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Rebranding Street Art: An Examination of Street Art and Evolution into Mainstream Advertising, Branding, and Propaganda

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Rebranding Street Art

*An examination of street art and
evolution into mainstream
advertising, branding, and propaganda.*

by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts In University Honors
and Communication Studies

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Abstract

An examination of the evolution of street art arising from an elemental form of graffiti/vandalism to an established and respected art form used by corporate organizations for advertisement and branding. This case study will provide testimony of research performed over the span of twenty years allowing for the development of acclaimed street artists like Shepard Fairey to establish their own brand identities and collaborations with corporate advertising. This will be exhibited by breaking down what street art is and how it relates to advertising, branding, and propaganda. Discussing the cultural community component of street art and how this allows for the growth of social acceptance by the high art community. Examining how this acceptance relates to the implementation of street art in advertising campaigns by corporations and artist individual brands. Through focusing on Shepard Fairey's migration from the anonymous street artist; with his Andre the Giant has a Posse Sticker Campaign (OBEY Campaign), to the well-known artist who created the 2008 Obama "Hope" poster and the International Women's March 2017 "We the People" poster collection.

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Key Words:

Advertising, Branding, Corporate Marketing, OBEY, Propaganda, Shepard Fairey, Street Art

For this image,
the one that started it all for me
and its artist whose name I will never know.

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“For me, there has always been a disconnect with the sort of elitist structure of the high-art world — and my distaste for that is at odds with my feeling that art should aspire to do great things. But there’s something powerful about seeing art in public spaces that has a function other than just advertising that’s selling a product.” – Shepard Fairey, 2010 via Interview Magazine

Introduction

Street art is an ever-changing form of vandalism. Over the past twenty years, this type of vandalism has moved beyond the walls and signs of your city streets and into the stores, studios, galleries, and museums that quantify and qualify what art is as accepted by society, bring around a new age of street art integrated within organized advertisements. The concept of street art culture stems from a broad idea of artists reclaiming the urban space, different from the purchased walls and billboards corporations use for advertisements. There are many components of this ever-growing cultural phenomenon including a community culture associated with street art and an evolution towards more stereotypical advertising and branding. This has been brought on by the normalization of the rebel subculture and the acceptance of counter-culture as a mainstream form of expression.

This case study will examine the evolution of street art with an introductory exploration of what is defined as street art and a brief history of its evolution. Additionally, this case study will focus on the cultural evolution behind street art, and the community that this art form serves. As this art form has evolved, it has intertwined a narrative between propaganda and branding. The past few years has seen the conceptualization of street art as a form of propaganda that can evolve into branding and advertisement. This phenomenon can be traced in the prolific career and evolution of Shepard Fairey, whose iconic 1990s OBEY campaign has masterfully intertwined all three conceptual uses of street art (propaganda, branding, advertisement) while still

maintaining artistic street credit and cultural desirability. This case study will analysis his path, the OBEY campaign itself, and provide a brief overview of his other notable works. I posit that this combination of street credit and gallery production allows Fairey to make a living in the economic world while still expressing his art in an impactful and authentic way.

I chose this topic to showcase street art as an evolutionary form of vandalism that has broken the bounds of standardized artistic expression in branding, propaganda, and advertising. Over the past four years, I have personally archived street art I have found in the city of Portland, Oregon on the social media site, Instagram. This cataloging led me to study street art as a vehicle for branding, propaganda, and advertising. I became fascinated with the multifaceted function of street art as an art form that often embraces a variety of patterns, messages, meanings, and methods. Through the process of writing this case study, I have learned that I am not the only one who enjoys studying and examining this process. Therefore, this thesis will function as an examination of how the evolution of street art has become a mechanism for advertising, branding, and propaganda. I posit that this phenomena has contributed to the shift in public perception of graffiti art and its culture, allowing street artists to gain credibility and standing within the artistic community. Thereby, allowing a form of vandalism to grow beyond the illegal, to the idyllic.

