

ArtsWest



STANFORD UNIVERSITY
THE BILL LANE CENTER
FOR THE AMERICAN WEST

Binh Danh on Photography and Art: A Series of Interview Questions

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April 2019
<http://artswest.stanford.edu>



Alexandra (Mac) Taylor: You have spent time creating distinctive, signature styles in your photography. Do these styles rely on each other or are they independent and more reflective of the evolution of your photographic method?

Binh Danh: Styles are hard to categorize. It depends on what I am looking at the moment, in terms of other artists' work for the past and present. But overall, as an artist with some years of experience, my style should rely on each other. I don't think I have evolved much in the style of my work. Most of the ways of making artwork stay the same; it is the content that could change.

Taylor: It appears that much of your work has emerged as a result of a fusion between materiality and history. What in particular do you think has inspired you to pursue art making in this way?

Danh: As an artist, material study is very much essential. As a child, I was drawn to scientific exploration. Science requires material, specimens, and artifacts. I have been very drawn to this idea. In grade school, I loved to visit the science lab and look at specimens. I remember one day our school got a sample of moon dust that was encased in acrylic resin. The teacher expressed how profound it was to get these specimens on loan for the week. I remember the students and myself oohing and ahing as he unveiled the samples. That had a profound effect on me.

Taylor: Your chlorophyll printing works and your daguerreotype works are, seemingly, quite different. Do you have a preference between one photographic style over the other?

Danh: Yes, currently and most likely for the long run, I prefer making daguerreotypes over chlorophyll prints. The chlorophyll prints work were specific to the concept of the series, war, found photographs, etc. What I enjoyed about making daguerreotypes is that I am a photographer again. I am out and about, making pictures with a camera. There's a sense of discovery and getting lost when I'm exposing images onto silver plates. There is also a rush of adrenaline as I race against the changing light and not knowing the result beforehand.

Taylor: What are you working on today? Will any of this work recall or rely on the styles you have already used in the past?

Danh: There are always many projects in the making, too many to list here, but since I have been "landscaping" for most of my photographic career, I want to get back into portraiture work, as I did with some of the chlorophyll print series such as Ancestral Altars. The portrait work will be daguerreotype touching on the issue of equality and self-representation.

Taylor: Who is your favorite photographer, living or dead?

Danh: I'm a big fan of Linda Connor's work. She knows how to photograph both land and body with such precision.

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