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Author

Quan, George Patrick

Publication Date

2014

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

BANBAN

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Art

by

George Patrick Quan

August 2014

Thesis Committee:
Professor Jim Isermann, Chairperson
Professor Charles Long
Professor Jill Giegerich
Professor Amir Zaki

The Thesis of George Patrick Quan is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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1.

The first year at UCR I wanted to challenge my own value of art. I began with an open and loose system when choosing ready-made objects. The process of selecting ready-made objects varied from the sentimental, the weird, the aesthetic, or a combination of the three. Gathering and fitting them in the back of my SUV became a significant part of my art. Like a pack rat that collects trinkets and objects, I was an art rat. My studio became a library of objects that I would chose from. Inspiration would come from my proximity and my long duration with objects.

The least interesting works for me were mostly didactic. For example, I made a table that required custom made dishes. I was never motivated to finish the work. I knew how the work was going to end. I felt I was not going to gain anything from the endeavor. I could predict the outcome, because the work was didactic . The work revealed its self too easy to me.

A method I applied to analyze work was the Stranger Test. The Stranger Test required me to pretend to be a stranger and view the work with a fresh eye. If I could easily read the considerations applied to the work, then it would fail the test. This process made me more objective and critical of my own work.

The more spontaneous works tended to pass the Stranger Test. For example, one work was called Cardboard Door. It consisted of two different stages, which was me throwing wet cardboard paper pulp onto my studio door and letting it dry. On performing the Stranger Test, it was difficult for me to figure out a logical explanation. I

could not tell if the work was accidental or purposeful.

The preliminary stages of making work required me to be more comfortable with sensibility. The exercise of assigning objects that I would encounter and making them into Ready-mades forced me to own my sensibility. I felt I had to analyze the object more critically. I did not have to deal with artistic makings, but the object itself. Ready-mades gave me the necessary distance to objectively analyze my work.

Ready-mades made me more like a curator. I would curate the objects in a way that allowed those objects to keep their intrinsic aesthetic state. Showing Ready-mades promoted my sensibilities and taste. I was interested in equalizing esthetic values. I thought that by placing objects of different context and references would equalize them. An example would be placing Hair salon photos with tree trunks.(fig.1,2) Putting those two objects in the same space forced me to see the salon photo as an artifact and the tree trunk as a cultural object.

I gathered found objects from nature, for example, rocks , used glass soda bottles which had been filled with sand, and dried tree branches were all from a dried out river bed.(Photo 3)I organized the objects in a row as a simple strategy to formalize these found objects. Things that all of these objects had in common were site and a layer of dirt that encased these objects. The dirt became a uniform. I placed these objects in a gallery space in order to persuade me and the viewers to allow different point of view and to value them differently, to emphasize the aesthetic value of these objects.

At this point , found objects seemed to lessen their appeal to me. I was challenged

by using different found objects and curating them so that my aesthetic value would trump others values. The sentimental relationship between object and author always showed up in the work. I was promoting my emotional and personal presence in the work. Authorship had the power to make things sentimental.

The historical shock of the ready-made and negating the objects original function, did force the ready-made to exist as formal aesthetic objects. I believe the contemporary use of found objects has lost its initial shock value. An example of a contemporary artist is Haim Steinbach. His anthropological approach to the found object art invites story telling. Story telling is inextricably linked to meaning and emotions, the sentimental.

Trying to avoid the sentimental I manipulated everyday objects, play houses, toilets, shopping carts to refocus on the aesthetics.(fig. 4,5,6,7,8) The manipulation became an aesthetic challenge. I felt cutting , duplicating and playing with the idea of wholeness was one way of escaping the sentimental and bringing it back as an aesthetic object.

Wholeness is often presented as something inseparable. In a way, the recognition of wholeness simplifies subjects. However, the idea of wholeness has its own limitation. I intended to challenge the idea of wholeness by imposing two unsuitable pieces into one complete object. For example, I combined two identical shopping carts that have been cut differently then joined and presented as one object. It created not only a vision of confusion for the viewers but also challenged their typical understanding of wholeness. Another example which shared the same thought was cutting photos. The framing of the

photo implies its wholeness. I presented the two identical photos with inverted cuts side by side. The decision of inverted cuts intend to be no identical. The process of filling in the information of the cut photos allowed the viewer to treat the work as a whole instead of individual photos. Symmetry and mirroring makes the work as a unified work . Each separate piece is its own entity while at the same time they belong to a larger picture.

