

# ART *Seen* UPTOWN

**Artist:** Hector Canonge **Title:** "IDOLatrics" (2007)

**Exhibited:** Through June, Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance 178 Bennett Avenue at W. 189th Street

Sometimes all it takes is a trip to the grocery store. For most of us it there we decided what we're going to make that night. For Inwood Artist Hector Canonge, an innocent trip to the market opened the lid on what was to become "IDOLatrics."

"I never shop, even for food," Canonge said. But on a trip with a friend to pick something up he started looking around.

"I started noticing more and more the images of women – particularly on food products," he said. "Most of the images had the archetype of women: He saw the mother, the femme fatale, the whore.

Canonge had read "Idols of Perversity," a feminist book by Bram Dijkstra and was swayed.

"I had already started working with technology. Particularly barcode technology," Canonge said. "It sort of translated into the codification of women."

In a world where touching art is usually against the rules, an interactive piece called "IDOLatrics" is fun. It's a big black box, with clear plastic tubes rising out of it. Attached to the tubes are jars and cans of food. Attached to the wall is a bar-code scanner. You pass the scanner's eye over a can of food, say a fun looking jar with someone wearing a sombrero, and an old video clip from a movie pops up on the a flat computer screen hung on the wall

"I wanted them to touch them, just

like you got to the store," he said.

It is fun, Canonge said, often referring to people "playing" with the piece. But the associations are thoughtful and deep.

"Most of the films come from the Golden Age of Hispanic film," Canonge said, from between the 1930 and 1950. These are films he grew up with and loves and closely typifies the women he sees on the labels.

"I spent probably about four months watching film – which is great because it's my passion," he said.

He also spent months looking through market and bodega isles finding the eclectic mix of Hispanic products in "IDOLatrics."

Canonge has studied comparative literature, film making and mixed media and brings all three interests to "IOLDatrics."

The Universal Product Code, or UPC, on each of the Hispanic products in "IDOLatrics" speaks to the globalization of products and back to women with imagery, representation and, with the UPC, codification.

Even though he picked products marketed to Hispanics, Canonge says the theme is universal, and could easily have been done with more mainstream U.S. products. Think Aunt Jemima maple syrup. "Every country, every ethnic group of every society has this," Canonge said.



~ Daniel P. Bader