Graffiti

Graffiti has been part of urban life for a long time, going back as far as hieroglyphics in caves where humans left their mark, and stories on the walls of the spaces they inhabited. The word graffiti is derived from the Italian *graffio*, “a scratch”. Graffiti became the action of writing or drawing on a surface in a public space in the 19th century. Graffiti is associated with the

textual aspect of tagging; often seen on trains, abandoned or downtrodden buildings (Frederick, 2009). Graffiti is generally associated with gangs, miscreants, teenage angst, and a disdain for authority which assigns a negative association with the action of performing graffiti (Banet-Weiser, 2011).

Street art is an evolved representation of this kind of vandalism. It functions as graffiti and as art, providing a public platform for information sharing and exposure of artistic ability. Street art has a direct relationship with culture, activism, advertising, propaganda, branding, social movements, and many other ubiquitous community issues (Austin, 2001; Banet-Weiser, 2011; Borghini et al., 2010; Droney, 2010; Pedro, 2011; Snyder 2009). Sarah Banet-Weiser is the Vice Dean, Director of the School of Communication, and a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California (USC) located in Los Angeles, California. In her article entitled, “Convergence on the street: Rethinking the Authentic/Commercial Binary”, she explores the dynamic between consumer culture and popular culture. Inspired by the themes and concepts that arise from Banet-Weiser’s work, I drew from her work my definition of street art as an examination of how street art in public and private spaces has been adapted over time for the mainstream society. By removing the stigma surrounding street art as vandalism, the art form is given the proper validity to function within artistic communities.. Thus, allowing street artists who have previously been categorized as criminals to have a place for their art in public spaces. Banet-Weiser examines this shift as a vital element of street art capitalizing on the niche market as it moves towards a more mainstream place in the artistic community (2011).

Vandalism is a form of unstructured destruction of a property that has not been sanctioned by the owners of that surface upon which the destruction has taken place, and is often associated with antisocial behavior and damage to this property (Frederick, 2009). The difference between street art and vandalism stems from a similar concept of meaning however, vandalism is an action that is often categorized as meaningless and aims only to damage property without much purpose beyond said destruction. Street art aims to attach a form of meaning to this alteration of property, going as far as to claim it is an improvement rather than a destruction. Culturally thought to be a recovery of public space through a presentation of public art, vandalism and street art are similarly performed actions with different cultivations. While vandalism and street art are both technically graffiti they carry different meanings and intentions by the artist. Nonetheless, both forms of graffiti are often discussed synonymously within academic discourse and social conversations.

Street Art

Around the world, the street art movement has grown and expanded tremendously in popularity since the 1980s and 1990s (Droney, 2010). This boom in exposure has shed light on the art form of street art, allowing the greater public to explore the definition of the art form, how it relates to the greater graffiti movement, and its historical categorization as vandalism. Street art is the area where graffiti and art converge to create meaning and bring forth an emotional response through visual stimulation (Bergen, 2012). Street art approaches graffiti from a variety of angles; from the medium used to produce the art, to the culture that has emerged from it. Each component of a street artist's piece plays a role in the message or lack of message an artist

is attempting to convey to a public through the works these artists create. There are many definitions of street art that exist, and I will use the following:

“ Broadly, street art is art in the historical tradition of graffiti, murals and tagging, that is painted, stencilled, stickered or pasted on public spaces walls, trains, fences, etc. that is clearly understood by its producers as art and not advertising” (p. 644).

Street art has evolved past a generalized term of graffiti, transgressing social and cultural dynamics and approaching vandalism from an artist’s perspective. Since graffiti is specifically associated with textual aspects of street art it is only one piece of the street art movement which is a multifaceted mechanism including both text and visual imagery/symbolism.