Manipulating found objects was like providing answers for me. The work became too formulaic and predictable. The process was something that didn't interest me . Cutting objects lost their meaning and overtime revealed that I didn't get anything back in return from the objects. It didn't provide me with a challenge. It didn't provide me with the same challenge I had when I curated found objects. There was nothing to reveal. It became an empty enterprise.

The end of the first year at UCR, I was not challenged by my ideas anymore. The work I made in the first year seemed to all point to a dead end. I felt that the body of work was predictable. It became too didactic. During this crisis of trying to find a new methodology of making art, I had discovered that asking questions was more fruitful for me than enforcing my artistic sensibilities and taste. I was interested in having work that forced myself to ask questions. I was drawn to reevaluating my own values. Asking questions also changed my definition of a successful art work. The new parameters of the Stranger Test. If the work gave me answers then it was not successful, if the work made me ask questions, then it was successful.

2.

I was interested in works of art that looked like found objects and found objects that looked like works of art. The first thing that caught my attention were mugshots. A particular group of photos that caught my attention were from the Dallas Texas county jail (Photo 8). The Dallas Texas series of photos looked like it could be pass as fine art. The lighting of the photo and the postures of the individuals seem to defy the context from where they were made for. Ready-mades that were disguised as fine-art photos.

I was also interested in making works of art that looked like they were Ready-mades. Oil stains on construction paper was another attempt at this endeavor. (fig. 9) To accomplish this simultaneously distancing and owning the work, I focused on making the work seem like accidents. No real artist gesture, just elements that collided together that have no artistic reason to be together.

3.

For the CARL fellowship I was interested in further pursuing authorship and mark. Ripped trash bags scattered on the ground, bent aluminum shards that looked like discarded manufactured pieces and anonymous paintings. (fig. 10, 11,12) For the sculptures in the show I was interested in making them not look like an artist had made, but were artifacts of a machine or accident. For the aluminum shards I was interested in discarded manufacturing. During the process of making the aluminum pieces, I imagined how aluminum would look like if they were real left over scraps from a factory. I kept my workmanship minimal, just bending the work enough to make it seem that it had been authored by some machine but enough to make it look like sculptural objects. I was thinking in the same methodologies for the ripped plastic bags. The arrangement and ripping of the bags weren't supposed to be obviously deliberate. It was supposed to look like a group of raccoons ripped apart trash bags on trash day.

The paintings were on a different trajectory but of similar mind frame. I was thinking of the space where the paintings were being shown as a storage unit. I treated the paintings as objects that existed in a limbo space in a museum. The work was supposed to be stumbled upon and not directed to.

I think the show was successful in that it had an anonymous feel to the work. It didn't have any discernible artist traits. The sculptures didn't look like an artist had made them, but instead was created by a set of circumstances out of anyone's control.

To further push the idea of concealing authorship I thought of branding. A way to

thwart any relationship to any individual or persona. In the business world, branding has successfully disassociated names from individuals, persona or groups and in turn associated it with a value, or a set of values. I believe a brand can have the same results on artistic identity.

Thinking of branding has made me also think of art and businesses. One of arts trajectory that I have always been interested in, is the blurring between art and everyday objects. Andy Warhol was successful in blurring the lines with his Kellogg Boxes.

In my head I imagined a world in which businesses like, Kellogg , Goldman Sacks, Nike , Cadillac or Apple, made paintings. Those paintings would then be shown next to their products in art shows. In this same imagined world I see myself standing in front of these paintings trying to understand my relationship with the work that was produced.

4.

For the thesis show I presented paintings and shoe boxes. The intentions of presenting paintings were to present BANBAN as contemporary brand that explores taste and value. (fig. 12, 13, 14, 15) The second part to BANBAN is the production of socks. The manifestation of this project will be a retail website called banbansocks.com , that offers socks designed by artists working for BANBAN.

