

## **TOM SERIES**

### **Self-portraits based on Tom R. Chambers' life experiences**

Tom R. Chambers utilizes the self-portrait to project his life experiences. His portrait remains constant with the experience (situation) indicated as a change or flux in the image. The accompanying text details his experience with the inclusion of links to the Internet for additional information. "Tom Series" is not only an artwork about Chambers' life - biography (visual/textual) - but also a reference tool, a study of history through his existence.

The constancy of the same portrait (Chambers' image) indicates a human being's existence within a world/an environment that's ever influencing and changing the psyche and at some point in time - later (twilight) years for this individual, the psyche begins to take control and evaluate the process - vis-a-vis, "Tom Series".

Viewers of the same generation will probably begin to travel down their own personal memory lanes that may or may not cross his own. As they look at a particular image and read the text of "Tom Series", they may very well have had a similar to almost same experience. If not, they might begin to think about what they were doing during that particular time period when he was involved in his particular life activity and even compare their and Chambers' activities - more or less fortunate, happier or unhappier - and other situational aspects that determine the human condition. And for particular viewers, their life experiences might weave in and out of his, creating a subliminal connection - similar to the helix that equates all life at the biochemical level.

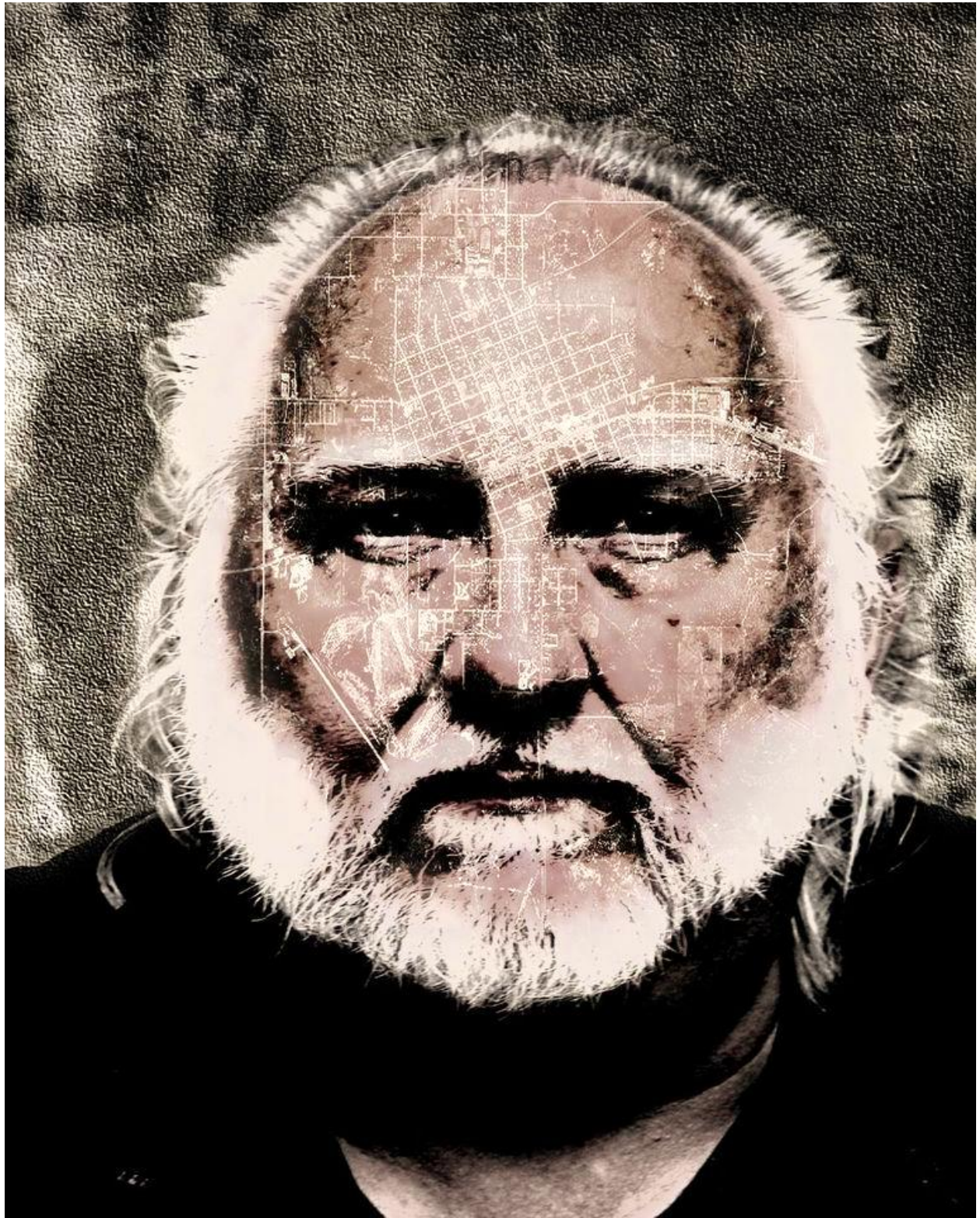
Viewers of today's generation - the young generation - will get a hint of what has come before them and might be ahead of them in an immediate sense. "Tom Series" becomes a litmus test for this generation to begin to gauge their own lives - an indicator of pitfalls to avoid and opportunities to take advantage of - a lifeline (in palmistry) to begin to evaluate their own in a projected sense and as it might relate to their parents'/grandparents' lives. The project might even bring the young generation closer to their parents/grandparents, and they (younger generation) might want to know more about them (parents/grandparents) and the older generation, generally.

Chambers regrets that he didn't get to know his parents better (see Jean Tom and Joe Tom). And he regrets that he didn't share in his son's childhood (see Father Tom). Maybe this is the main reason for "Tom Series".

## **Hometown Tom**

A satellite photo (courtesy of USGS, 2005) of Chambers' hometown (Nocona, Texas, U.S.A.) is superimposed onto his face to indicate that he and his hometown are inseparable even though commonality has been lost over the years due to Chambers' living away and lifestyle. He attended first/fourth grades there with occasional visits during the summer season.

When he thinks of his hometown ... a small leather goods, cattle ranching, and farming community of about 3000 people ... he has fond memories, and he regrets that he hasn't visited more often. His grandparents, parents, brother and other family members are buried there, and he hopes this area will be his last resting place as well.



## **Tube Tom**

The classic Indian head TV test pattern is superimposed ... similar to war paint ... onto Chambers' face to indicate programming influence on his childhood and adolescence (1950s - 1960s). Chambers is a Baby Boomer ... born in 1947 ... and part of the first generation to be nurtured and entertained by the tube. The test pattern became an industry standard, and it was originally developed by RCA.

Chambers remembers his father ... and his grandfather ... grappling with the TV remote control that came out in the 1950s and the occasional arguing between his mother and father over which program to watch. He fondly remembers his mother having to sit in front of the television in the mornings and afternoons to watch her soap operas. And when his father came home after work, it was couch and TV time before and after dinner.





## **Joe Kim Tom**

Chambers' brother's name and birth/death date are superimposed ... similar to etched stone ... onto his forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate a tombstone (death mask) to indicate his experience as a result of his brother's death in 1953. He died at birth, and a few days later, Chambers vaguely remembers peering into a tiny casket to see him. He does remember his mother, father and other family members visibly upset.

At the time, Chambers was six years old, and this was his first encounter with death. He has always said over the years that he was an only child, but underlying his comment has always been the fact that he had lost a brother. He always wonders who his brother would have grown up to be and what kind of relationship they would have had.





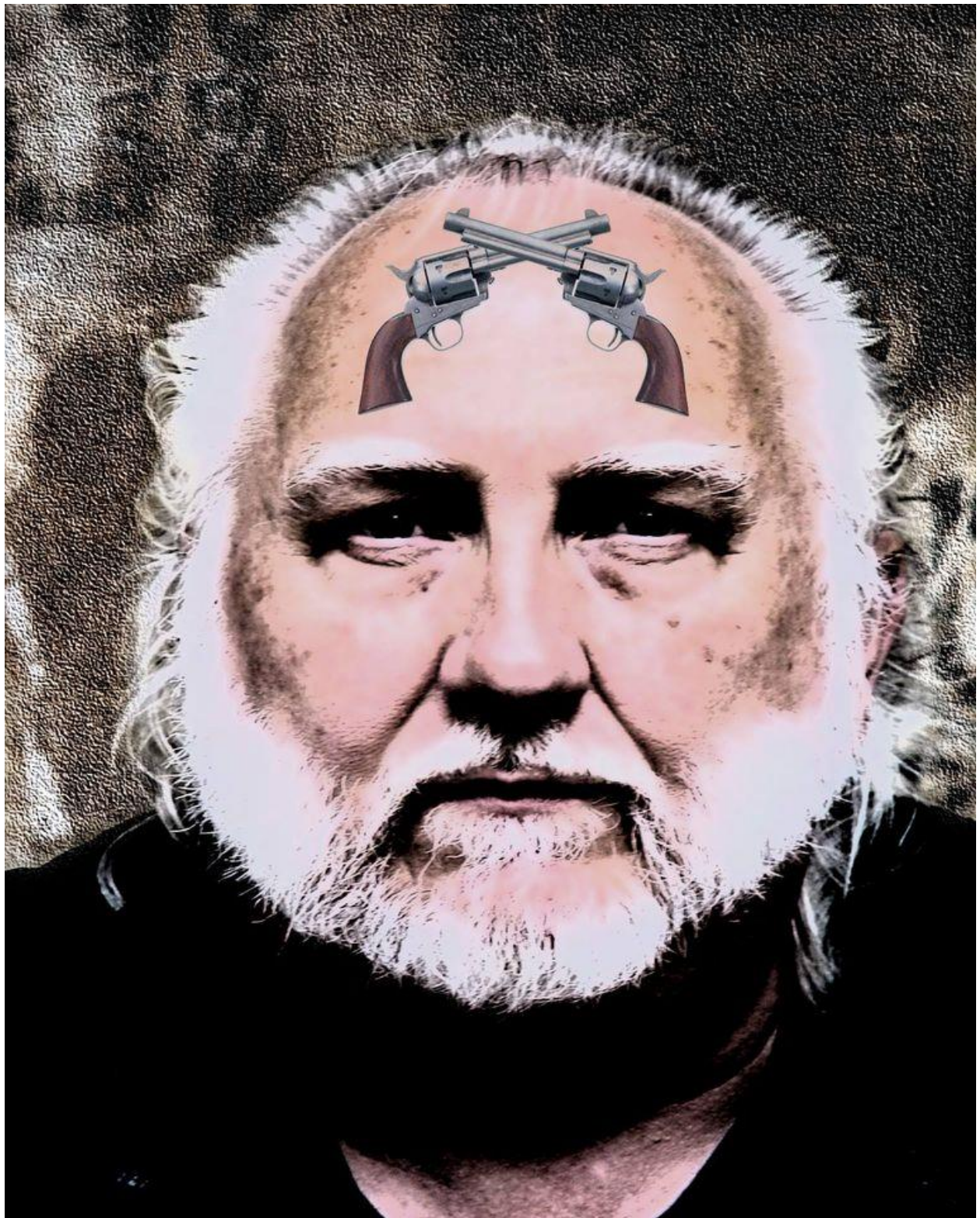
## **Cowboy Tom**

A pair of 1873 Uberti Cattleman series, single-action revolvers (six-shooters/six-guns) are superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate the influence "The Old West" (movie and TV Westerns) had on him when he was a child. His father bought him a toy gun and holster set (double ... one on each hip) when he was in the second grade (1954 - 1955) in Sunset, Texas.

He remembers wearing his guns ... almost as big as he was ... to school and checking them in with his home room teacher. Many of his classmates (boys) did the same and at recess, they would check them out to play cowboys/Indians and good guys/bad guys (lawmen/outlaws). He had a girlfriend (Judy), and he also remembers defending her as they hid behind a cardboard box ... to simulate a large rock ... for protection.

Today, Chambers is greatly saddened that children bring real guns to school and kill their fellow classmates and teachers. And it's hard for him to fathom this change in mentality/morality ... ironic behavior ... over a fifty-year period.



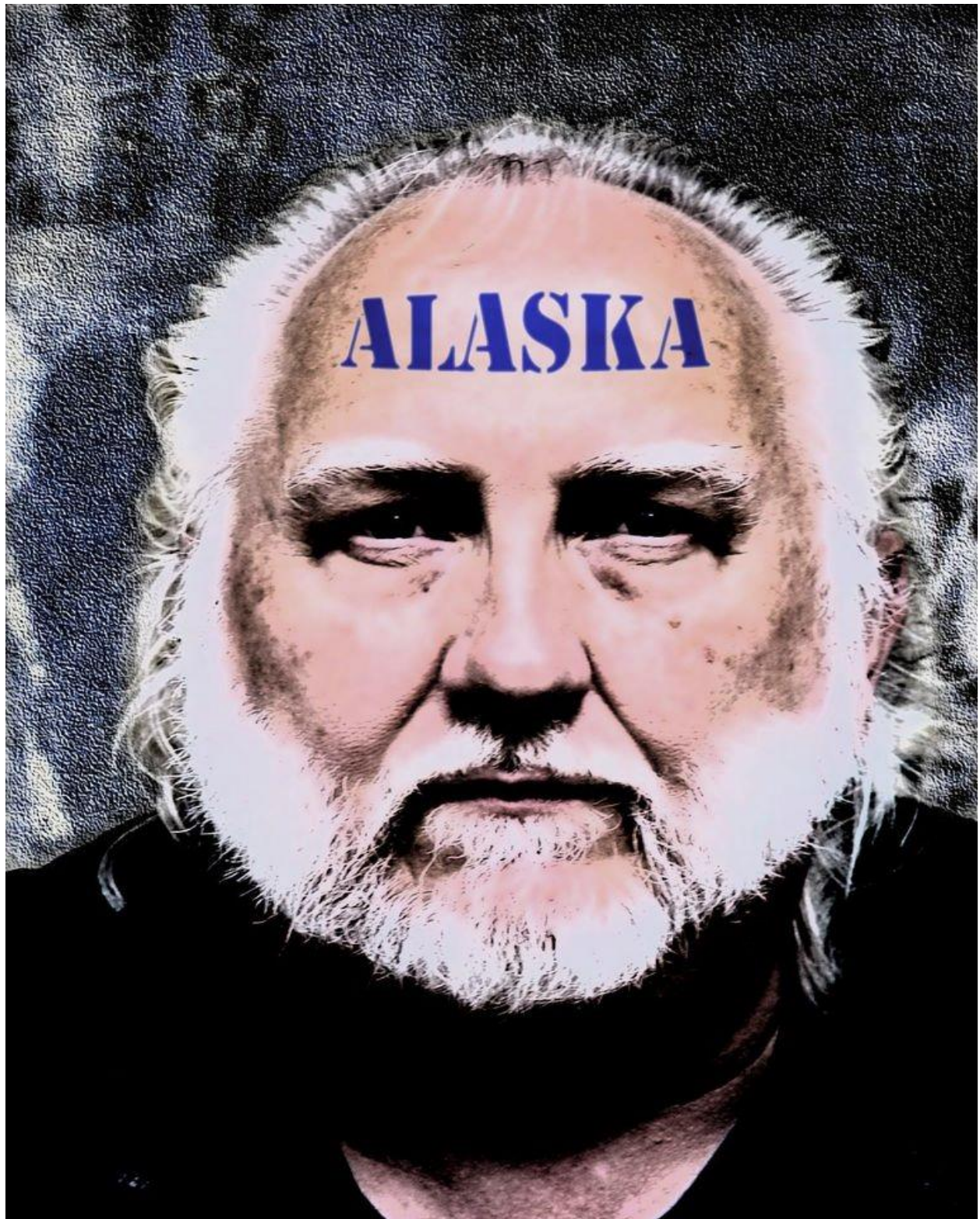


## **Territory Tom**

The word Alaska is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead ... similar to stenciling on a package to be shipped or delivered a long distance ... to indicate his move there in 1957 when it was still a Territory to join his father who was doing contract work. He remembers his mother and uncle (her brother) taking turns behind the wheel as they drove from Texas to Alaska. Upon entering Canada, they traveled along the famous Alcan Highway (built during World War II).

