

An Exploration of Artwork by Shepard Fairey

By Paula Briggs

This resource explores aspects of Fairey's work, as shared with teenagers aged 12 and 13.

In particular the resource takes inspiration from Fairey's methods of production and use of imagery to make work which might be defined as propaganda art. [You can see the practical studio session which followed our exploration here](#) and [our resulting outcomes here](#).

Frank Shepard Fairey (born February 15, 1970) is an American contemporary street artist, graphic designer, activist, illustrator and founder of [OBEY Clothing](#) who emerged from the skateboarding scene. He first became known for his "[Andre the Giant Has a Posse](#)" (...OBEY...) sticker campaign while attending the [Rhode Island School of Design](#) (RISD).



Shephard Fairey

Fairey became widely known during the 2008 U.S. presidential election for his [Barack Obama "Hope" poster](#). The [Institute of](#)

[Contemporary Art, Boston](#) has described him as one of the best known and most influential street artists.^[4] [Wikipedia](#)

Videos Sharing Fairey's Creative Practice

Teenagers were shown the following videos in which Fairey shares aspects of his creative process.

After watching the videos, the group discussed the various stages/actions of Fairey's printmaking process:

- Making a printable surface: collaging papers with history and painting over them
- Creating stencils for use with screen printing or spray paint
- Layering of imagery
- Sanding
- Varnishing

We also discussed his use of symbols or icons and visually strong graphics.

Using the images below as starting points for further discussion, we also briefly talked about:

- What is propaganda art?
- What kinds of visual devices might it rely upon?
- How does Fairey use and limit colour?
- How does he use text within his imagery?



◊ WE THE PEOPLE ◊

PROTECT EACH OTHER

We The People by Shepard Fairey



We The People (detail) by Shepard Fairey



◊ WE THE PEOPLE ◊

DEFEND DIGNITY

We the People by Shepard Fairey



The Black Hills by Shepard Fairey

[See how the teenagers went on to define their own "message to the world" here.](#)

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