The ambiguity of an object being an art object and non-art is what most compels me to consider socks as art object/non-art object, a contradiction. Banbansocks.com is an investigation of art and the everyday. (fig. 16,17, 18, 19, 20) This mode of existence is something that I've borrowed from my own personal ways of seeing the world and deriving meaning from it. When I look for meaning or purpose to my existence, I see what has come before me, and I have concluded to accept all views of existence and purpose as valid. I see all modes of existence as being correct. There is no contradiction because ideas are divisible. Instead of a trajectory of advancement, I believe that there is an infinite possibility between things and ideas. The same goes for art. There is the infinite between art and art , art and the everyday, and the everyday and the everyday.



Tree Trunk Installation, PGG 2012



Tandi 24x34" 2012



River, Salton Sea, 2012



Toilets, 2012



Shopping Carts, 2012



Miami, 2013



Playh, 2013



Oil Stain, 2014



Friends Friend,2013



Plastic Bags, 2013



Aluminum Shards, 2013



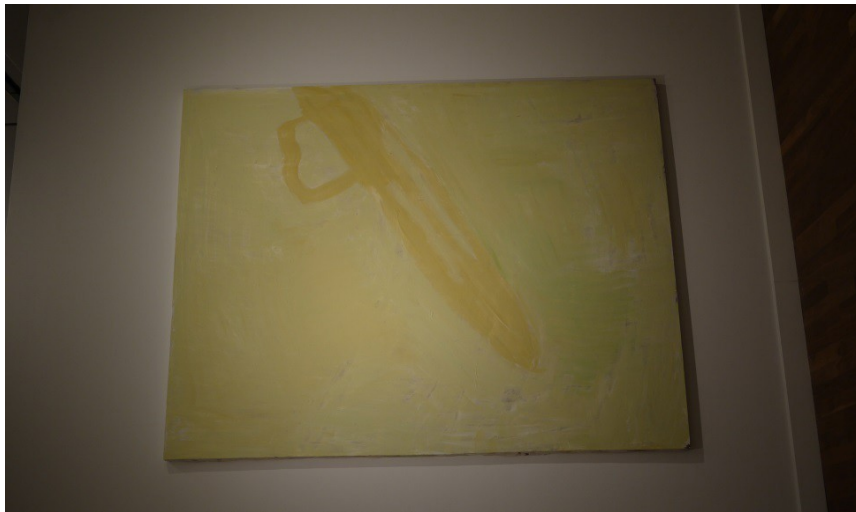
Painting 88, 2013



BANBAN Shoes, Carboard, Shoes, and Acrylic Paint 2014



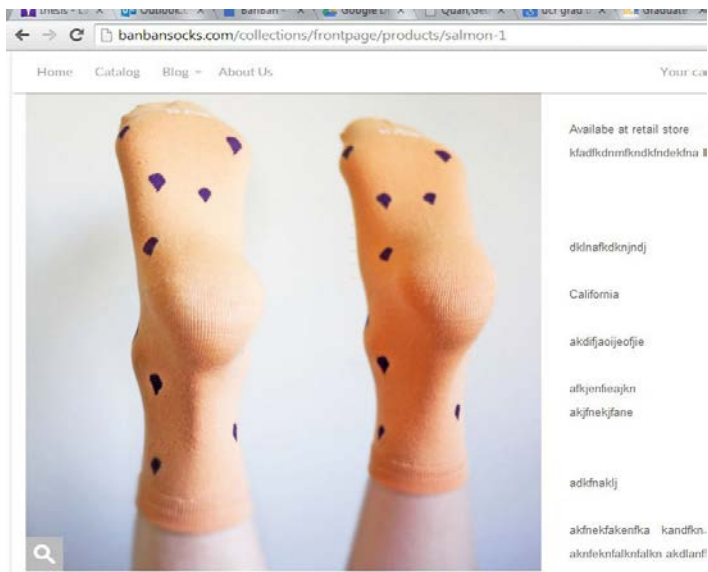
The Golden Shoe, 2014



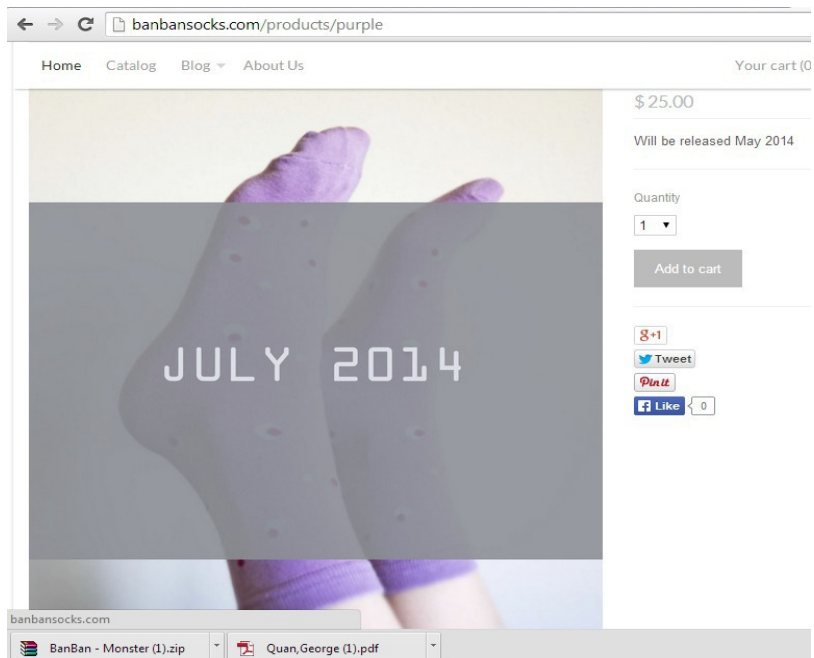
Golden Gate Bridge, 2014



Everything is mine, 2013



Banbansocks.com, Orange Water, 2014



Banbansocks.com, Purple run, 2014

← → ↻ banbansocks.com/products/blueblue

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BLUEBLUE (M)
\$25.00

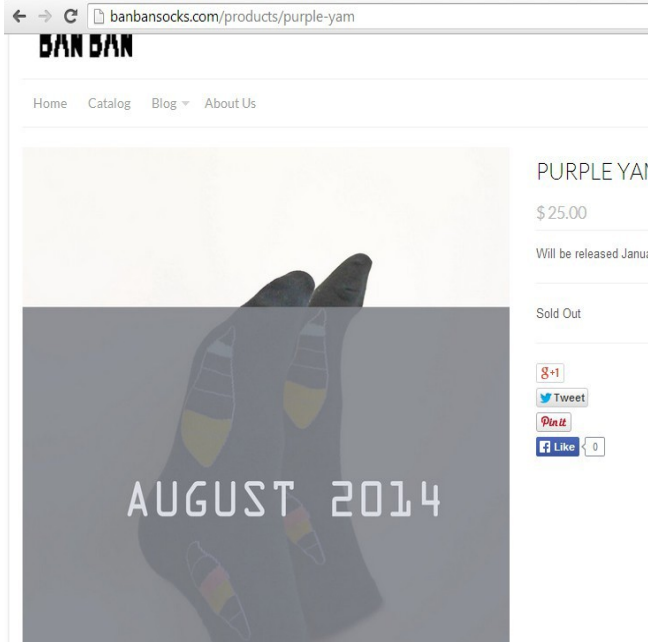
Unisex. One size fits all.
This sock was inspired by

Will be released March 2014

Sold Out

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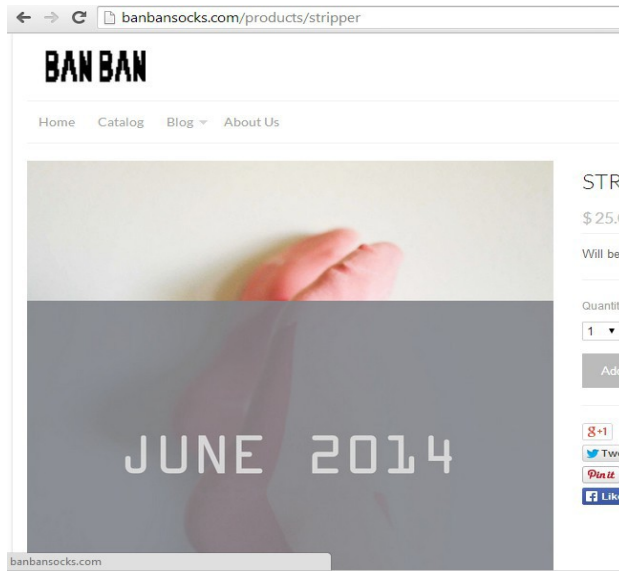
Banbansocks.com, Half Blue, 2014