For a nine-year-old boy at the time, Chambers' trip was an adventure, and his stay in the Territory was one of wonderment. While living and going to school in Anchorage and Fairbanks, he also experienced glaciers, gold panning, Mount McKinley, Northern Lights (aurora borealis) and dog sledding. Again for a child, Chambers was "Alex in Wonderland" (vis-a-vis "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland") ... a place that bespoke of The American "Old West".





## **President Tom**

A vote button is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate his election as President of the Student Council when he was in the seventh grade in Lompoc, California (1959 - 1960). This was the first time that he was considered to be popular and have the potential to lead among his peers.

Chambers remembers ... mostly girls ... running his campaign during the school election and after he was elected, supervising student body activities and running council meetings. This process helped him overcome some of his shyness and appreciate the political system. And he remembers his mother and father being proud of his ability to walk into a new situation (Chambers' first year at that school) and manage to move into a leadership role.





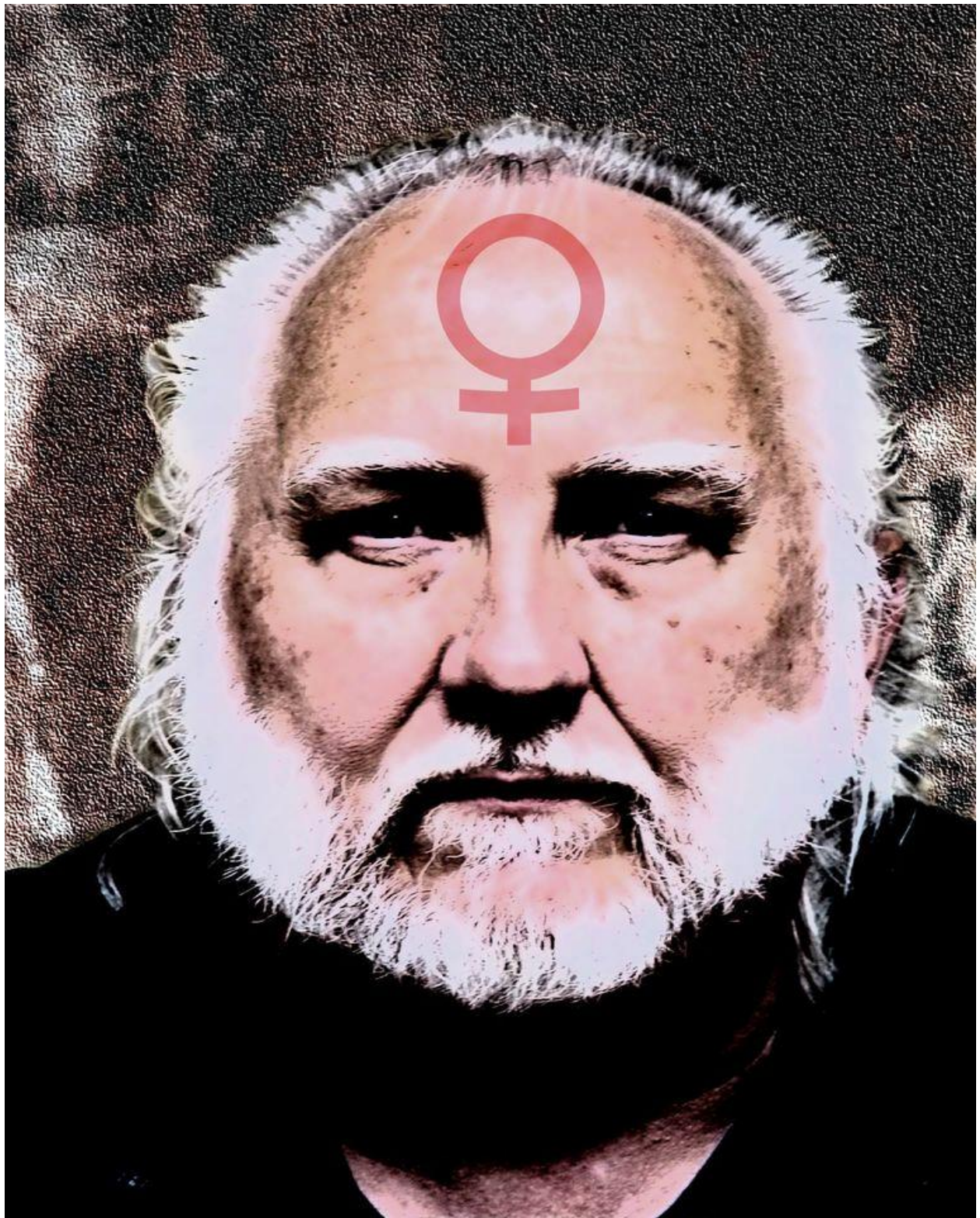
### **First Love Tom**

The female symbol or Venus Sigil is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate his encounter with the opposite sex he deemed as his first love when he was in the eighth grade (Topeka, Kansas). She was in the seventh grade.

He remembers dancing with her at the Friday-night dances sponsored by his school. They were considered a couple, and all eyes were on them when it was their turn to slow dance. Chambers remembers being so nervous that he literally shook as he brought his girlfriend closer to begin the dance.

The encounter that school year (1960 - 1961) was probably more pubescent than love since he was only thirteen years old, but in his mind ... serious ... serious enough to cry like a baby when he had to move away from her due to his father changing jobs.





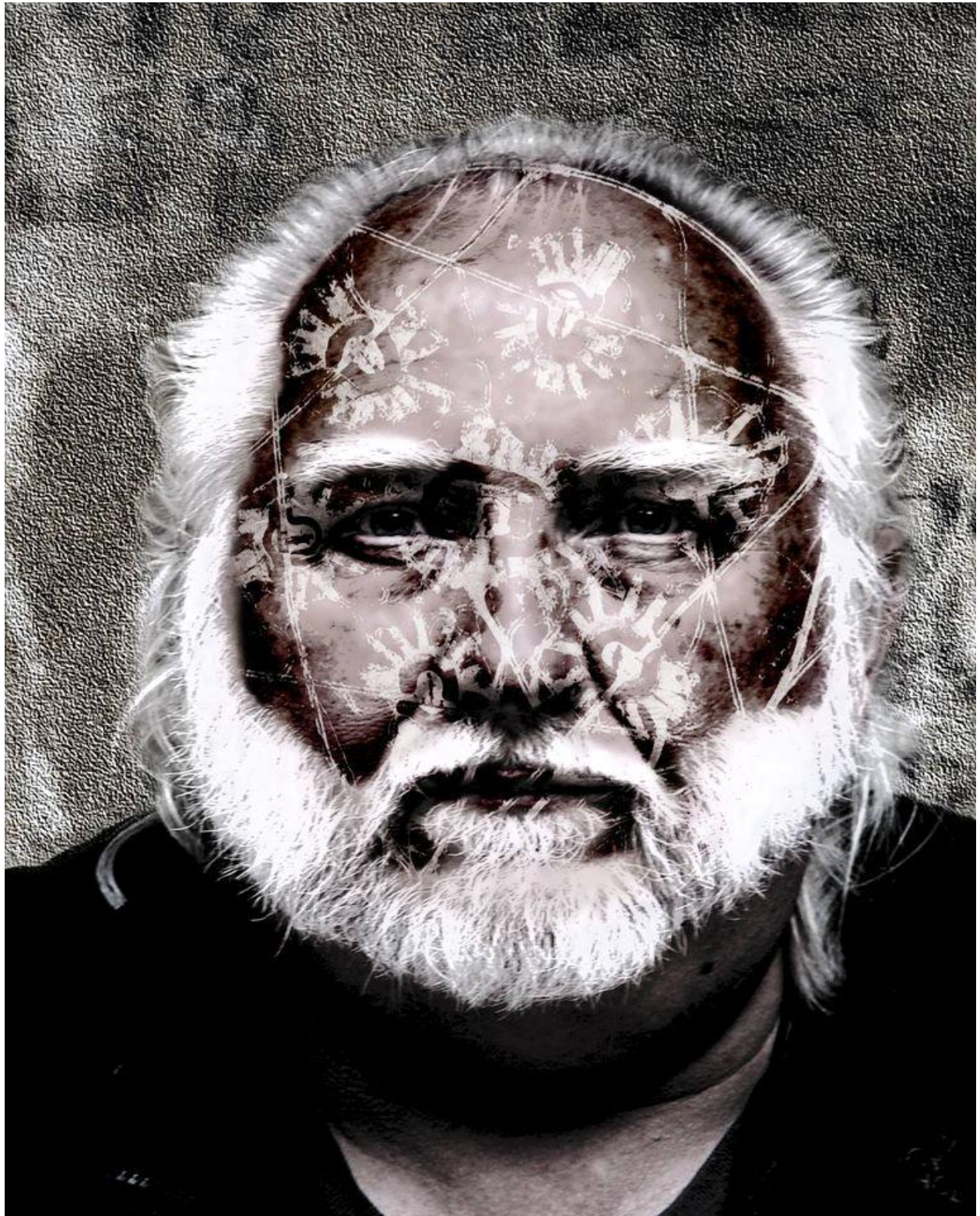
## **Crisis Tom**

A reconnaissance photo (#5; completed SA-2 missile site showing characteristic Star of David pattern; courtesy of the Dino A. Brugioni Collection at The National Security Archive, The George Washington University) is superimposed onto Chambers' face to indicate the stressful nature of his experience in 1962 because of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

At the time and particularly on October 22 when President John F. Kennedy informed the world that the Soviet Union was building secret missile bases in Cuba, Chambers was living precariously close to missile silos in the Lincoln, Nebraska area (His father worked on the silos.) ... more than likely a prime target or at least it felt that way for him as a fifteen-year old.

The Thirteen Days (now a movie) of confrontation ... on the brink of a nuclear holocaust ... between America and the Soviet Union passed with the removal of the missiles from Cuba.





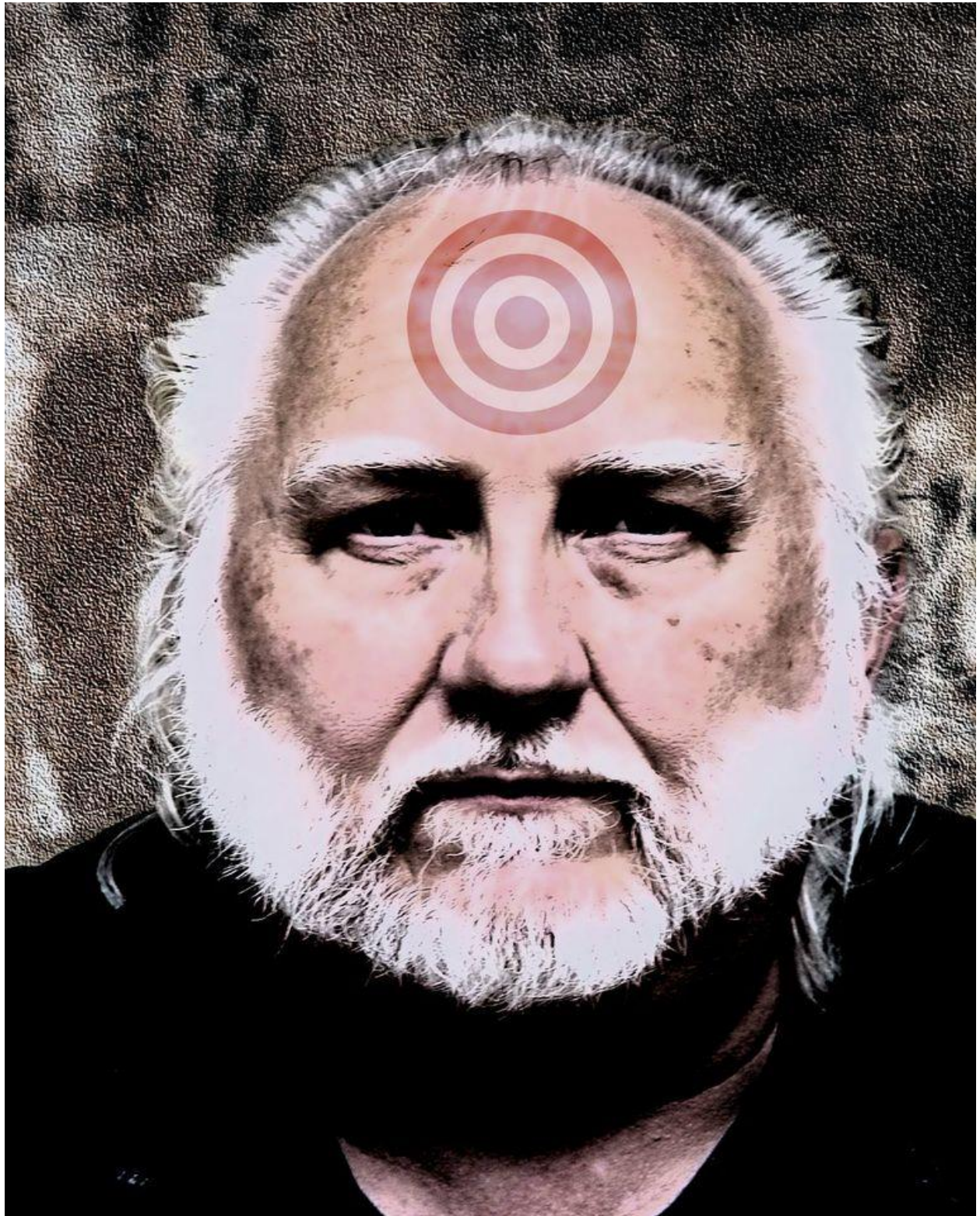
## **Target Tom**

A target is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate his traumatic experience as a junior at Austin High School in El Paso when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. He was sitting in his geometry class when words came over the public speakers that the President had been shot.

Chambers froze as well as everyone else in America. School was let out, and he spent the next several days in tears and glued to the television watching the news and the funeral procession for the late President. He remembers John John saluting and Jackie walking up to the casket with her children to kneel before it.

When Kennedy died, it was as if the entire nation had been targeted. And Chambers was (is) uncomfortable with the fact that the assassination happened in his home state. The network coverage of the aftermath is one of the most moving and historic passages in broadcasting history.





## **Bill Tom**

Chambers' grandfather's name and birth/death dates are superimposed ... similar to etched stone ... onto his forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate a tombstone (death mask) to indicate his traumatic experience as a result of his grandfather's (mother's father's) death in 1964. He and his mother were living in El Paso, Texas at the time, and he remembers his mother receiving a phone call that her father was in the hospital and critically ill. They jumped into the car and drove to Nocona, Texas ... several hundred miles away ... and arrived just a few hours before his death.

