, San Francisco; "South Africa: State of Emergence," Galeria de la Raza; and "VII Biennale of Latin American Printmaking, "San Juan, Puerto Rico.

1986-1987

Is invited to join board of directors, Galeria de la Raza; shortly after this the Artistic Director, Rene Yanez, resigns, and early in 1987, Chagoya is appointed interim then permanent Artistic Director. Curates various shows including "La Cruz: Spiritual Source" (co-curates with Amalia MesaBains) and a Day of the Dead exhibition.

1987

Exhibits with Betty Kano in twoperson exhibition, "Social Narratives: An Exploration in Content," Berkeley Art Center; in a review, Charles Shere comments on Chagoya's "good humor, the lack of bitterness in denunciation of contemporary social issues Nicaragua, South Africa, Coca-Colonization" and describes the large cartoon drawings as "elegant in spite of their sinister content'(The Oak/an Tribune, March 31).

Produces (for the first time since 1983) eight more of his Homage to Goya prints. Also makes diptych, Monument to the Missing Gods.

1988

Creates more large charcoal cartoons, Old Toy and When Paradise Arrived. Participates in group shows including "The Precious Object," San Francisco Art Institute; "Peter SeIz Selects," Berkeley Art Center; and "Day of the Dead," Alternative Museum, New York. Is one of three artists selected by San Francisco art dealer Paule Anglim for her gallery's "Introductions" exhibition. In a review Kenneth Baker singles out Chagoya's work in a review, praising the "etchings and aquatints in which he [Chagoya] cleverly altered scenes from Goya's The Disasters of War so they came up looking something like contemporary editorial cartoons. The rest were big, enigmatic, beautifully made charcoal drawings in which cartoonlike characters suggest themselves as personifications of faceless power" (San Francisco Chronicle , July 27). In the summer, Anglim asks Chagoya to join her gallery; gallery artists include Terry Allen, Deborah Butterfield, Christopher Brown, Sue Coe (who had originally drawn Anglim's attention to Chagoya).