

PRESSING ON

In the Schnitzer's new exhibit, Under Pressure, more than contemporary art is on display, but also a challenging reflection of our times

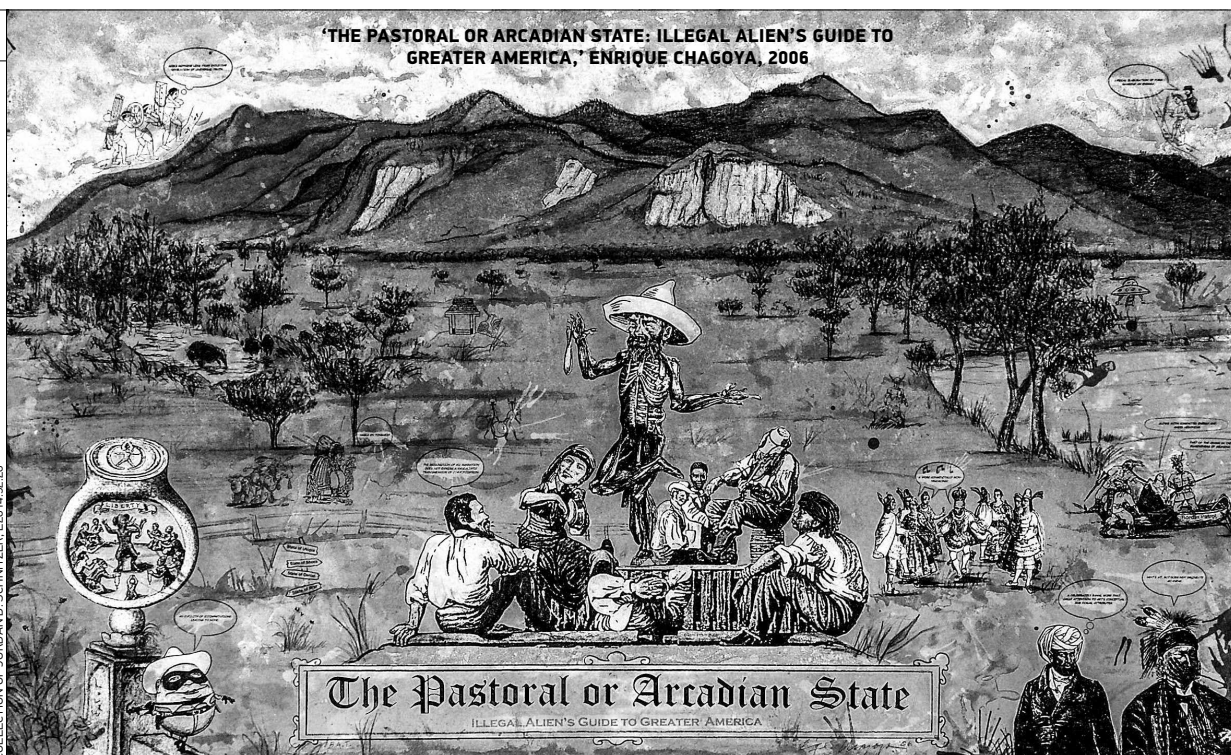
Playing devil's advocate, I ask art collector Jordan Schnitzer how contemporary art can possibly fulfill us in an age of flickering screens and attention spans. Immediately I regret siding with the devil, even if only momentarily. Schnitzer's response is so passionate, so righteous and, frankly, so absolutely correct that his indignation at the thought that art could ever be irrelevant reverberates through the phone.

"The most significant part that can't be forgotten is artists are always chroniclers of their times," he says. "Art is not a 'nice to have'; it's a *must*. Why?"

He ticks off recent events: the ongoing Nigerian massacre carried out by militant group Boko Haram; the killing of teenager Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson; the terrorist attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.

"If any one of your readers — if you — aren't groping inside yourself with anguish at what's happening in the world around us, then something is wrong," he says. "How do we help get answers as best we can? I would suggest one of the most important ways we do that is through art, because art has a way of sucking us in and making us think."

The provocative nature of contemporary art — typically classified as the art movement spanning from the end of postmodernism and World II to today — is well poised to challenge today's audience with difficult



questions and answers. Beginning Jan. 23, prints of 40 world-renowned contemporary artists including Kiki Smith, Chuck Close, Damien Hirst, Hung Lui, Roy Lichtenstein and Kara Walker will go on display for *Under Pressure: Contemporary Prints from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and his Family Foundation* at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.

Schnitzer, a UO alum and Portland businessman and philanthropist, currently lays claim to the largest collection of contemporary prints in the country; he will speak about art collecting 11 am Saturday, Jan. 24, at the JSMA.

The work presented in the show, Schnitzer points out, grapples with contemporary and timeless issues in American society — for example, Enrique Chagoya's "The Pastoral or Arcadian State: Illegal Alien's Guide to Greater America."

"What he's doing," Schnitzer says of the San Francisco-based, Mexican-born artist, "is taking the themes of his community, his life, his society, his ethnicity, and he's putting them forth for us — often in a mocking, sarcastic way — forcing us to face the stereotypes of Hispanics."

The exhibit also pays homage to the widespread and meteoric rise of printmaking and print publishing houses post-World War II, which allowed artists not only the opportunity to be prolific, but also to be more experimental and collaborative in their work.

"They've given artists the ability to push the envelope of works on paper," Schnitzer says of the print houses. "Never in history has there been such an exciting transformation of an art form." ■

Under Pressure runs Jan. 24 through March 29 in the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's Barker Gallery. The exhibit's opening reception is from 6 to 8 pm Friday, Jan. 24; free.

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