Out of several grandchildren, Chambers was probably the closest to his grandfather since he visited and stayed with his grandparents on numerous occasions (summer vacations). Chambers remembers helping his grandfather take care of his herd of cattle and sitting (on small, wooden box chairs) in his small country store talking with the oil field workers and neighbors when they would come in to buy a Coke/Dr. Pepper and something to eat.

And he remembers going (in a red Ford pickup truck) ... almost every day during the summer of 1960 ... with his grandfather to an area nearby to watch workers constructing a large dam to create a lake. Today, this lake ... Lake Nocona ... is one of the better lakes for fishing and recreational sports in Texas. Chambers misses his grandfather.



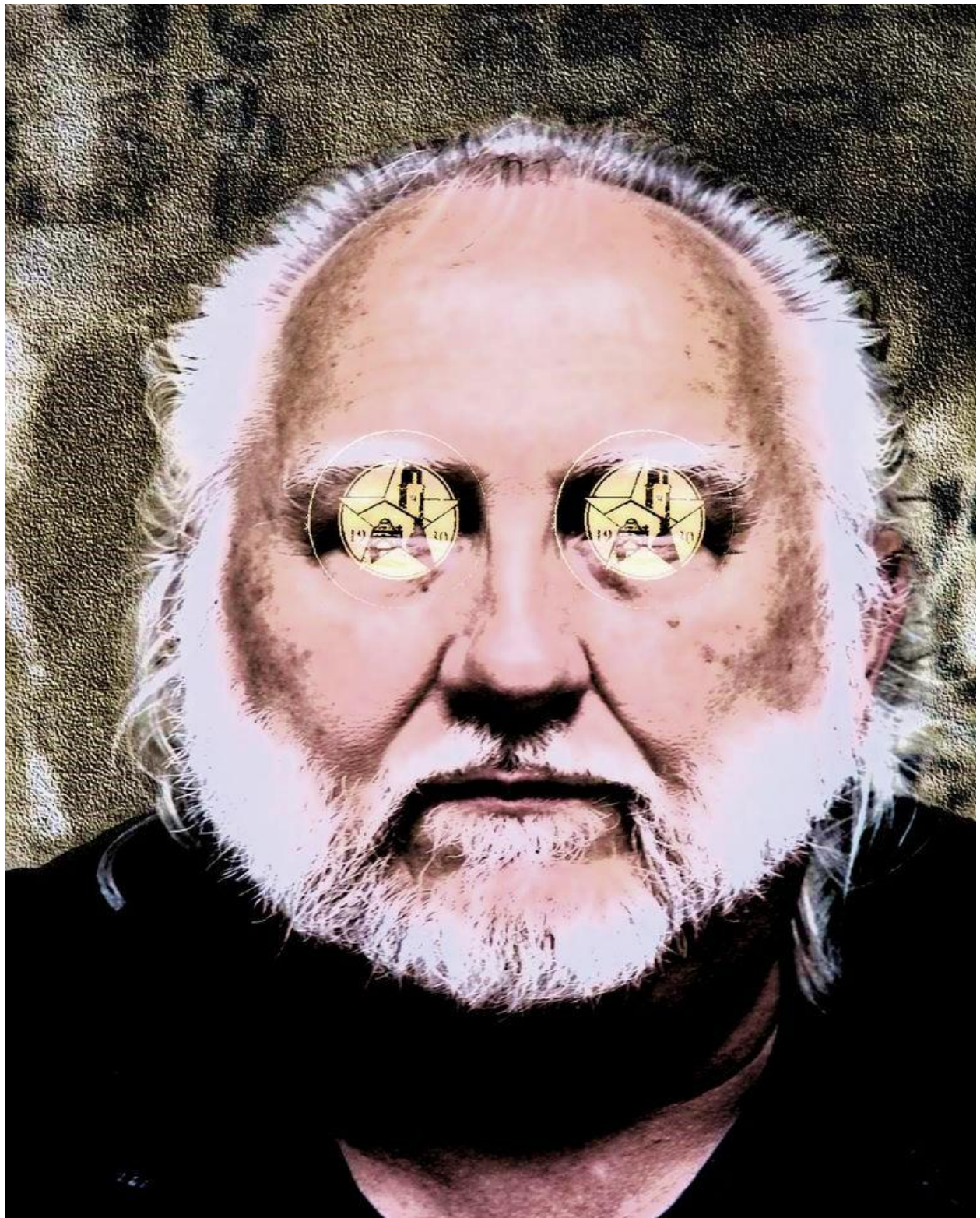


## **AHS Tom**

The logo of Chambers' alma mater, Austin High School (El Paso, Texas, U.S.A.) is blended into his face to cover his eyes similar to being "starry-eyed" ... naively idealistic ... in his age of youth and innocence as he went through the mechanics of studying various subjects during high school. He looks back on his cultural and social ignorance at the time, and he hopes that today's educational institutions are approaching their young participants in a more holistic fashion.

He does have fond memories of the pep rallies for the school's football team. The student body would turn out in force to cheer on the team ... one that was a powerhouse in the district. He had a desire to play, but he was too small within a student population of 3000 that contained a large pool of larger boys. So he settled on watching them play at home and sometimes away every Friday night. Chambers graduated in 1965.





## **Chief Tom**

Lips are superimposed onto Chambers' face ... similar to kiss imprints ... to indicate his introduction to petting (making out) at the Chief Drive-in Theater in his hometown (Nocona, Texas) during summer vacations when he was a senior in high school through his sophomore year in college (1964 - 1967). He remembers using his mother's car to pick up a local girl then head to the drive-in theater to not necessarily watch the movie.

It seems they always ended up in the back seat. But when Chambers recalls these moments, they were no more intimate than a child licking ice cream. He credits his caution and/or ignorance to his upbringing and the times.

He does have fond memories of the Chief Drive-in Theater, which no longer exists. He remembers the tinny sound of the outdoor speaker that hung on the car window and the smell of the food from the snack bar. And when he thinks of the Chief, he also recalls numerous times he and his parents went to the movies at a drive-in theater in various locales.





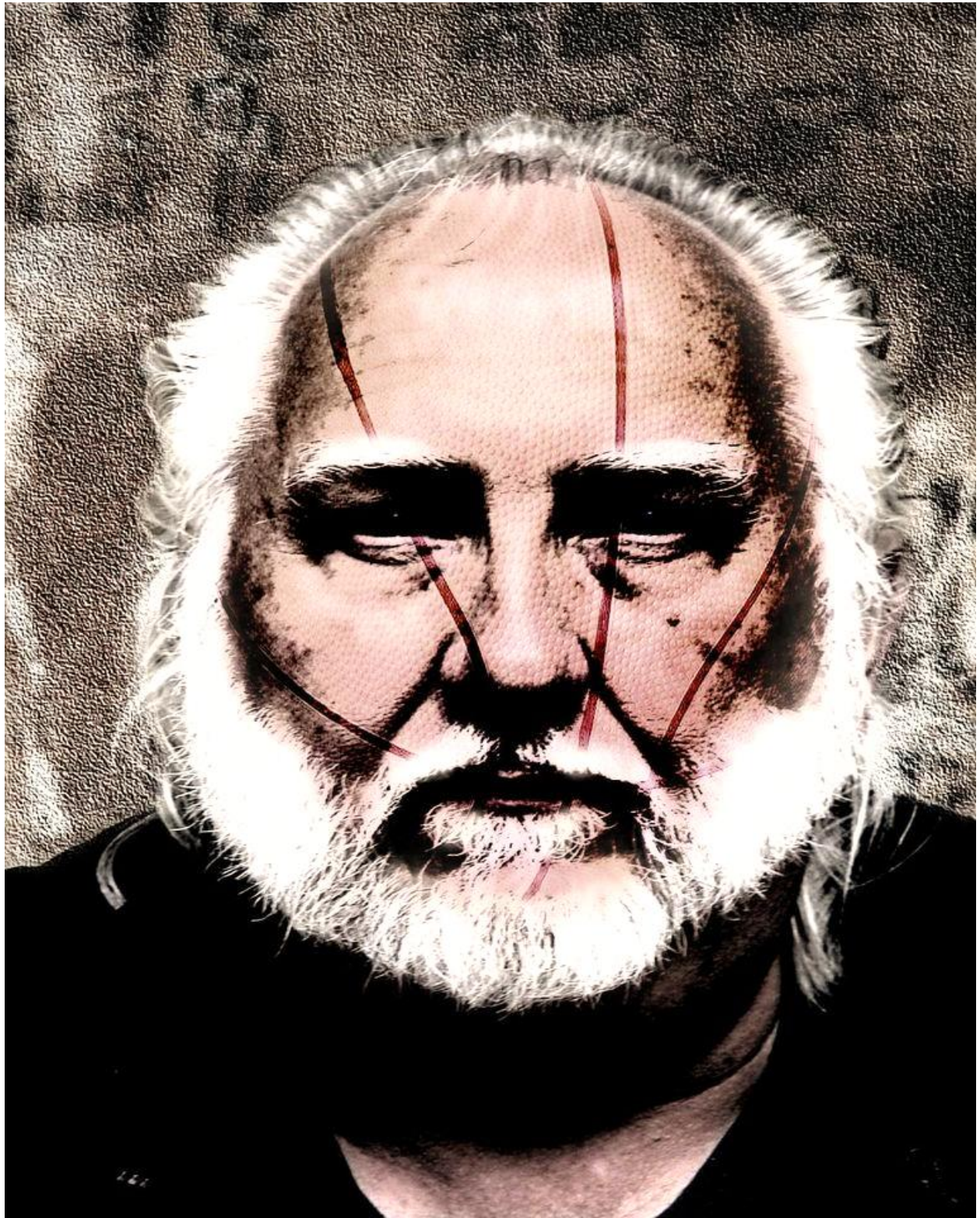
## **NCAA Tom**

A basketball is superimposed onto Chambers' face to indicate his fortuitous and almost ruinous first year (1965 - 1966) in college at Texas Western College (now The University of Texas at El Paso) in El Paso, Texas due to his college basketball team (Miners) making it all the way as the NCAA Champions.

He lived in the same dormitory as the team and like most of his classmates, attended every game that year even at the demise of many of his night classes to see history being made, and indeed it was. The Miners squad beat the heavily favored Kentucky Wildcats with the first all-black starting lineup in the NCAA men's basketball finals. And Chambers along with most of the Texas Western student body partook in a nightlong campus and street celebrations.

A movie has been made about the all-black team ... in a mostly all-white college sport at the time ... winning the championship: Glory Road.



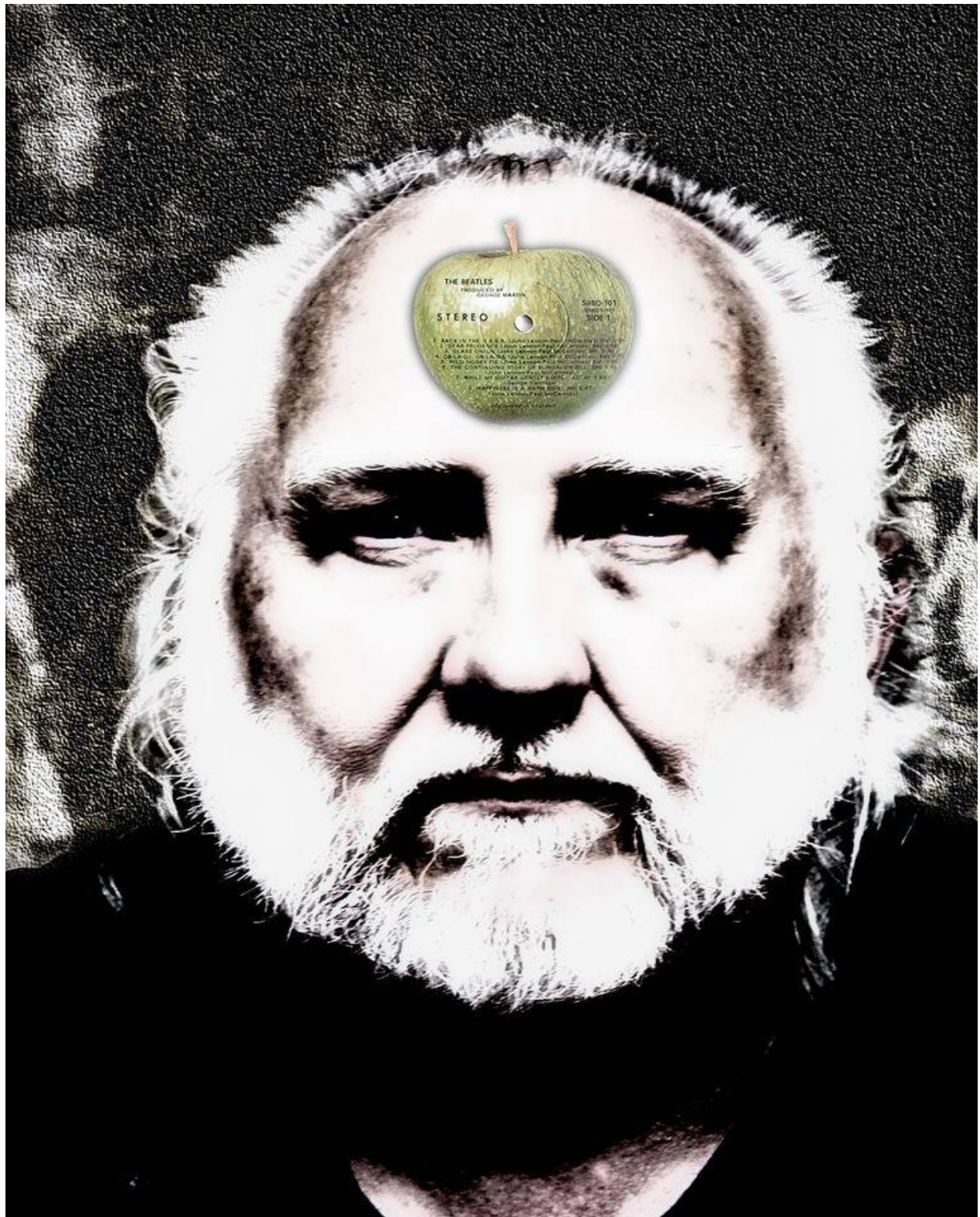




## **Apple Tom**

The Beatles' Apple logo is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead, and his face is whitened to indicate not only the influence that The Beatles had on his generation, but also the tremendous impact that their "The White Album" had on him when he was in his senior year (1968) in college (Midwestern State University).

He remembers his roommate walking in with the album saying, "You've got to listen to this!" And they did, over and over. The album name was actually "The Beatles", but over time and due to its color ... white (no designs/patterns) ... Chambers and almost everyone called it "The White Album". This album marked the first on the then newly formed Apple label.



