

# Maggie Taylor and Tom Chambers

by Antoine Tanguay

## The Saboteurs of Reality



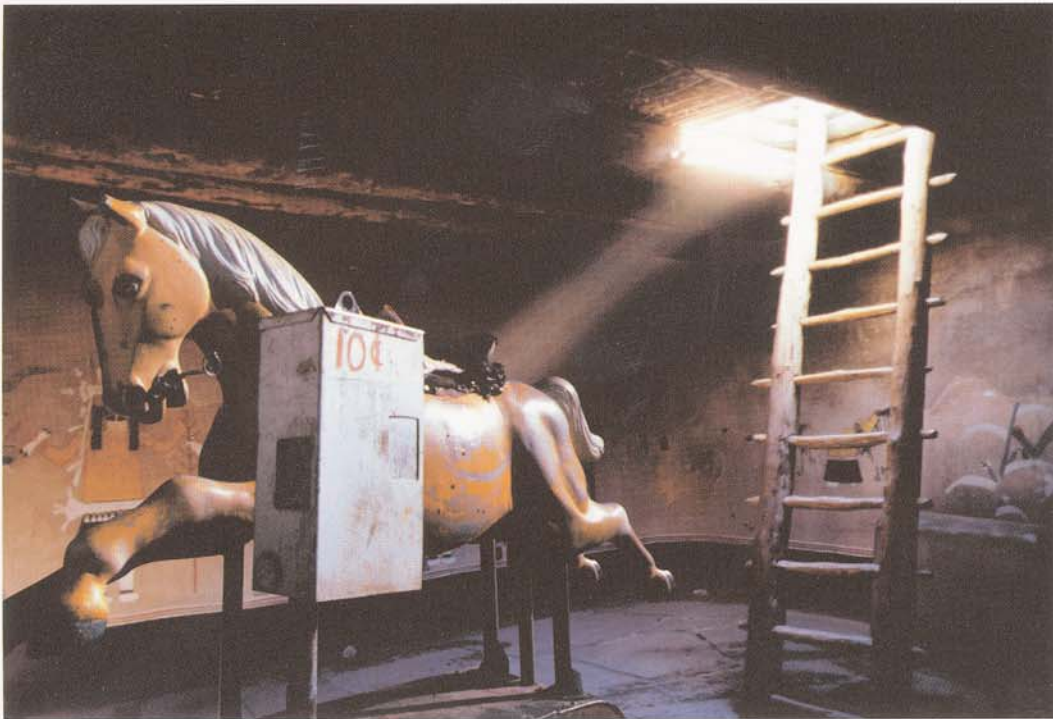
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In the first half of this article Antoine Tanguay writes about Maggie Taylor. Please see a link to Maggie Taylor's website under "Links". This article has been translated from French.

## Tom Chambers: The Collage Looking Backward

Like Maggie Taylor, thanks to Photoshop, Tom Chambers became fascinated by the ex-voto art form while on a trip in Mexico. Traditionally painted on surfaces made of metal or wood, an ex-voto is a representation of a miracle which one witnesses and which is offered as thanks to the saint who helped the creator of the piece.

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Inspired by these scenes which were stamped of a passionate nature and describe extraordinary events, Chambers first builds his imagery by using his Nikon FM3 or his Mamiya Pro TL. He then digitizes his negatives to assemble them according to his whim of the moment. And so, in the case of "Plymouth Rock" (see picture above), the discovery of an intriguing whirlpool in a lake made him think of associating this image with the shot of the classic car belonging to his brother, a few fish to add a bit color, and most of all, since an anchoring element to the scene was missing, the final addition being the photo of Chambers' neighbor's daughter. All these elements were around him, yet nothing would be expected to work together except for the instinct and desire to express a new emotion. "Usually, photography by its nature wants to document a precise moment in time. My work doesn't consist of documenting but rather illustrating fleeting moods that can't be captured by a traditional camera or seen by the naked eye. Therefore, I consider myself to be both an illustrator and a photographer. My grandfather was a painter. Maybe I am following a family tradition within a different artistic realm," says Chambers.

Like tiny germinating stories with themes of water and fire, two recurring elements in the Mexican ex-voto, the assemblages by Chambers show scenes from a world one would believe to come straight from the dreams of a sleeping child's spirit, a world where exaggeration and fantasies are the driving force of searching a sense of mystery and one's faith. Still, his images are open to individual interpretation: "I try to create scenes that are ambiguous, where it is up to the viewer to interpret what is happening."

As with Maggie Taylor's collages, Tom Chambers' works of art bridge the gap between an inspiration belonging to the past and decisively modern techniques. A photographer for many years, he readily admits, as with Taylor as well, that the discovery of Photoshop has been essential and that even today he hasn't grasped all the nuances of the software: "I believe that someone can work with Photoshop for many years and still only scratch the surface, without catching sight of all the possibilities. I am therefore concentrating on my needs in order to perfect my art." The mysteries of faith as with digital technology keep being impenetrable...

It goes without saying that digital imaging software isn't and will never be a proof of artistic quality. There will always be limits and even with the countless filters on hand made available, one cannot fix a bad image. To this point, Chambers is well in hand to accept the challenge facing creators who have learned to work with digital imaging software: "up to twenty years ago, the illusions created in a darkroom certainly impressed the viewer, but these tricks of the hand are no longer enough. The artist must create a true mood since the viewer has become, the future being inevitable, much more demanding." With a little courage and determination and a good dose of inspiration, anyone can feed the seeds of creation that sleeps in each of us. One just needs to dare and to associate oneself with works of art like those of Chambers and Taylor so as to have as many aces in one's pocket and therefore perfect the fascinating work-of-art's relationship between photography and illustration.