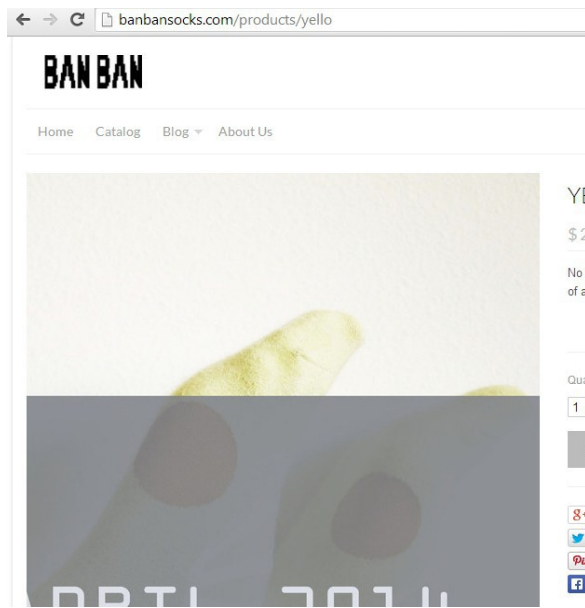
Banbansocks.com, Purple Yam, 2014



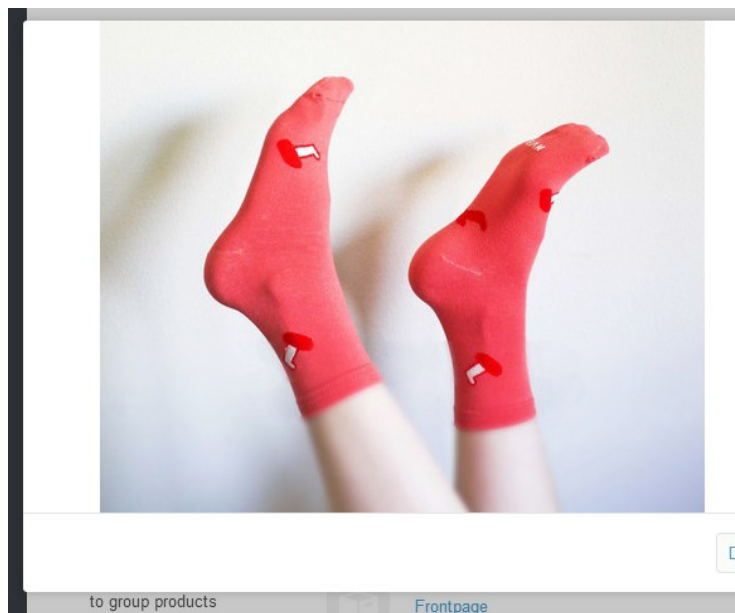
Banbansocks, Red Lantern, 2014



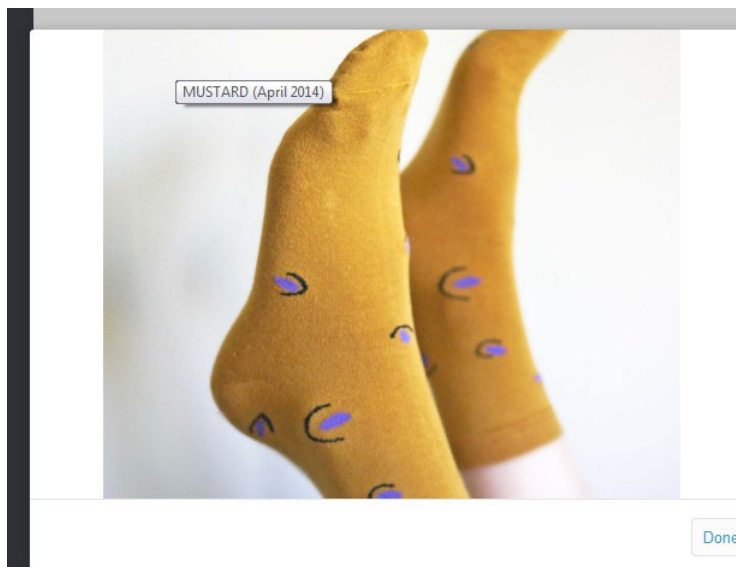
Banbansocks.com, Stripper, 2014



Banbansocks.com, Brown BB, 2014



Banbansocks.com, Red Mushrooms, 2014



Banbansocks.com, Purmimn, 2014