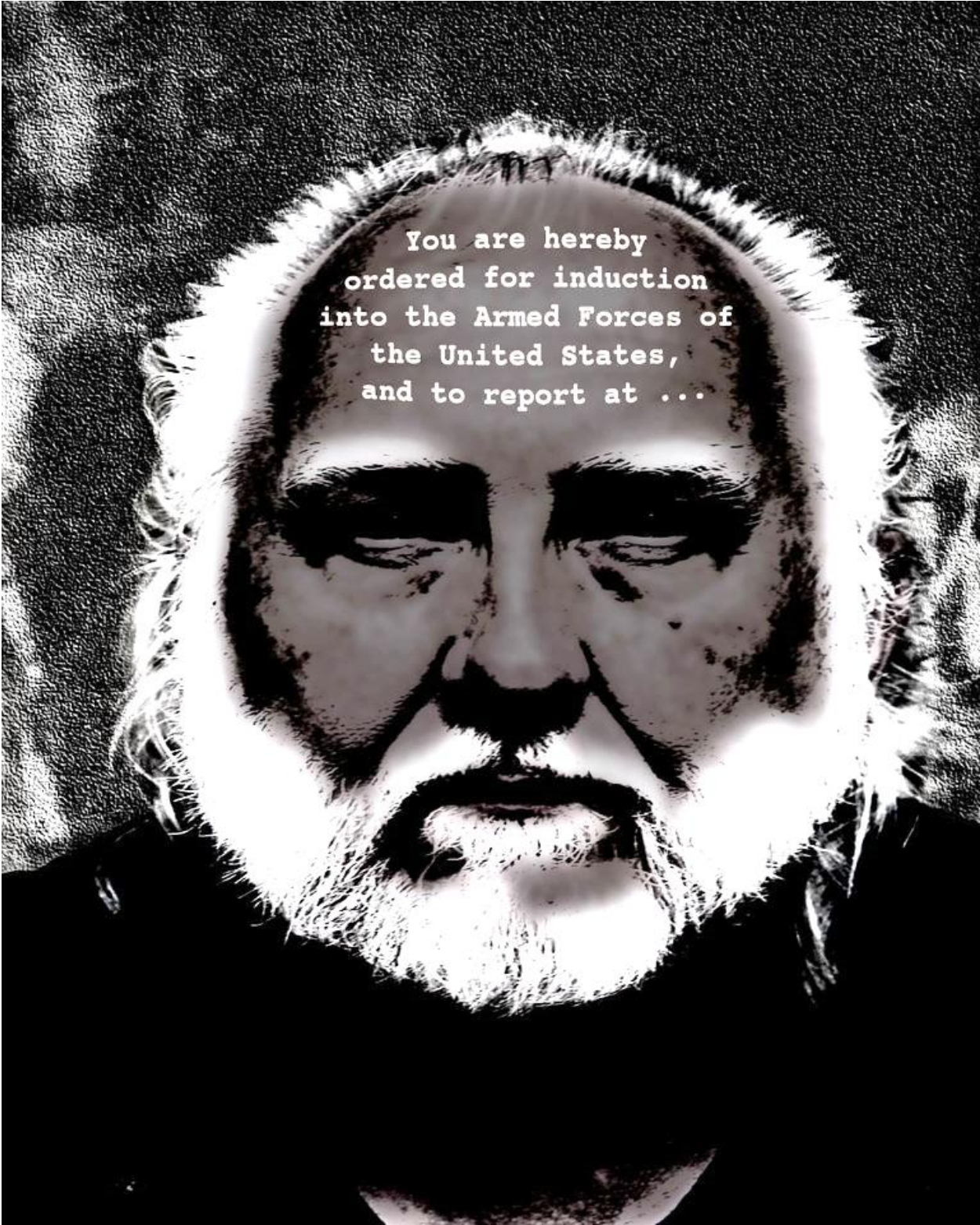
## **Draft Tom**

Chambers' face is darkened, and the words, "You are hereby ordered for induction into the Armed Forces of the United States, and to report at ..." are superimposed onto his forehead to indicate a foreboding that he had upon receiving his draft notice from the Selective Service System in 1969. At the top of the letter in large text and all caps was the title, ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION.

He had graduated from Midwestern State University just a few months earlier, and he was working at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. He was apprehensive about the likelihood of being shipped off to fight in the Vietnam War, and he was angry because he was being drafted by the same system that had disqualified him over a medical condition to continue advanced military training in ROTC while in college (He had completed his basic training as a Freshman and Sophomore.).

The night before he was supposed to report to the induction center, he and his wife went to see the movie, "Easy Rider", but the shocking and unhappy ending depressed him even more. The next day at the center, Chambers told the GI in charge about his medical condition, and he (the GI) nonchalantly wrote 1Y across his (Chambers') records. Just like that and with a stroke of a pen, Chambers was out of the draft, back with his wife and on the job again. He has no qualms about his second disqualification. He feels saved when so many of his ROTC buddies ... including a cousin ... died in a war that history questions as viable.





You are hereby  
ordered for induction  
into the Armed Forces of  
the United States,  
and to report at ...

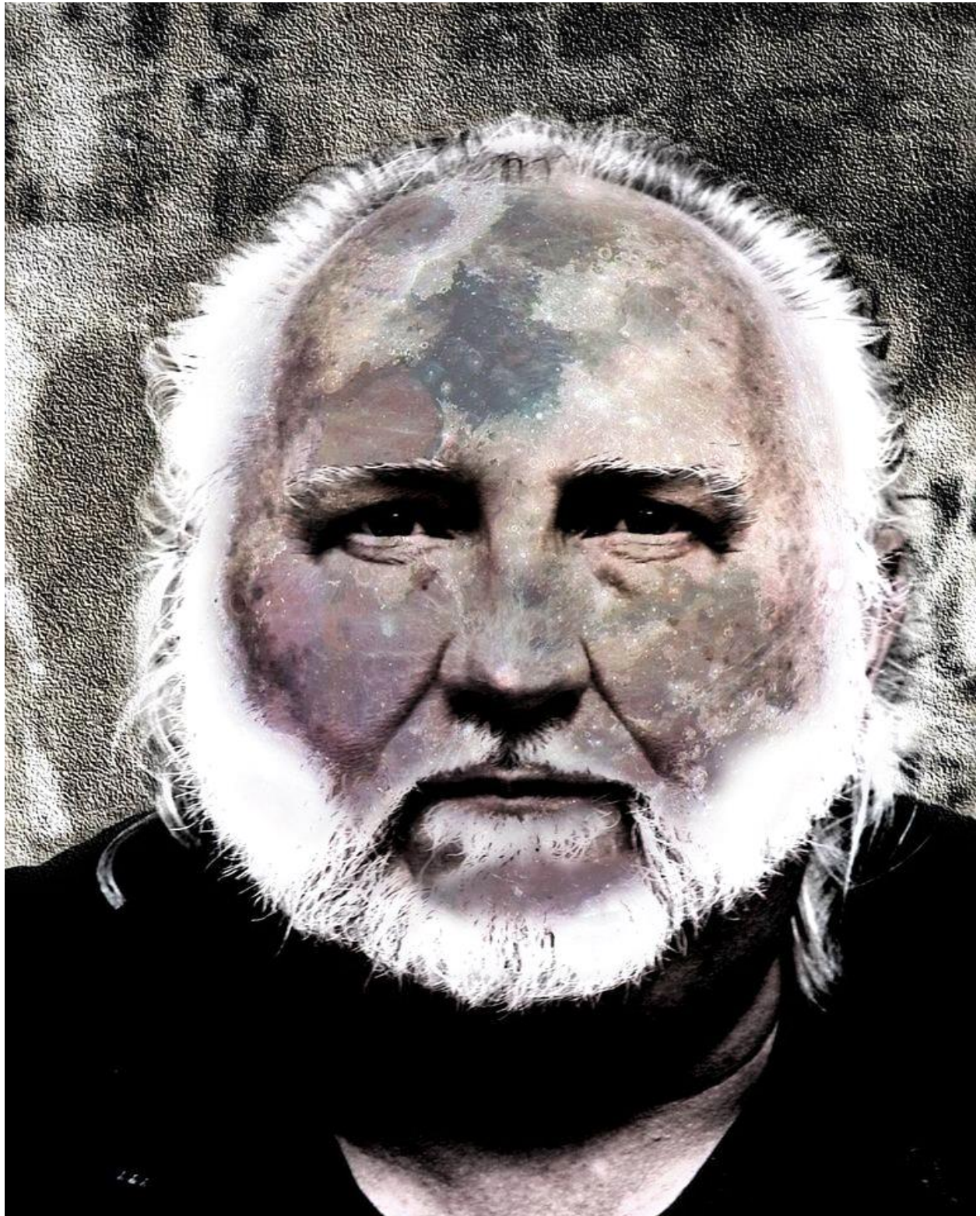
## **Apollo Tom**

A photo of the moon (courtesy of NASA) is superimposed onto Chambers' face to indicate his involvement with the Apollo Program at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas (1969 - 1972). This was his second job out of college, and he participated in the historic research of the Lunar Fines (soil) as an analyst at the Lunar Receiving Laboratory.

Chambers was able to do what very few human beings have done ... literally touch the Moon by holding a Lunar Fines (soil) sample between his thumb and finger. He had followed the space program since Russia's launch of the first satellite ... Sputnik ... into space in October of 1957 and his country's consequent race to space with NASA's earlier programs, Mercury and Gemini.

Chambers has become more cosmic, perhaps, in the sense that today, he searches for extended meaning in his life experiences and his art.





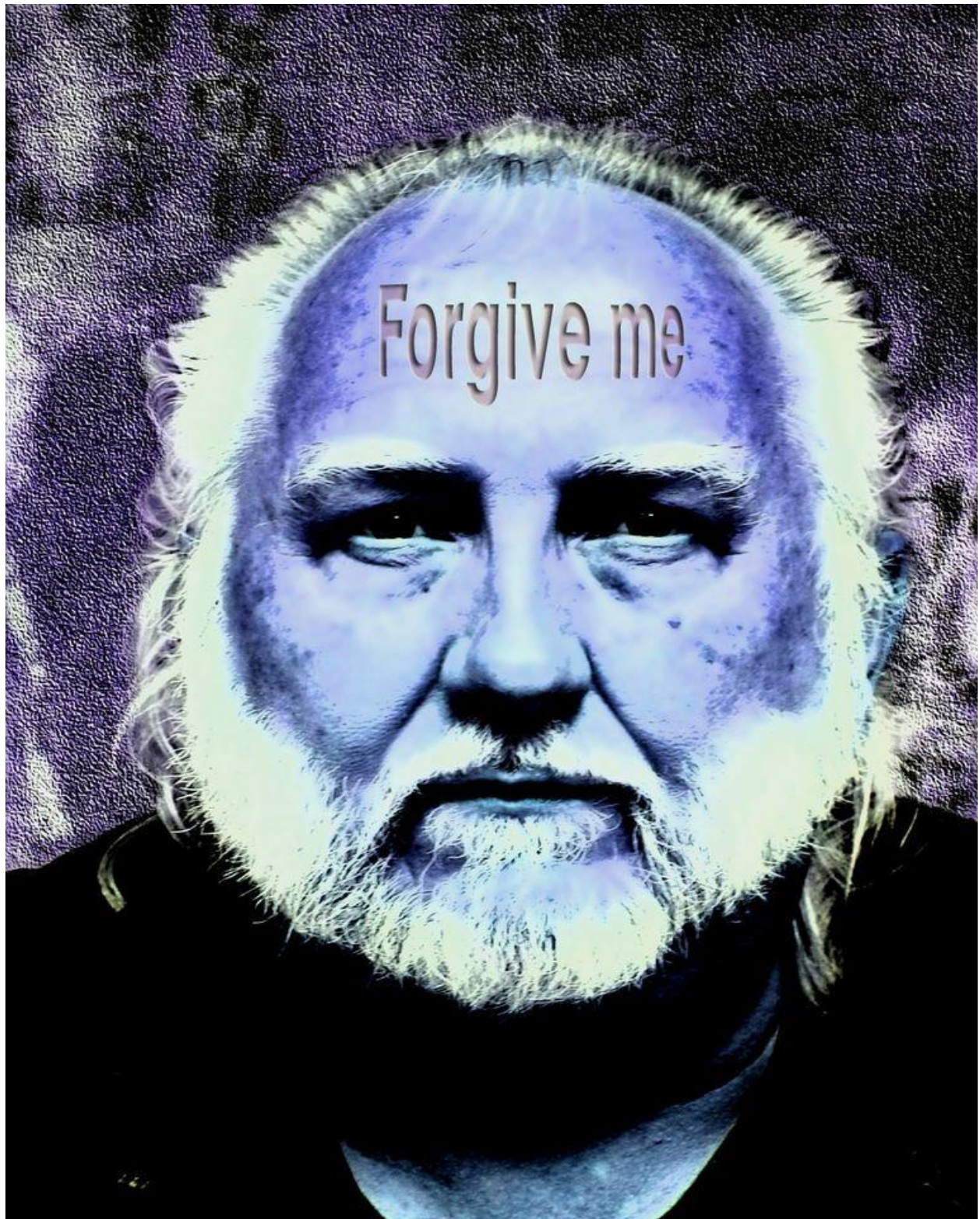


## **Father Tom**

Chambers' face is tinted light blue, and the words, "forgive me" are superimposed ... similar to branding ... onto his forehead to indicate the birth (1971) of his son, Christian Rogers Chambers ... "baby boy" ... and his regret that he was with him only the first two years of his life due to a divorce.

Chambers is now in contact with his son. A span of almost 30 years were missed due to circumstances and/or excuses. He received a surprise e-mail from him on July 2, 2003, and they have communicated and exchanged pictures frequently since that time.

Prior to this, Chambers had tried to make contact with his son by writing to him when he (his son) was serving (Army) in the Gulf War in 1991, but no response. His son is married with a family of his own, and he's a general surgeon in Texas.

