



*Rock of Ages, oil, 40" by 80"*

*"This painting is a work of the Grand Canyon and depicts the Temple of Isis from the south rimmed canyon, looking north. Continuing eastward, and to the right, are the Colonnade and Buddha Temple—two additional prominent canyon features."*

left after two years, however, to join his uncle as part owner of a label manufacturing company and to start painting. He also got his private and instrument pilot license and flew for the label company and for the

*(Top left) Above the Whirling Din, oil, 24" by 30"*

*"As a pilot, my favorite place is 'above the clouds.' Here, I find solace from the clanging noise of the earthworm existence of the world below."*

*(Bottom left) Western Cumulonimbus, oil, 16" by 20"*

*"From the Latin cumulus, 'heaped,' and nimbus, 'rainstorm,' The Cumulonimbus is my favorite stage of cloud formation. As aviators, we are advised to have the ultimate respect for these cloud formations. The up and downdrafts from these giants can be dangerous. Hail and high winds can be disastrous to an aircraft, but the sheer majesty and power of the thundercloud is truly one nature's awe-inspiring beauties."*

Civil Air Patrol for 10 years. Flying, he says, gave him the perception to paint vast landscapes and cloudscapes.

In 1980, Chávez sold his interest in the manufacturing company so he could paint full time. "I was making money, but my heart wasn't in it," he says. "My love was art; I wanted to paint."

Chávez's first subjects were pueblos, but his love of—and fascination with—the land soon took over, especially the landscapes of the West. "I'm inspired by its majesty," he says. "We have exposed geology like nowhere else in the country. The clear skies and depth perception is incredible."

Chávez quit flying in 1983 for several reasons. "It was dangerous, flying with one engine and no copilot," he says. "I had a couple of near-death experiences. And I didn't want

to take time away from painting."

In 2018, while his studio was being gutted and remodeled, he began to paint in the weaving studio of his great grandfather, Reyes Ortega, in Chimayo, north of Santa Fe, New Mexico. "I had been focusing on my art for 38 years without stopping," he says. "I needed a little break, and I wanted to learn to fly drones, so I took a two-year sabbatical."

During that time, Chávez got licensed to fly drones commercially and has since taken about 600 videos for businesses and thousands of photos for himself. "Those photos are all digital," he says. "I put them on hard drives and store them in a safe."

Those photos provide him with a perspective of the land from above that neither he nor anyone else could achieve in person, and he uses them to create magical paintings

***"I often look at my paintings through red glasses."***