

Illegal Alien's Guide to Somewhere Over the Rainbow

2010, edition 13/30

Color lithograph with chine-collé

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

In this complex map-based lithograph, Chagoya populates the land and ocean with myriad emblems of national pride associated with countries around the world. He also reconfigures the world map so that each country or region is scaled up or down to reflect its carbon footprint. For example, the continent of Africa, given its small carbon footprint, is reduced, while China—the nation with the largest carbon footprint—is magnified.

Two charts appear on the map: one documents per capita carbon dioxide emissions, and another charts total carbon dioxide emissions per nation. Throughout the map, the artist indicts a variety of factors such as deforestation, oil refineries, power plants, and agriculture as the cause of man-made pollution. Chagoya reflects the global impacts of these practices through an anthropomorphized Earth, overheated, sick, and fallen to its knees in a state of despair.

Español:

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La Bestia's Guide to the Birth of the Cool

2014, edition 13/30

Lithograph with chine-collé and
gold metallic powder

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Chagoya creates a codex—an ancient manuscript form that existed among Indigenous populations in Mesoamerica—with a design of a multi-car freight train, representing the unstoppable nature of cultural appropriation. For many centuries, artists and designers have been influenced by the work of Indigenous artists, incorporating design elements and styles into their own work, often without consideration for the original context.

Chagoya references “La Bestia,” or the beast as it is colloquially known, the mode of transportation for millions of Central American immigrants—many of them Indigenous—who seek passage across Mexico in hopes of reaching the U.S. The “payload” is Modernist in design, represented by the artist’s distinctive red, blue, yellow, white and black palette. This geometric design is repeated in the clothing of the figures, including the gown worn by a Mesoamerican deity, modern sneakers, and children’s dresses.

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The Enlightened Savage

2002, edition 14/40

Digital pigment prints on paper wrapped around can with silkscreened cardboard box

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Just as elite art collectors “consume” art, purchasing and reselling it with zeal, so too can the “primitive” but enlightened artist consume the movers and shakers of the art world. Chagoya refers to this sardonic worldview as “reverse anthropology,” in which western culture becomes a source from which Indigenous artists may borrow—just as cultural appropriation is a mainstay of modern and contemporary art.

For example, in a twist on artist Andy Warhol’s iconic paintings of various varieties of Campbell’s Soup, Chagoya created labels for a series of soups that use special ingredients sourced from contemporary art world players. Soup varieties include *Curator’s Liver*, *Cream of Dealer*, and *Artist Brains with Rice*. With his “Cannibull’s” brand, Chagoya makes an explicit reference to cannibalism, which is widely believed to have been practiced by the ancient Aztec people.



Andy Warhol, *Soup Cans*, 1962, Museum of Modern Art, New York

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