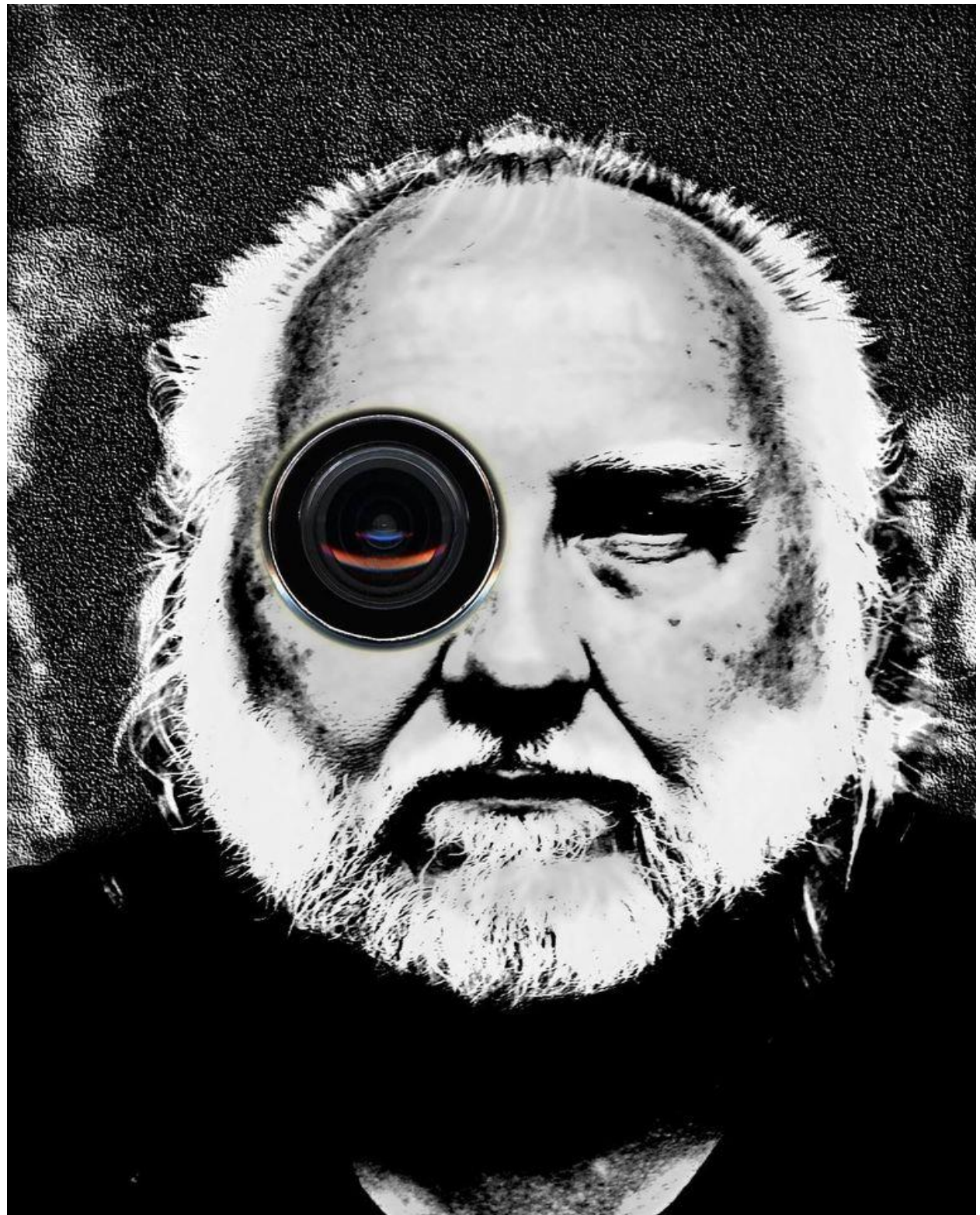


## **Photo Tom**

A camera lens is superimposed onto Chambers' right eye, and his face is gray-scaled to indicate his exposure to the medium of photography in 1973 and his preference for black and white. This exposure via an encounter with a "hippie girl" ... as he calls her now ... was a turning point in his life. The relationship didn't last, but his desire to explore the medium of photography grew to the point where now, he is known internationally as a serious photographer and visual artist with numerous exhibitions to his credit.

He began with a Pentax (35mm film SLR), then changed to a couple of Nikon FE2s (35mm film SLRs) in 1983. He currently uses a Canon (digital EOS SLR), but still has these Nikon FE2s which have exposed thousands of negatives over the years. The lens used for the superimposition in the image is his Nikon 20mm which he used exclusively for his documentary portraiture work.





## **DoV Tom**

"Beau-Cant edition of 10" (bronze, 11.25 x 8.5, 1975 [cast 1983]) by Harvey J. Bott is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate the influence this sculptor had on him in 1974 - 1975 while living in Galveston, Texas. Bott was living and working in his studio, Loft on Strand, and Chambers documented the sculptor's DoV (Displacement of Volume) and Fetal Form artworks.

This encounter was another turning point in Chambers' life, and he considers this working relationship (mentorship) with Bott to have put him on track as a visual artist. This explains the circle-square configuration that can be seen in his mixed media artwork, "Mother's 45s" (1990).







### **Bicentennial Tom**

The Betsy Ross Flag is superimposed onto Chambers' face to indicate his pride and participation during the 200th commemoration of the Bicentennial of the United States of America on July 4, 1976.

He was living on The Strand in Galveston, Texas, and he opened his living quarters/studio to the general public that day to help the Galveston Historical Foundation promote preservation of this historical district. He fondly recalls the multitudes filing through to say hello and take a look at the interior of the historical building he was living and working in.

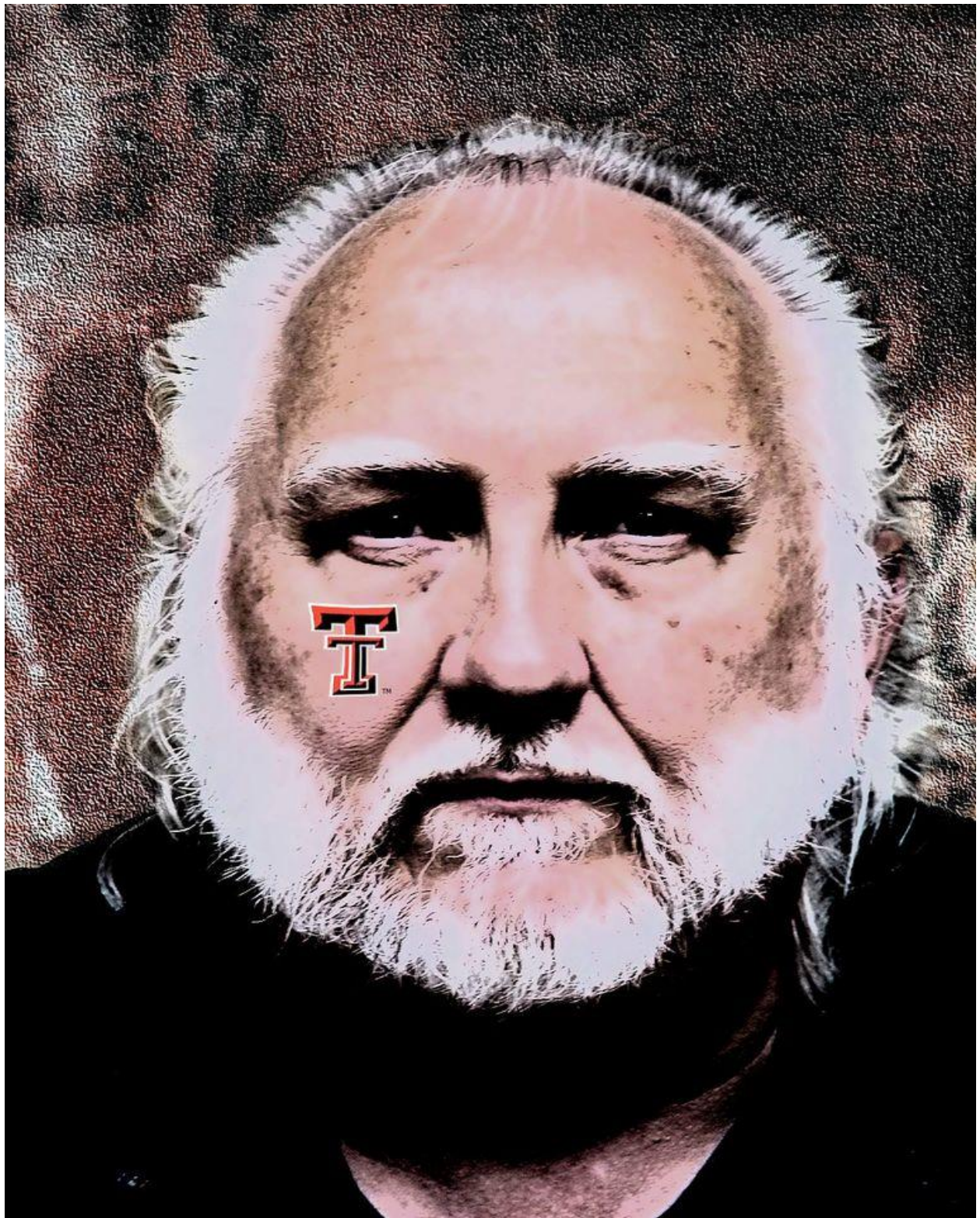


## **TTU Tom**

The Texas Tech University logo is superimposed onto Chambers' right cheek (vis-a-vis rah-rah sticker) to indicate his decision to move from research to media ... another turning point in his life ... at this institution as Manager of Medical Photo/Media (1981 - 1983, Lubbock, Texas) and a correct one that has sustained him until now.

During this time period, he also conducted photo seminars for communications professionals, and he established Viewpoint Gallery to showcase photographers' works from across the nation (U.S.A.). American Photo magazine reviewed the exhibition by Martin Benjamin in its April, 1983 issue. This curatorial endeavor moved him more in the direction of serious photography, and it set the stage for his first documentary project.





## DSP

The letters, DSP are superimposed (with shadow play) onto Chambers' forehead, and his face is gray-scaled to indicate his first serious approach to a photo documentary project ... "Dyer Street Portraiture" ... and his preference for black and white.

He created this project in El Paso, Texas (1983) about the cultural mix of denizens on a particular street, Dyer. The project was exhibited at various venues in the States, and his documentary portraiture style received good reviews. American Photo magazine listed the project/exhibition at The Silver Bullet Gallery (Providence, Rhode Island) in its Notable Exhibitions section, and stated, "The black-and-white images record a diversity of common people in an urban habitat with an ambiance of film noir." (March, 1986 issue). The good reviews and mention in American Photo magazine encouraged Chambers to continue and move forward with other photo documentary projects.







## **Jean Tom**

Chambers' mother's name and birth/death dates are superimposed ... similar to etched stone ... onto his forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate a tombstone (death mask) to indicate his traumatic experience as a result of his mother's struggle with cancer and death in 1983. His mother had seemed healthy just a few months before and celebrated Christmas Eve (1982).

Chambers is thankful that he was there that evening to celebrate with his family members, and he remembers his mother asking one of her sisters (Billie Joy) to take a Polaroid picture of him and her together. He can't recall his mother ever asking for a picture request before. Maybe she had a premonition. He keeps the picture in his wallet as a reminder of how fortunate he was to be with his mother that evening. He wasn't there when she died just a few months later. Chambers misses his mother.

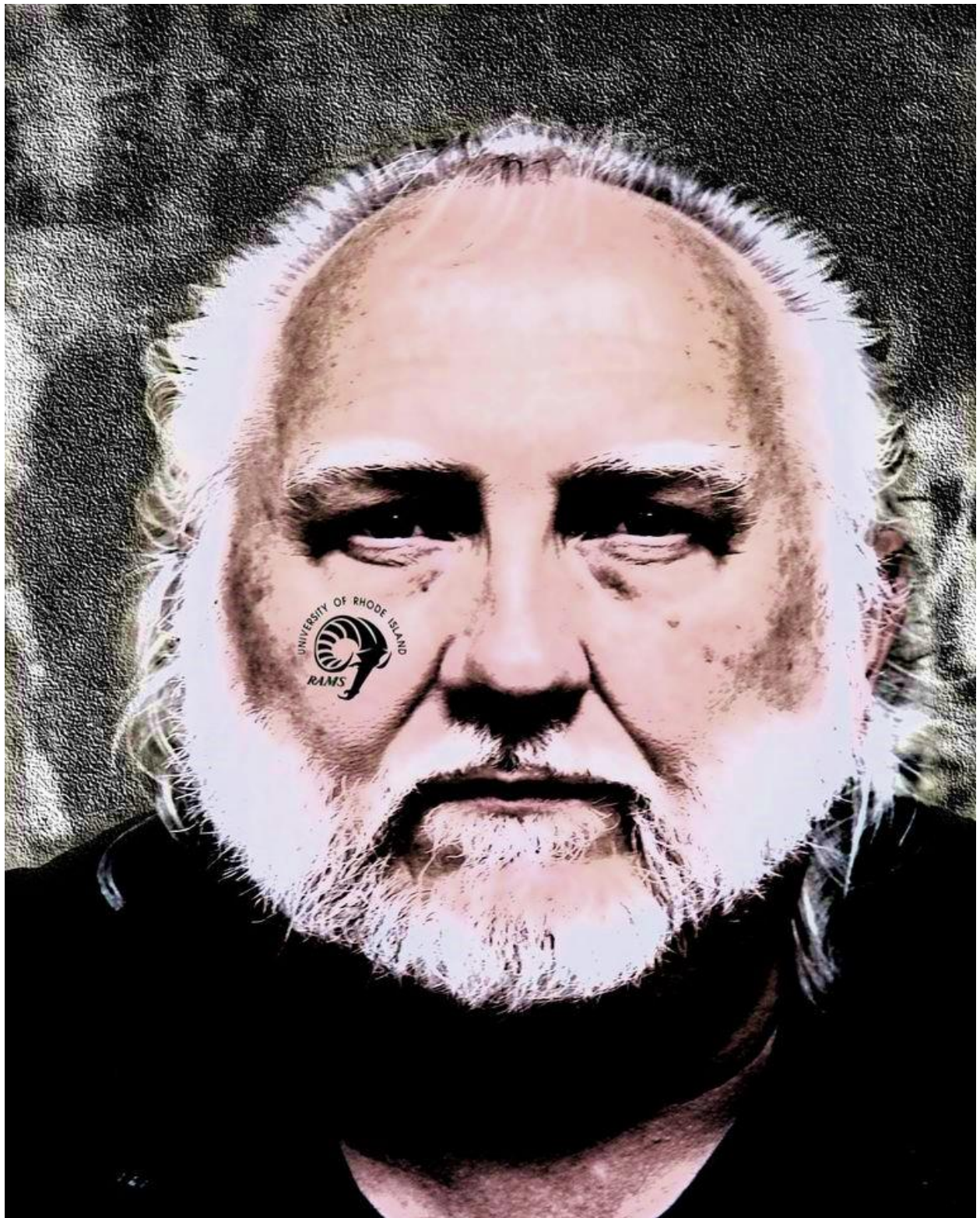


## **URI Tom**

The University of Rhode Island logo is superimposed onto Chambers' right cheek (vis-a-vis rah-rah sticker) to indicate his bold decision to move ... partly due to his mother's death ... from Texas to the New England area (Rhode Island) in 1984, and continue to work in media at this institution as Manager of Photography. He was the university's newspaper photographer, and he generated images for brochures, magazines and annual reports.

A year later, he was asked ... through his freelance activities ... to become the Personal Photographer for the Mayor of Providence (Joseph R. Paolino, Jr.) and City Photographer. He accepted the staff position and stayed with the Mayor's Office through 1990. During his employment, Chambers made thousands of images, and generated personal, photo documentary projects such as "Descendants 350" (exhibited throughout Rhode Island; received a Governor's Proclamation [RI]; and currently resides in the Rhode Island State Archives), 1986.





## **Joe Tom**

Chambers' father's name and birth/death dates are superimposed ... similar to etched stone ... onto his forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate a tombstone (death mask) to indicate his traumatic experience as a result of his father's death in 1986. Chambers had made a trip from Providence, Rhode Island ... where he was living ... to see his father in Nocona, Texas just a few months before, and he seemed to be in good health.

They made the rounds and visited several of his father's childhood friends and almost every evening, they socialized at the Eagles Club and VFW. It was totally unexpected when he received a telephone call from one of his uncles that his father had passed away.

Chambers was fortunate to have spent some quality time with his father. He flew back to Nocona for the funeral, and he was given the American Flag that draped his father's casket at graveside by the Nocona VFW Post members. Chambers misses his father.







## **Politics Tom**

Michael Dukakis Presidential election campaign buttons are superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate his participation at the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia as the Rhode Island Delegation Photographer and Mayor (former) (Providence, Rhode Island) Joseph R. Paolino's Personal Photographer. The former Mayor Paolino was Chairman of the Rhode Island Democratic Party at the time and since Chambers was his Photographer and City (Providence) Photographer, he was asked to attend the convention.