A major component that separates street art from graffiti is the artist’s relationship to the art created. There are many draws to being a street artist, including minor and major career moves for an artistic career and as a member of society. The allure of fame and recognition is one of these draws which is a major career move along with the minor associations such as a connection to the environment and community. Street artists pride themselves on their subversive approach to publicised art and since there are no real true barriers to an artist’s canvases, the options for art expansion are almost limitless. Amassing as much art as possible spread out over an urban space is a part of this process. Mass campaigns often have their own micro-communities of admirers that open doors to greater projects and a wider range of publicity. Due to its often illicit nature, street art lives beyond the usual constraints of public art, carrying forward messages that remain unchanged by corporations advertisements and other outside influences. Street art is often anonymous, and there is little reliance on coverage in the stereotypical high art world which allows for a wide variety of artistic expression with less social constraints. This does however, limit an artist’s ability to make a living from their artistic

contribution to a public space, which is referred to as a means of reclaiming the public space from corporate advertising (Borghini et al., 2010). This notion is portrayed by the idea that due to the artist's ability to create as they please, there is less likelihood for their artwork to sell a product or influence a consumer choice in consuming said product. This is a very common view in most street art studies, and allows street art to function as more than just vandalism. As stated by Banet-Weiser, "Street art cannot be read as simply a sign of urban decay and rebellious youth, nor is it a pure form of cultural innovation" (2011). It has even been described as "a multicultural mélange, part melting pot and part mosaic" (Borghini et al., 2010). This is partially due to an associated mentality and partly due to the scrutiny of street art that has been exhibited by the high art world towards street artists over the past twenty years (Fairey, 2010).

The broad reach that street art provides for its artist is, in fact, the reason street art has been adopted by many companies in advertising campaigns. The replication and broad span of categorization of street art is a large component of this. Artists often assign personal symbols and logos to their work as a form of signature allowing for categorization (Banet-Weiser, 2011). Artists often use a variety of mediums in the creation of their work. By having a symbol to unify their pieces, it signals to the public that they have interacted with this specific artist's works before. Without mass coverage and usage of these personal symbols as signatures, community recognition would be less obtainable. Through the variety of mediums housed in the street art umbrella, an artist's logo/symbol is their individualized mark and their own personal brand as well as the mindset and goals of the artist involved.

"Street art, graffiti, tagging and muralism are all different forms of art; they use different materials, have different end goals and are understood differently by a variety of audiences (and in media-saturated contexts, it is often difficult to discern differences between different forms of art, including commercial expression such as advertising)." (Banet-Weiser, 2011)

Items such as templates, stickers, stencils, and prints allow for a larger production of the artist's work than a can of spray paint and one wall. This can also be said for tech-based street art such as video installations, and audio files which are often stored on the internet that can be accessed by anyone. The advancement of technology since the 1980s and 1990s has allowed street artist to continue to place the ownership of their art within the hands of their public. This engagement formerly found in the urban landscape can now be utilized in new artistic ways in the virtual public sphere, allowing street artists to provide access to their works through social media platforms, and personal websites or blogs.

The goal of street artists relies on the invocation of emotions and responses from the public, without the public interacting with their art, there would be no need for a street artist to continue forward. The nature of the overlapping creation of street art asks artists to embrace even seemingly contradictory responses to their works, such as the replication and often amateur style of recreating another artists work. Shepard Fairey does this on his website under a tab entitled *Bootlegs* where he showcases “*rip off*” or recreated images of his own work. This embracement of other street artists interacting with his original design allows for a shared participation in the application of street art and allows Fairey to share his brand in new ways. In the book, *Taking the train: How graffiti art became an urban crisis in New York City*, historian Joe Austin suggests that graffiti plays a role as a form of discourse between street artists and the public. By mimicking the widespread use of famous names on billboards and in print through the process of “writing” one's art with the public view, street artists in the 1960s and 1970s were able to communicate in a playful and easily understood way, devoid of the usual markings and indications of fine art world, and be understood by public within the space it covered (2001). This

concept of street art being utilized as a form of personal discourse by the artists, is key in understanding the eventual evolution of street art into a piece of advertising or propaganda. When street art is commodified as such, the artist's personalized brand allows and encourages onlookers to partake in a community response, and allows for individual attachment to the art and the street art community.

