‘Dog Eat Dog,’ a painting the size of a wide-screen television, is an abstraction of organic life combined with inorganic materials. Chicago artist Marcos Raya keeps this creation of his on his art studio wall in Pilsen, displaying a consistent theme of reality abstracted by machinery through his artwork.

Raya has many pieces on sale at the Wunderkammer exhibit of Gallery Victor Armendariz on 300 W Superior St, Chicago until at least March 31. His work is selling well at the gallery as one of his napkin-sized collages sold for $50 thousand.

After examining his distinctive artwork at the gallery, Raya gave reporters a tour of his art studio in Pilsen. Subsequent to meeting in front of the building, Raya led the group along the side of the multi-story building and up a staircase that entered a huge warehouse area. Following this, one of the studio’s employees operated a manual elevator, lifting the group to the third floor where Raya presented and discussed much of his art assembly.

“When I do something, it’s got to be new or at least different,” Raya said, “unlike other artists who get stuck with their own technique to the point that they get repetitious.”

‘Sons of a Bad Life’ is a painting of a photo taken in Pilsen of people he personally knew, and he didn’t finish it until twenty years after he started in the 70s. “There was a point where Pilsen almost looked like a skid row,” Raya said, “And these guys were local bums... They drank themselves to bed.” The image shows seven men and a dog in the foreground of a street in Pilsen, with a car coming behind them and one of the men lying unconscious with a crown on his head. “I could tell these guys were about to die, so I took pictures of them,” Raya said. “Even the dog got hit by a car.”

Pilsen presented so much violence and concern to Raya when he arrived in 1964 that he moved out of town for a while. Raya depicted the sorrows of his early times in Pilsen in his self-portrait, ‘3 A.M.’ With a neighborhood view in the window behind him, he painted himself pitifully lying his head down on his desk with an empty bottle of alcohol and pistol beside him. “When someone asked me about my identity, I told them I left my mom’s house to find it.” He wanted to break the confinement of being identified too simply by Pilsen and his Mexican heritage.

“I wanted to collect inorganic stuff and fuse it with organic stuff,” Raya said. His abstract painting ‘Business is Business’ places modern technology alongside a gigantic organism, seemingly close to a monstrous cockroach. “I’m 73 years old and still working,” he said. “You don’t find full-time artists anywhere.” When asked what audiences should take away from his distinct art, Raya said, “It’s the work of an independent realist.”