Chambers was able to experience the political process at close range. Throughout the Primaries, the nomination and campaigning against George H.W. Bush (Vice President and Republican nominee), Chambers occasionally documented Dukakis and Paolino together as well as other politicians such as Jessie Jackson, President Jimmy Carter, Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, Senator Edward Kennedy and others.

A change in history could have seen Chambers as The White House Photographer since he was recommended to Michael Dukakis by his boss, Joseph R. Paolino, Jr., former Mayor of Providence and Chairman of the Rhode Island Democratic Party.



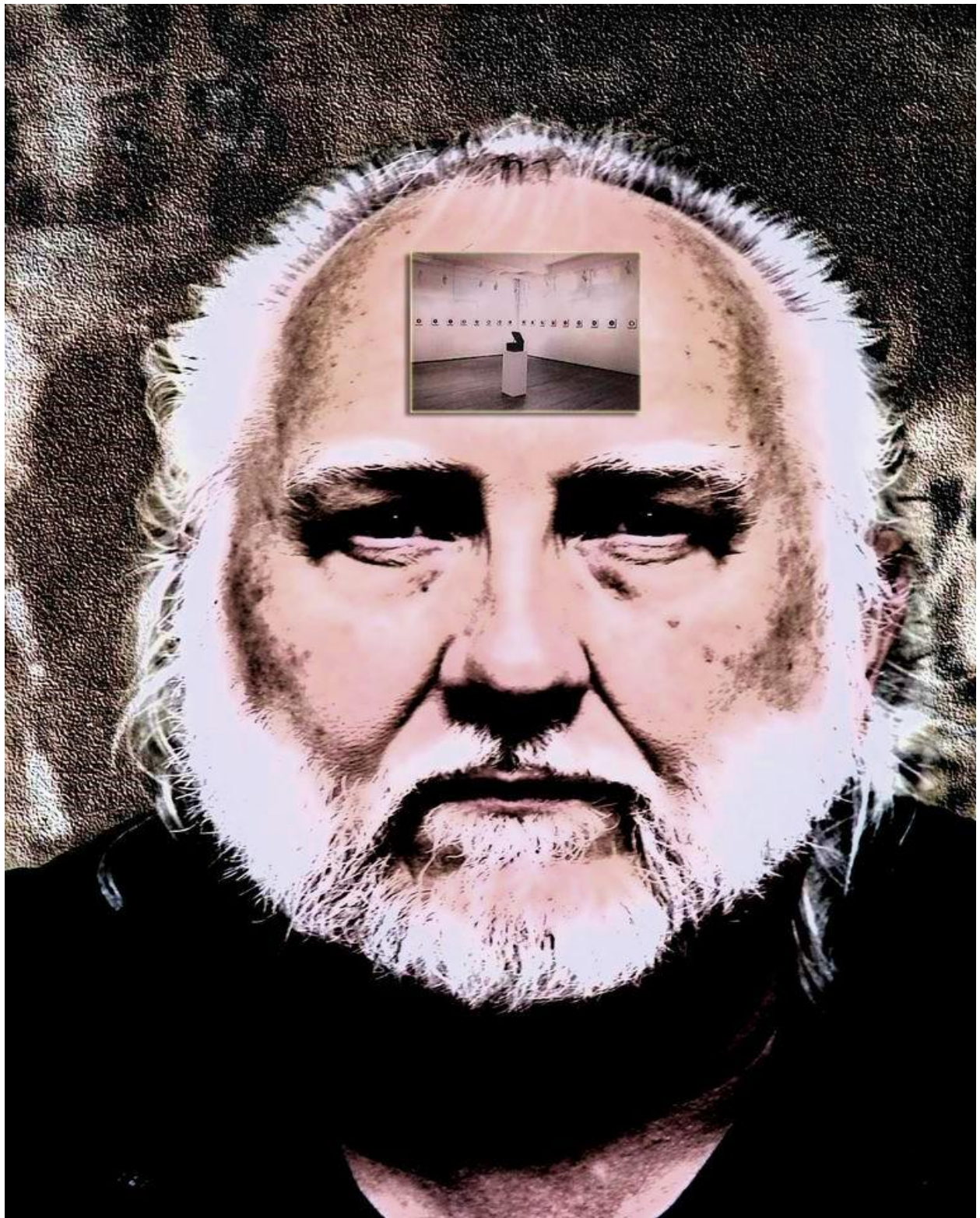
## **Ms45s Tom**

An installation photo of his project, "Mother's 45s" (Ms45s) is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate that out of all the photo and visual arts projects he has created, this one has the most significance because it's a tribute to his deceased mother ... and all mothers of the world ... and it perpetuates her existence. The project was shown at Gallery One, Providence, Rhode Island (1990), and picked up through national (USA) search for the "Parents" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art/Art Galleries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio (1992).

In the installation photo at Gallery One, his mother's RCA 45rpm record player (Model 45EY3) is seen as the centerpiece and source for the sound stimulus of the songs, and 17/45 of the photo/record assemblages are seen as a part of the surround or 360-degree approach to encompass the viewer.

The Providence Journal stated, *"The result is a moving tribute to his own mother that Chambers hopes will stir memories and emotions in everyone."* (April 20, 1990), and The Phoenix's New Paper/Providence Phoenix stated, *"In one fell swoop, Chambers chronicles how we interact with our memories and how those memories are forever irretrievable."* (April 19 - 25, 1990).





## **Volunteer Tom**

The Peace Corps logo is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead ... similar to a large decal ... to indicate his involvement and pride with this organization as a United States Peace Corps Volunteer in the Arts and Curator for the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa. He served his two-year tour, and extended a third year (1993 - 1995) to finish establishing a computer information database for the gallery's Permanent Collection. He trained staff in curatorial preparation and mounted numerous exhibitions from the Permanent Collection.

He also initiated and taught The McEwen Photographic Studio for the gallery's Art School, which culminated in student photo exhibitions at the gallery. He also found the time to initiate a vocational arts program, "SKIA" (Street Kids In Action) for street children in Harare. Chambers was invited to show his personal work, so he created the project, "Variations on the Dan Mask", which was shown at the gallery, December, 1995.



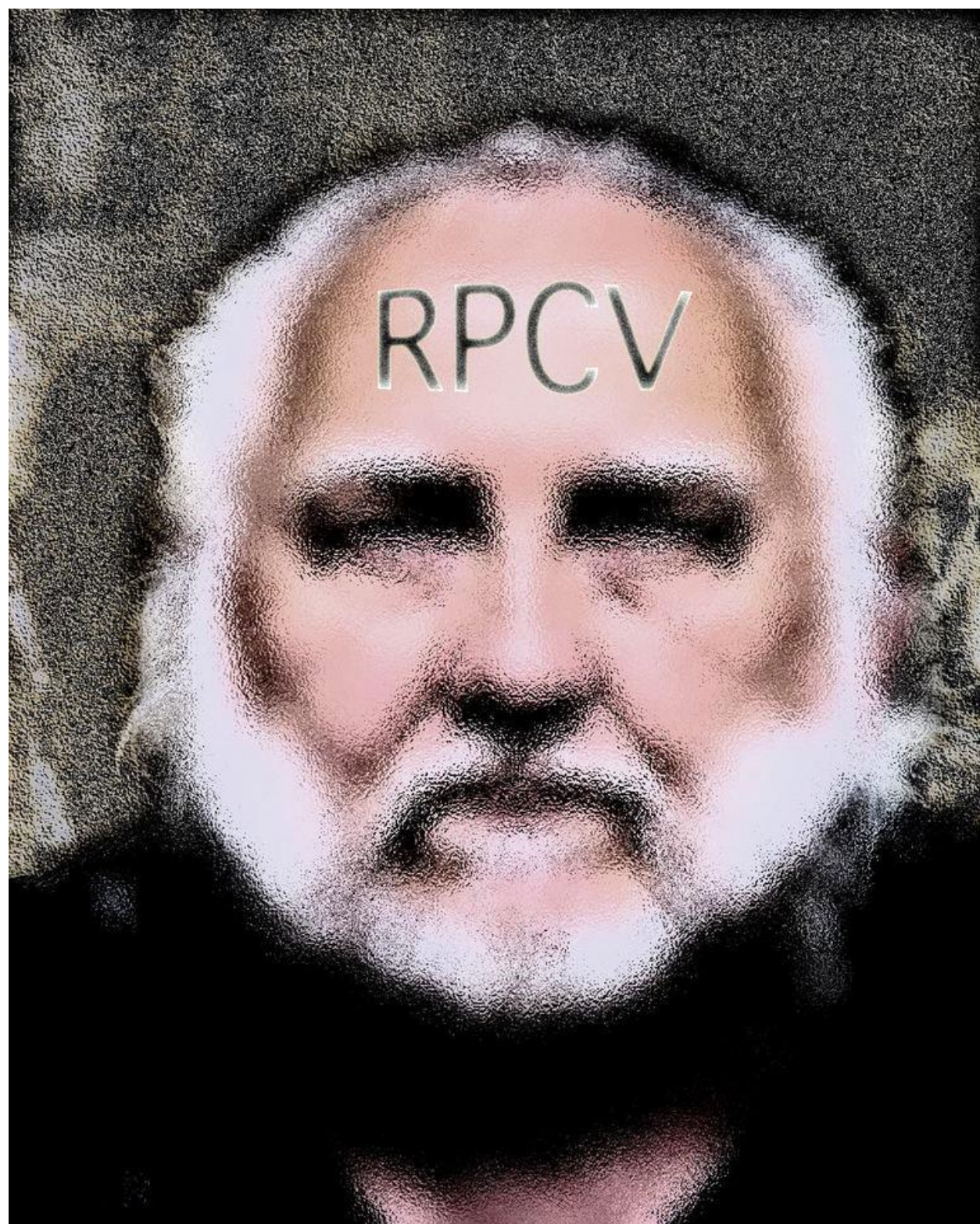




## **RPCV Tom**

Chambers' face/hair/shirt and background are treated to simulate a freeze-up, and the letters, RPCV are superimposed onto his forehead to indicate one of the worst periods of his life as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) going back (1996) to Washington D.C. during the worst winter storm to hit the area in ten years to look for employment. He struggled in and out of the Peace Corps Office trying to make contacts, and search job databases for three months and finally, an English/Media teaching position was offered to him in Gwangju, South Korea.

He took the position due to little cash flow and a bit of desire to go overseas again. This experience made him realize how close one can come to homelessness, and he's more empathetic when he sees someone on the streets who has no job and no home. So he tries to look at this traumatic experience as a learning process for a better understanding of humanity.



## **Korea Tom**

The South Korean Flag is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate the white background of the flag to indicate his move to this country in 1996 to teach English/Media at various venues. His first experience was for two years.

During this time, he teamed up with a Korean documentary photographer (Choi Ok Soo) to have a two-person photo exhibition ... "People to People" ... at the Kumho Art Center in Gwangju (1997). The project was accepted as part of the Kumho Art Foundation Archives. He also got married to a Korean woman (Cho Eun-mi), and they had a Traditional Korean wedding.

His second experience was for three and a half years (2000 - 2003), and he continued his English/Media teaching at various venues including American Culture at Changwon National University. He traveled to numerous Buddhist and Taoist Temples throughout his stay in South Korea to begin to learn these philosophies.





## **Oline Tom**

Chambers' grandmother's name and birth/death dates are superimposed ... similar to etched stone ... onto his forehead, and his face is whitened to simulate a tombstone (death mask) to indicate his traumatic experience as a result of his grandmother's death in 1997. He was teaching in South Korea when he received a letter ... and the obituary clipping from his hometown (Nocona, Texas) newspaper ... from one of his cousins that she had passed away.

Out of several grandchildren, Chambers was probably the closest to his grandmother since he visited and stayed with his grandparents on numerous occasions (summer vacations). And when he transferred from Texas Western College (now The University of Texas at El Paso) to Midwestern State University, he lived with her that summer (1966) prior to entering his second year in college.

He remembers playing Scrabble with her and borrowing her car to occasionally go out on dates with the local girls. His last encounter was him holding this small, frail woman in his arms when he said goodbye to go overseas (Zimbabwe, Africa) in 1992. Chambers misses his grandmother.





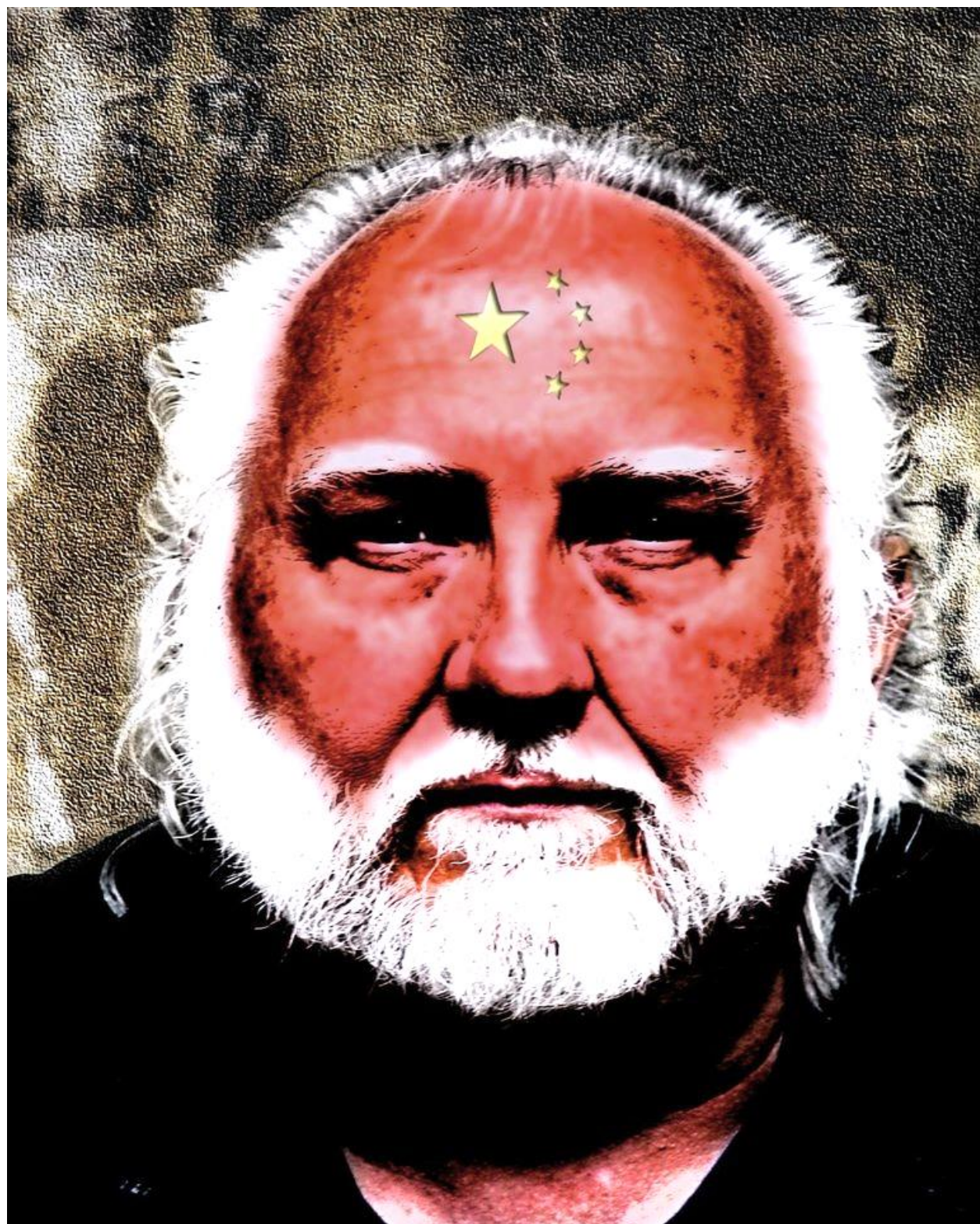
*Oline Meekins*  
1899 - 1997



## **China Tom**

The five yellow stars of the Chinese Flag are superimposed ... cut ... onto Chambers' forehead, and his face is reddened to simulate the red background of the flag to indicate his move to this country in 2003 to continue to teach English/Media at Sheng Da College (2003 - 2005) and Digital/New Media Art at Zhaoqing University (2005 - 2007)]. While at Sheng Da College, he teamed up with a Chinese documentary photographer (Zhao Zhenhai) from Zhengzhou to have a two-person photo exhibition ... "Zhao/Chambers Joint Photo Exhibition" ... at the Sheng Da College Library (2004).

