

Q. In other pieces -such as "Jewelry Weapons" and "Champagne Extinguisher" - you have developed a new meaning for premium objects that -actually- go against their every-day signification or gives them a new twist. The desire to work with premium brands is casual or it's part of point of view that you've been developing in different pieces?

A. The premium brands I've chosen are the religious institutions of our age, our most powerful and revered symbols. Holy icons in the strictest sense. Brand identities bridge the worlds of perception, perceived satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the three-way tension that drives consumerism. I've used the brands in a purely symbolic way. I'm not disrespecting them. On the contrary, I'm acknowledging their place in the pecking order of our consumer culture. Brand iconography was more prevalent in my earlier work. These days, I prefer to focus on the application and/or the 'product'.

Q. You said that there's no political agenda in your pieces but some may disagree. After all, by re-contextualizing you're opening a debate that involves criticism.

A. For me, it's all about starting a debate, and that's not politically motivated. Of course, I make my work for a reason. What that is, however, is up to the viewer to decide. I don't have an agenda, hidden or otherwise. I want people to think for themselves. You could say I seduce and invite people to stop and think for a moment. I want my work to provide a platform from which people can explore and reflect on their own ideas and opinions. Besides that, I feel strongly about the 'necessity of criticism'. Still, I like to leave that to the people.

Q. About the Gas Masks... Do you think that the desire to feed our fears is equal to the desire to reach pleasure through objects?

A. No. I think there is an essential difference. It's quite clear that the desire to unconsciously 'buy-out' our fears is premeditated and can be seen as an artificially 'induced' concept. Our modern economy demands that we make consumption our way of life. That we convert the buying, selling and usage of goods into rituals, that we even seek spiritual satisfaction in it. But, when somebody can evaluate a product without fear, he or she can take a much more rational decision to buy.

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Q. Is this a way of explaining how huge and ridicule fetishist has become?

A. You can see it that way. It's an attempt to visualize fetishism, especially 'commodity fetishism' that denotes the mystification of human relations which arise from market trade, when social relationships between people are expressed as, mediated by and transformed into, objectified relationships between things. That's how Karl Marx put it. But that doesn't mean I'm a Marxist, communist, leftist, or any other -ist. Such labels, in themselves, are examples of political branding.

Q. What do you mean when you said that we're in a perpetual state of war?

A. We are in a continuous state of imbalance with ourselves and with our natural and social surroundings. We are subject to all kinds of forces, which continuously bombard us with propaganda designed to influence what we think and how we behave. This economic and psychological climate has an immense impact on our emotional wellbeing.

Today, a parallel to the terms state of war is easily made.

With the military-industrial complex, new technology, the information society, economic and ecologic crisis, it's more critical then ever to know how to cope with 'hostile' environments.

Q. Do you feel that the insatiable culture of consumption is some kind of disease of modern times or just a feature of society that provides no harm?

A. Our insatiable culture of consumption has been manufactured and is the by-product of a crumbling global empire. An empire of whose beliefs is funded by capitalism and the illusion of democracy. The concepts of Capitalism and democracy have been part of the same process since the beginning. A citizen influences the process with his/her vote, the consumer votes with his/her money. As capitalism flourished in much of the first-world so did democracy. And vice versa. In Western Europe, the U.S. democracy provided the foundation of life and capitalism provided the essentials - a house, a car, a fridge, a washing machine and all the other symbols that have come to represent that system.

Yet, once our basic wants and needs were met, the capitalist system was faced with a fundamental problem. In providing everything we desired the system made itself obsolete. Capitalism can't grow when people's basic material needs have been satisfied. That's when the fundamental shift took place.

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Capitalism stopped manufacturing products and began manufacturing perceived needs and wants. The capitalist turned his attention to creating hungry, insatiable consumers. The consumerist system must create a constant stream of new desires and wants for the slightly better, slightly different products that fill our shopping adventures. Consequently, today we shop as a pass time. We buy stuff as a hobby. Capitalism was transformed to consumerism.

Over, the last years, consumerism has evolved once more. Today, we're surrounded by 'free' services and products. With non-transparent terms of services and difficult to read privacy policies and settings the consumer is guided into the next gen. information society. Companies make their money by selling information. Your information.

Every purchase we make with our credit or debit card, every time we swipe our customer loyalty card, every time we walk around town with our cell phone, we're being tracked. Today, we're knowingly permitting, and in some cases actually paying for apps that track us, tap our phones and spy on us. All to promote the new consumerism. It quickly turns into a totalitarian movement.

Democracy tends toward diversity where totalitarianism tends toward homogeneity. Capitalism focuses on meeting needs where consumerism focuses on creating them. These systems cannot exist amicably in the same society, as a 'survivalist blogger' under the name of HowardR nicely sums it up.

Q. Have you received requests to buy any of the pieces?

A. Yes.
Unfortunately, I can't get into details.

Q. Has someone remove the piece's meaning and try to buy them to have, in case of need, a pretty version of a gas mask? After all, you said it yourself: "we don't want, but we do".

A. The Designer Gasmasks have attracted a lot of attention from celebrities, exotic investors and an army of intellectual 'elite'. There are several layers to the statement the gasmasks make. They host many messages that can support each other. Each person interprets the idea in his or her own way. Some see them as art, others as some sort of luxury accessory. So yes, there are people that perceive this project as a usable product.