

Tom Chambers

ENTROPIC KINGDOM



Flying Big Blue [original in color]

What ideas are essential to you concerning the 'Entropic Kingdom' series?

'Entropic' is defined as a lack of order or predictability, or a gradual decline into disorder. The idea behind this series is that man has ignored the fragility of the environment, and his disregard is causing the animal kingdom to undergo negative changes. The animal population is affected as regular climate patterns are destroyed. Mammals compete for smaller spaces, and temperature changes limit fish, bird and insect migration. I'm attempting to illustrate the animal world that's been thrown out of kilter.

What typically is your process in creating an image? What is the balance of planning and preparation versus the actual execution of the final image?

Inspirations for images can come to me at any time. Initially, I sketch out a concept or idea I have for an image, keeping in mind what is feasible. It's very easy to go over the top or to the conceptual extreme with images that are put together digitally, and I occasionally have to reign myself in.

Generally, each element in the image is shot separately using a digital Nikon or a medium format film camera. This process may take a month, depending upon how quickly I am able to get all the shots and sort through them, picking the ones that work best together. Elements of the final image may include the landscape or background, often shot in sections, as well as the sky, a human figure, an animal, or another object. If I use film, it is processed and scanned at a high resolution, approximately 80 megabytes per frame. Then, I use Photoshop software with a Macintosh computer combining each element to create the final image. Lastly, the image is printed with archival pigment inks on a cotton rag paper.

When it comes to editing your work, what is your process?

I edit my work as I go. It's pretty obvious to me when an image is not working. There could be different reasons for that. Visually, the elements might not work well together, or conceptually it's an image that doesn't work with the rest of the series, or the image is not strong enough. There is a fine line to making photomontages. It is very easy to push the image too far, into the hokey realm, or not far enough and the image is too mundane. My rule of thumb is to create an image that is possible in reality, but not probable.

Why did you choose photography versus another means of expression?

I took the usual art school photo classes but didn't get serious about photography until, as an art director, I discovered Photoshop in the early 90's. My workplace had many of the necessary tools for me to experiment and I was familiar with scanning and printing processes. It was almost as if this artistic direction fell into my lap. I enjoy the spontaneity of using the computer, being able to choose elements, and rearranging compositions. With my background in graphic design, it was the perfect fit.

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(opposite above) *Cow Girl* [original in color]
(opposite below) *Ashly with Deer* [original in color]

Feeding Time [original in color]



move close, inspect the beauty and power of the animal and the print, to indulge himself in unguarded, child-like pleasure as he remembers these old friends from childhood.

If there is one main idea, story or common thread that runs through all of your photographs, what would you say it is?

My approach to making photographs is tied together by my desire to figure something out and then to find a way to represent that in photographs. I teach photography at the university level. The point that I most emphasize to my students is that photography is a language, a very seductive, expansive and powerful code of symbols with which to communicate ideas and express sentiments.

In my own work, I tend to formulate an idea or a question that I want to explore, begin taking pictures, and then start experimenting with different styles of execution until I find an approach that makes sense with what I'm trying to say. I don't think I have a specific style per se, as each series calls for its own visual solution.

What does being a photographer mean to your life?

It means that I'm lucky enough to have a tool that allows me to go look at things that perhaps would not be accessible to me without the camera. It means that I digest the world around me in a way that my eyes, brain and heart are constantly engaged in dialog with each other. It means that I get to interact with people—students, other photographers and artists, and the public at large—in a way that I find rich, stimulating and gratifying. It sanctifies my natural curiosity about the life we've constructed for ourselves and allows me to ask questions through photographs. □



Nine Francois Ferret

If there is one main idea, story or common thread that runs through all of your photographs, what would you say it is?

Probably the most significant thing that I want to emphasize is that I am not interested in documenting, or in the classical role of photography in society, history, etc. I do not mean to say anything with my photography, because I am sure that people interpret images entirely on the basis of their own experience, and experience is unique for each of us. For me a camera is a tool for obtaining and preserving proofs of my existence and maybe this is why I still prefer analogue photography. Firstly, the most significant thing that lies at the basis of all my photography series is the link of their plotline with the content of my dreams—rooms, houses, and frontiers that represent the main key motives of my dreams. Secondly, I am interested in representation and interpretation of space and environment in the spectator's consciousness, which gives identity and value to that which is depicted on the photograph. Probably these are two main reasons why I always see the ironical in the conceptions of my works, although irony is not emphasized as the chief aspect of my works.

What does being a photographer mean to your life?

To me photography is a way of self-satisfaction. □

If there is one main idea, story or common thread that runs through all of your photographs, what would you say it is?

The common thread expressed in my work addresses the mystery of the reality in which we live. The mystery is perpetuated by the surprising, but significant, connection among all living things.

What does being a photographer mean to your life?

Photography lets me continue the direction my family has taken in the arts since my grandfather painted illustrations in the 1920's. What I am doing is essentially a continuation of his work, but using a different medium. The thrill of 'carrying the flag' for my family is further enhanced by

the excitement I find in displaying my work both nationally and internationally through the use of print and Internet channels. Opportunities such as the upcoming Fotográfica Biennial in Bogota, Colombia will push me to grow professionally as I meet fellow international photographers and travel in another culture. □

Second, never ever pass up photo opportunities. I can't remember how many times I've said to myself, 'Oh, I'll get back there again the next time and get that shot.' Trust me, it almost never happens. I've learned the hard way that, as a photographer, you need to take advantage of whatever opportunities life places in front of you. Don't let it slip through your fingers.

If you could choose one photographer (living or dead) to create a portrait of you, whom would you pick?

Definitely a wet collodion portrait made by Sally Mann. There's just something about the work that she's done beginning with her 'Deep South' series and the recent portraits of her children, as well as herself, that just knock my socks off.

If there is one main idea, story or common thread that runs through all of your photographs, what would you say it is?

There's definitely a thread of whimsy, humor and wonder in just about all my work. I've almost always been drawn to things that either make me laugh, or cause me to do a second take. As most of my friends will tell you, my humor is fairly twisted. If it happens to be out of context to the locale, so much the better. For example, there was a (now torn down) sculpture of eight cars, impaled on a giant spindle in the middle of a strip mall, in a Chicago suburb. That appealed to my sense of humor. I nearly got into an accident when I first saw the 'Hell Is Real' billboard out of my rearview mirror as I was driving down an eastern Kentucky interstate. I ended up going 20 miles out of the way in order to get that image.

What does being a photographer mean to your life?

It's my one true creative outlet. I'm probably happiest when I'm out shooting images and trying to make art. If I didn't have that outlet, I'd probably drive everyone—and myself—crazy. Or crazier than I already do. □



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(above)
Tom Chambers
The Offering from the series *Entropic Kingdom*
(original in color)