Because of his student connections, he was able to travel to numerous cities ... Kaifeng, Luoyang, Anyang, Nanyang, Shaolin Temple (Kung Fu)/Deng Feng and others ... in the region to not only experience the culture and history of the country, but also meet and greet their family members. Chambers also traveled to many Taoist Temples to continue to learn the philosophy of Taoism. While at Zhaoqing University, Chambers developed the Digital/New Media Art curriculum and worked with art students to generate art projects. Many of the projects were in collaboration with other colleges and universities in the USA to promote cross-cultural exchange.



## **Grandfather Tom**

Chambers' face is tinted light pink, and the words, "thank you" are superimposed onto his forehead to indicate the birth (2005) of his granddaughter, Camdyn Chambers ... "baby girl" ... and his thankfulness for his son allowing him into his life and family after such a long period of time ... a span of almost 30 years that were missed due to circumstances and/or excuses.

His son sent him e-mail in 2003 to make contact, and in his message, he mentioned that he had two sons, Connor (1998) and Justin (2000). Chambers didn't realize that he was a grandfather until that time. He now has four grandchildren, Carter (2007).





## **Tao Tom**

The Yin Yang symbol is blended into Chambers' face to indicate his continued interest in Taoism. He traveled to numerous Taoist Temples in China to learn more about this philosophy. At the center of Taoism is the concept of Tao, which is the natural order of things and cannot be explained since it exceeds senses, thoughts and imagination. It needs more meditation and contemplation and can be known only through mystical intuition.

Literally, Tao means 'the path' or 'the way'. Tao is the natural way of the Universe, the driving power in Nature, the order behind all life and the driving force behind all living things. It underlies everything and works beyond human logic. Taoists believe Tao is the origin of the Universe and creates all living beings, thus they worship all life in the Universe and everything else created by Nature, thereby worship Nature (Laotzu).



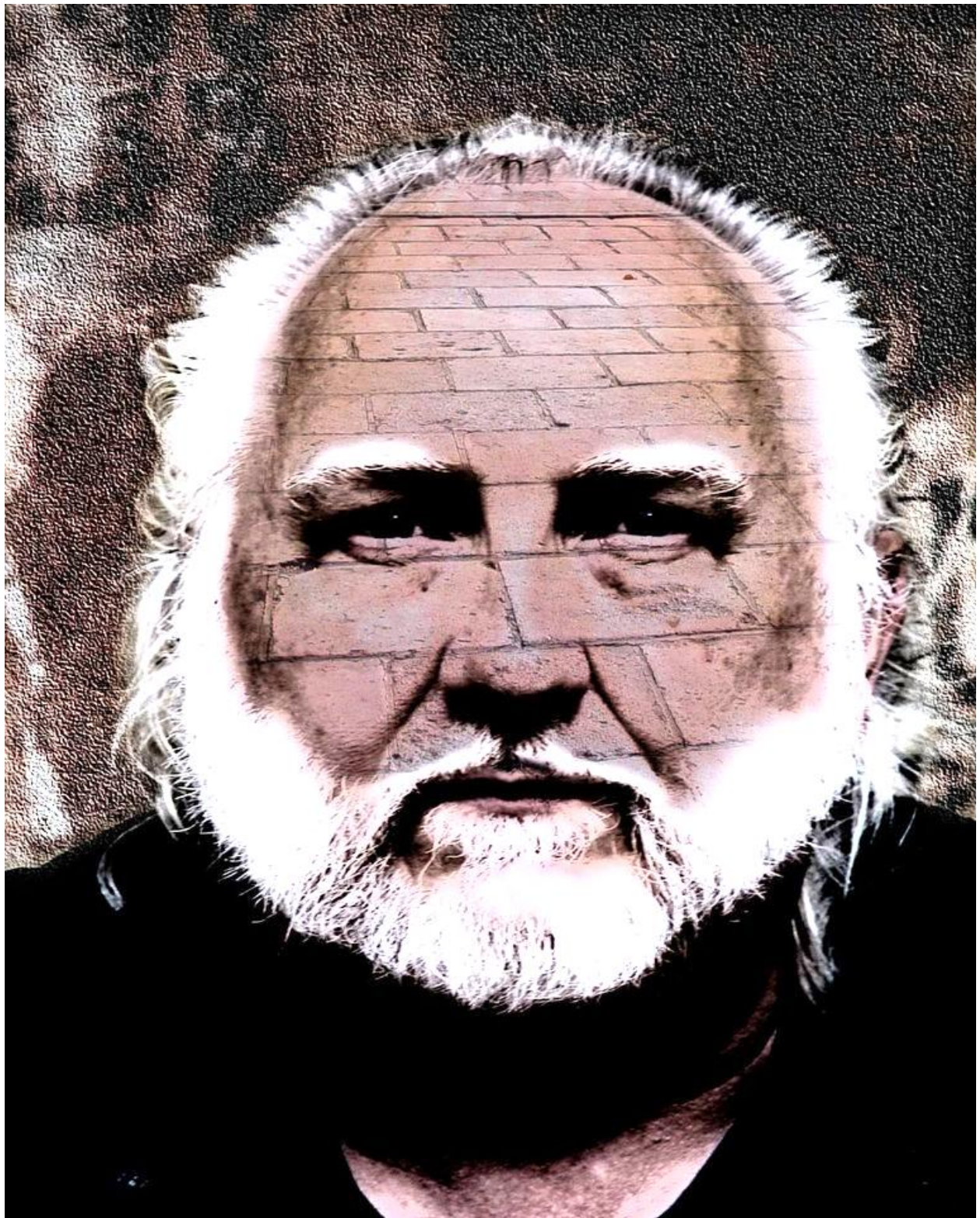




## **The Great Wall Tom**

Part of the walkway of The Great Wall (Mu Tian Yu) is superimposed onto Chambers' face to indicate his experience there near Beijing, China (November, 2005). That day, very few people were touring, so Chambers felt like it was just him and this great barrier. To have studied The Great Wall in World History when he was in grade school back in the United States and actually be walking on it almost 50 years later was awesome.

His students in China said to him, "*You're not a man until you've walked The Great Wall.*" This quote comes from the late Mao Zedong, and it reads, "*He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man.*" Chambers walked part of it so he guesses he's part man or a bit truer. Since he was by himself most of the time on the wall, he had a chance to document his walk, which he later made into an art video titled, "The Great Walk".

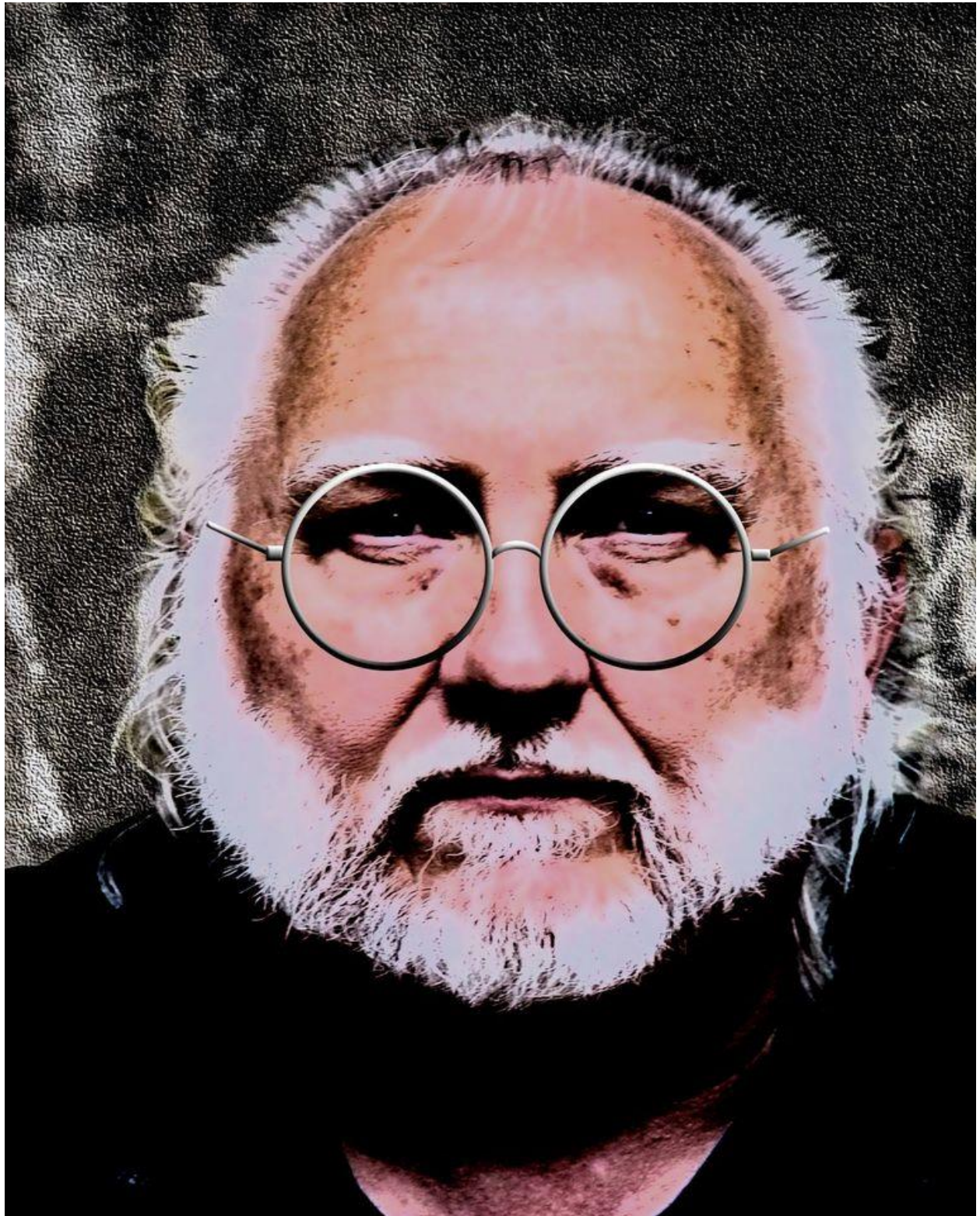


## **Gandhi Tom**

Wire rimmed glasses are superimposed onto Chambers' eyes and nose to indicate his experience at Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram when he traveled to India in July, 2006 to teach a Digital/New Media Art workshop for new media design graduate students at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad. The workshop lasted three weeks, and it culminated in the "NMA@NID" exhibition at the institute.

He had the opportunity ... via his students ... to visit the Ashram which Gandhi founded in 1917. Walking through the structure ... where Gandhi once spearheaded various social struggles and wrote his autobiography, "My Experiments with Truth" ... was a holistic experience for Chambers and one that cut through the pages of history in an immediate sense. The workshop at NID became secondary the day he visited the site where India's great philosopher and leader once lived.



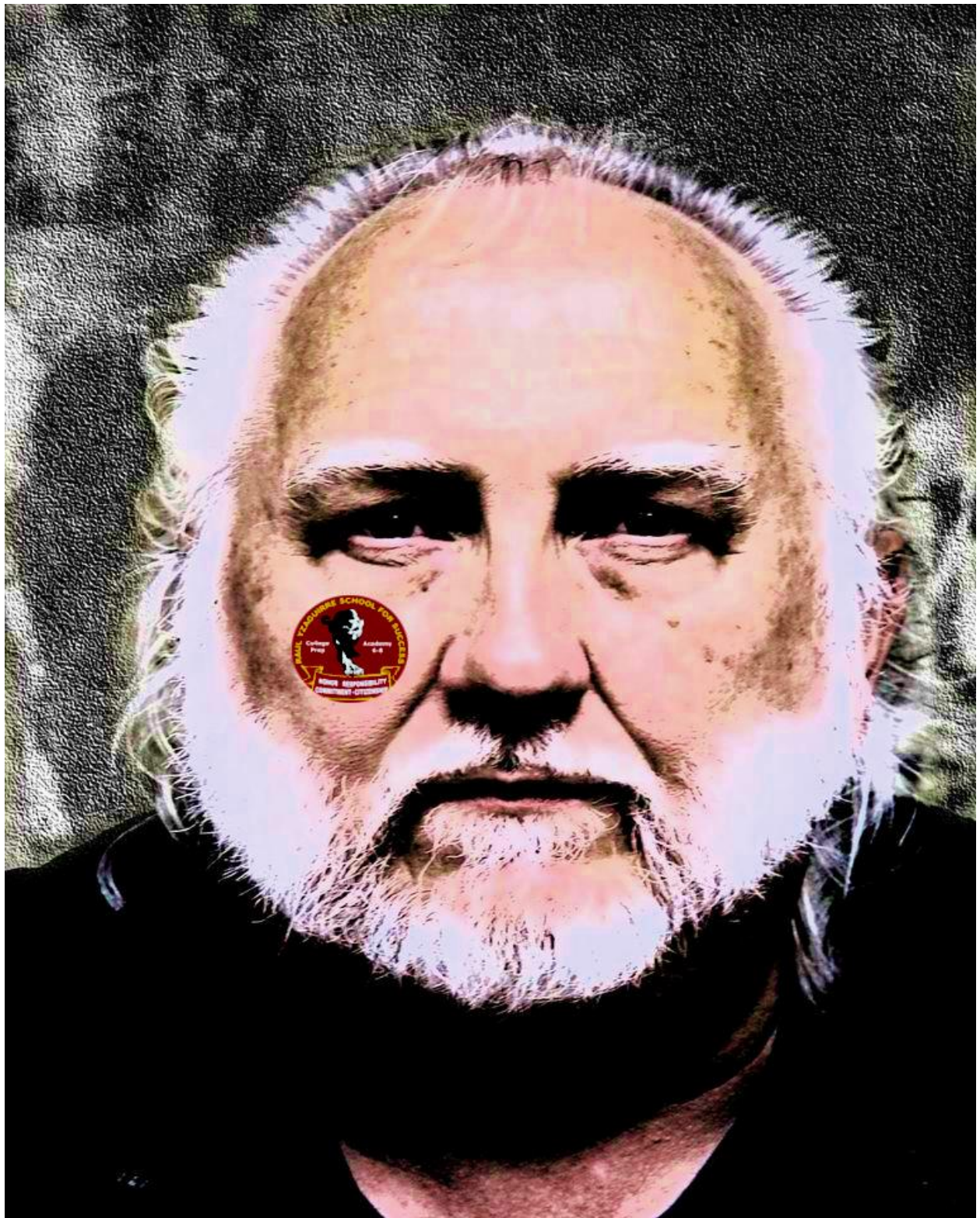


## **RYSS Tom**

The Raul Yzaguirre School for Success logo is superimposed onto Chambers' right cheek (vis-a-vis rah-rah sticker) to indicate his return to the States in 2007, and teaching Technology Applications for middle school students at this charter school in Houston, Texas. He taught until 2013 when he decided to retire from teaching.

