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ESSAY - Shepard Fairey

There was a fascinating excerpt in a book called *POP: How Graphic Design Shapes Popular Culture*, authored by Steven Heller. On page 45; *Shepard Fairey Is Not a Crook* was the title of a chapter that I am responding to. It caught my attention, not because of the word crook, but as a street artist whose attention has as much clout as Banksy has. Therefore it was natural for me to choose Fairey to be cohesive for my overall project subject matter on Banksy.

“Take Banksy and Shepard Fairey, two undeniably influential urban talents, both with careers firmly rooted in outdoor art, both active for about the same periods of time, yet the makeup of the current markets for their respective work could not be more different”.

Shepard Fairey made his name by designing the iconic Barack Obama "Hope" poster. That poster became the focus of legal and ethical scrutiny - for use of Mannie Garcia's AP news photo of Barack Obama. The legal issue questioned Fairey's sampling the existing imagery of Garcia's. Below is the transformation from the original photo to the iconic poster.

Despite the scolding criticisms, Fairey prospered with the worldwide recognition and reputation. That *HOPE* poster widely described as iconic and came to represent the 2008 Obama presidential campaign. It consists of a stylized **stencil** portrait of Obama in solid red, **beige** and (pastel and dark)

blue, with the word "progress", "hope", or "change".

During the 2008 election season, initially independently but with the approval of the official Obama campaign. The design was created in one day and printed first as a poster. Fairey sold 350 of the posters on the street immediately after printing them. It was then more widely distributed, both as a digital image and other souvenirs. The image became one of the most widely recognized symbols of Obama's campaign message, spawning many variations and imitations, including some commissioned by the Obama campaign. This led *The Guardian's* Laura Barton to proclaim that the image "acquired the kind of instant recognition of Jim Fitzpatrick's Che Guevara poster".

Looking forward to further developments by this radical artist. Who will Fairey influence?

Spawning a new genre?



Citations

Art, Money, Shepard Fairey, Banksy and the Quest for Clarity. Art Business. Circa 2009. Web. March 11, 2013.

Heller, Steven. *POP: How Graphic Design Shapes Popular Culture*. New York: Allworth Press, 2010. Print.

Barack Obama Hope Poster. Wikipedia. 2008. Web. March 11, 2013.