He also had groups of students teach students at other schools and districts. They taught graphic arts software as it related to core subjects. In his mind, the gist of education is students being able to teach other students. He feels that motivation, engagement, and empowerment (MEE) are key factors to youth development.



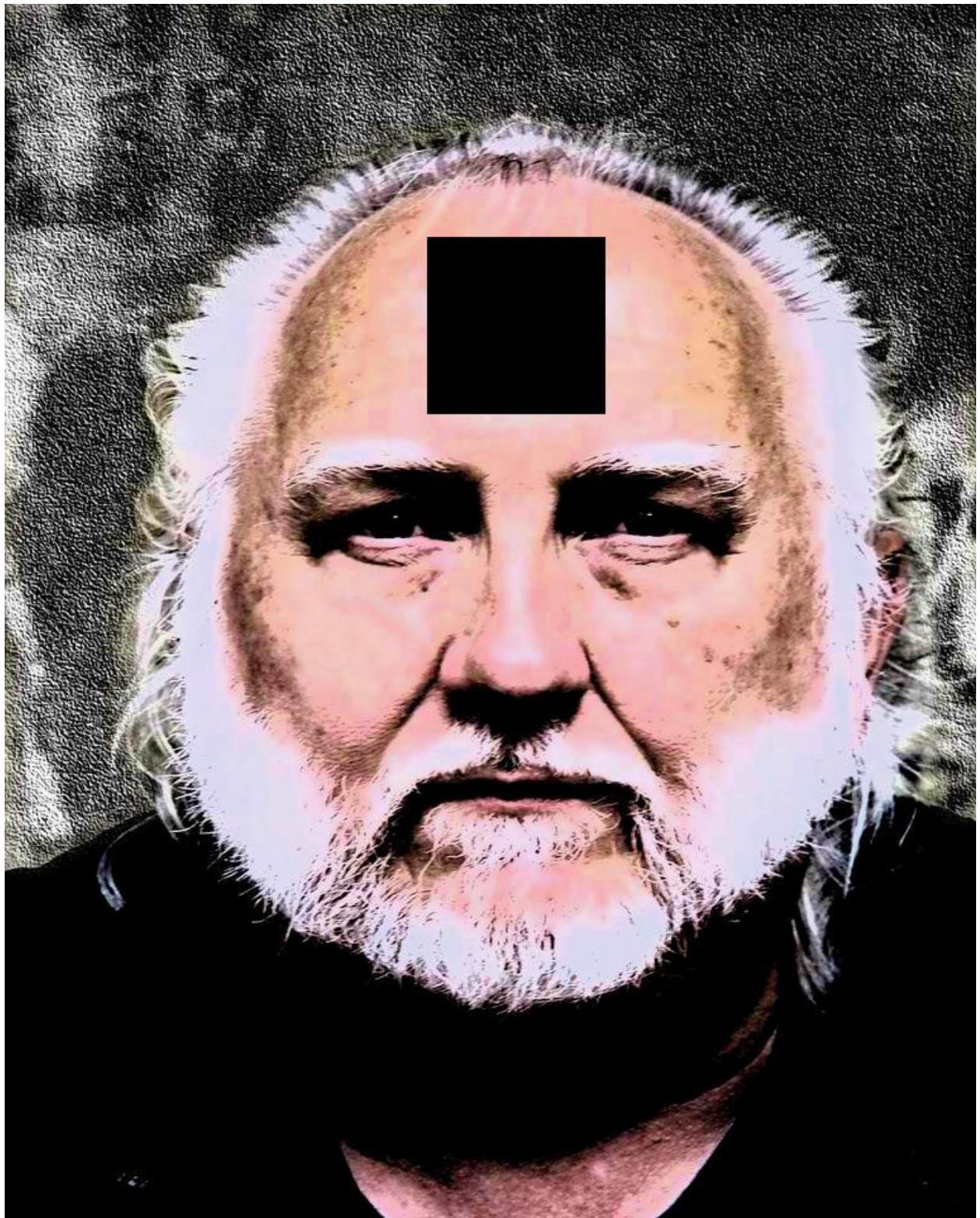




## **Black Square Tom**

Kazimir Malevich's "Black Square" is superimposed onto Chambers' forehead to indicate his work with Suprematism. After retiring from teaching in 2013, he has devoted all of his time to working with the pixel as Suprematist/Minimalist Art and interpretations of Malevich's "Black Square". His "My Dear Malevich" project has received international acclaim, and it was shown as a part of the "Suprematism Infinity: Reflections, Interpretations, Explorations" exhibition in conjunction with the "100 Years of Suprematism" conference at the Atrium Gallery, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York City (2015).

He has over 100 exhibitions worldwide and numerous books about his photo and arts projects published on Amazon.com.



## "Tom Series" Exhibitions:

(First Love Tom, Apple Tom, Apollo Tom), Face to Face (group show), Modern Fine Arts Museum, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, August 18, 2017.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Tolijatti State Art Museum, Russia, October - December, 2015.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Perm State Art Gallery, Russia, May - July, 2015.

(Tube Tom), The Selfie Show: An Art Exhibition of Self-portraits (group show), Museum of New Art, Troy, Michigan, U.S.A., May - June, 2015.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Villa Ichon, Bremen, Germany, November - December, 2014.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Samara State Art Museum, Russia, May - July, 2014.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), SFA Galleries, Nacogdoches, Texas, U.S.A., September - October, 2013.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Photo Festival, Arezzo, Italy, September - October, 2012.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Manomentr Gallery, Moscow, Russia, February, 2012.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Eumeria Gallery, Tokyo, Japan, December 12 - 17, 2011.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Rosphoto Exhibition Centre for Photography, St. Petersburg, Russia, November 25 - December 1, 2011.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Gallery, American University of Paris, Paris, France, October 11 - November 7, 2011.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Metenkov Museum of photography, Ekaterinburg, Russia, August 17 - September 18, 2011.



(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Chelyabinsk Museum of arts, Chelyabinsk, Russia, July 5 - August 9, 2011.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Roba Gallery, Omsk, Russia, June 18 - July 6, 2011.

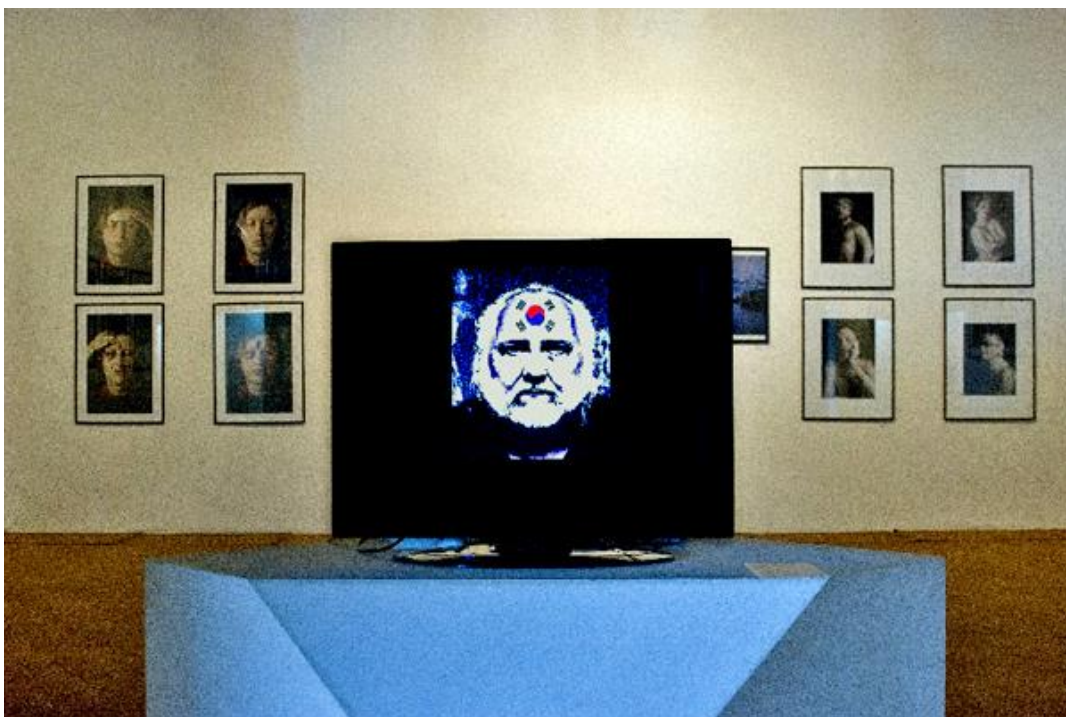
(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Krasnoyarsk cultural Museum Centre, Russia, March 31 - May 22, 2011.

(Hometown Tom, Tube Tom, Apple Tom, Photo Tom), The FACE (group show), Novosibirsk State Museum of Local History, Novosibirsk, Russia, February 16 - March 14, 2011.

(China Tom, Tao Tom, Hometown Tom, AHS Tom [instructor invitation]), SELF/SOUL (Joint Student Exhibition, Zhaoqing University and University of Louisville[Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.]) (group show), Fine Arts Department, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, Guangdong Province, China, December 1 - 25, 2006

(China Tom, Tao Tom, Hometown Tom, Target Tom), Faculty Exhibition (group show), Fine Arts Department, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, Guangdong Province, China, November 25 - December 1, 2006.

Installation examples of "Tom Series" in Russia as a part of "The Face: The Evolution of Portrait Photography" curated by Andrey Martynov:





A "Tom Series" draft was purchased by the Hilton M. Briggs Library, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota, U.S.A.

A term paper was written on Tom R. Chambers (Art Appreciation for Honors; a 100-level, lower division class, where students have chosen an artist on the theme of interconnectivity, and analyzed a selection of works.) by Peter DeGroot, art student of Dr. Leda Cempellin, Assistant Professor, History of Art, Department of Visual Arts, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota, U.S.A., 2009.

Comments about "Tom Series":

Bruce Hanks, Manager (retired), University of Winnipeg Instructional Network, Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology [CDDL], The University of Winnipeg (Canada):

*"At a time when all known convention(s) are in a state of flux, globally we see issues of identity coming to the fore. People, cultures, countries, corporate branding - just about everything is struggling with identity. I see your work and see an artist who is not afraid of who he is, and knows clearly where he stands. This is identity in your face. A well-articulated juxtaposition of the present image (portrait) with historical reference points/images that define(ed) who you have*

*become. Although personal, your age and experience growing up in the 50's and 60's, and as such a member of the baby boom generation, is easily extrapolated to every other member of that generation. I see your home town and I am in Bristol, England. I see the test pattern and somewhere in my files I have an Indian Head test pattern, etc. Your personal frankness and honesty allows for others to see themselves on a parallel path. This needs to be a traveling exhibit along with many others exploration of identity."*

JD Jarvis, Art Critic/Artist and coauthor of Going Digital: The Practice and Vision of Digital Artists (ISBN 1-59200-918-2) (USA):

*"Here's to a series that runs for many years yet to come."*

Martin Mendelsberg, Designer/Typographer (Creator of Holocaust Portfolio.) (USA):

*"Great work!"*

Ricardo Baez-Duarte, Digital Photographer/Artist (Venezuela):

*"This is a very interesting series. It invites the audience to think hard about the message. I like the technique, very original. Good!"*

Hannah Gal, Digital Artist (UK):

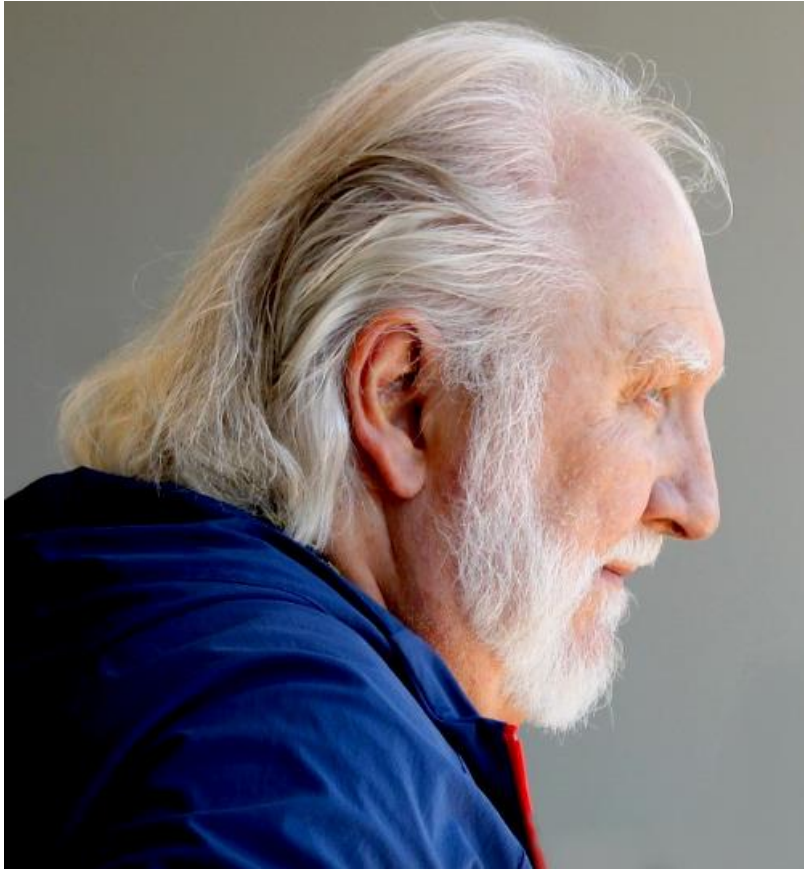
*"Striking!"*

Larry Lemons, Photographer/Artist (Hometown [Nocona] friend) (USA):

*"I found your Tom series fascinating, thought provoking, and reminiscent of some of my own personal experiences. I viewed each image and read all the captions to get a better understanding of not only the art project itself, but of you as a person, which I believe might have been a great part of your intent. While I do not share the Taoist philosophy that you seem to have embraced, I do believe that there is a better way to live than just working all week to accumulate money for more useless material possessions."*



*I have staked my eternal destiny on the teachings of and my faith in Jesus, the Christ. I have neither read or heard of any other great master who was willing to lay down his innocent life for the sins of this world and then have the power to rise up from the grave in victory over death. Forgive me for preaching, but to not reply to that part of your project would be to deny my own personal faith, which I cannot do. I like your art and I do not take offense to it in any way, in spite of my own Christian commitment and desire to see others come to know Him (John 3:16). In fact, I am inspired by it. Please continue to share it with me."*



Tom R. Chambers  
2019