Advertising

Advertising uses human emotion and individual want for acceptance by the community to sell and market products and ideas. Although using an idea of inclusion, advertisements capitalize on a push for social uniformity and shared community values. Corporate advertisements market rebellion through the implementation of street art into their advertising campaigns. Suggesting that going against the mainstream is what everyone really wants because it draws away from the idea that the organizations themselves are involved, allowing for the illusion of individualistic capitalism, a concept that is not real. As individual street artists grow in popularity, they are able to capitalize on these advertising techniques: "These street artists are therefore producing their street art as a form of advertising" (Droney, 2010). Opening channels for street art to evolve into brands that are known and coveted, large corporations such as Levis, IBM, and Apple have used this evolution to incorporate street art and collaborate with street artists for massive advertising campaigns. Since art can survive without advertising, but advertising is just rhetoric without its visual counterpart, this union has been extremely lucrative and important for advertisements.

This begs the questions; where are the lines drawn? Where does street artistic practice stop being a recovery of public space and start becoming a model for promoting advertising and

consumerism? How does street art that slyly influence and overtly manipulates its consumer into absorbing advertisement without their knowledge, thus becoming corporate propaganda? “Both artists and advertisers are fully aware of the contradiction in producing art as marketing materials and marketing materials as art, and this conjecture is not simply a convenience. In fact, they often seek to maximize this indistinction” (Droney, 2010). Droney posits that this convergence of the two is at least, in some instances, allowing for mutual exploitation using each other to market their own propaganda. This is especially represented under the definition of propaganda as “the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols” (Lasswell, 1927). The publicity advertisements bring street art imagery has greatly influenced the street art evolution and allowed for artists to break through the elite barriers that have often constrained these vandals in the eyes of the fine art world.

The article, “Symbiotic Posturing of Commercial Advertising and Street Art” by Borghini, Visconti, Anderson, and Sherry, states that street art already utilizes advertising tactics to present its message specifically by:

“Mirroring and integrating advertising practices, the rhetoric of mass replication observed the following steps: (1) the construction of a unique and recognizable personal/collective creative template, (2) the transfer of some shared street art values to this template and its replication through connected variations, and (3) the adoption of a variety of media to mass communication and replicate the message” (2010).

When advertising companies implement street art into their campaign, they allow for an adoption of shared meaning between the street art and the corporate advertising campaign. Due to many cultural clashes in ethics and intention, there will always be clashes between stereotypical advertisements and street art, due to the historic notion that street art is trying to take back public

space from advertisements. The mutual aim to make a public statement will also connect these two communities together because they can so easily be impacted by one another (Pedro, 2011).

Propaganda

Propaganda can be found in the street art wheelhouse because each of these methods of communication share core elements. Propaganda is a message pointedly created to influence the opinion of its viewer, using emotions to influence the viewer's perception of the message. These messages can be subtle or blatant, and often are deliberately attempting to bring forth emotionally charged responses. This is done through specified placement and illogical interaction, suggesting parallel relationships between concepts that are uncommonly linked. Utilizing the intended audiences fears or misleading information, propaganda acts to build support to influence and entangle unsuspecting publics (Lasswell, 1927). Propaganda creates a following through emotional attachment and a feeling of belonging, as does street art.

This is exhibited by the culture that creates community through shared interest and practice in the street art world. Individuals involved in this culture find their place in creative rhetoric, through sharing their artist's brands through preproduction of the art as provided by the artists. The symbolic connection that brings these members together is essential for creating this community (Borghini et al., 2010). This shared connection is a key to associating street art with propaganda, and this is why street artists can market their artwork as propaganda in their own way, which allows for a positive association with a term often associated with negative influence. Street art markets its community and influences emotions as a piece of its culture. Street art takes part in the production of individualist branding through the usage of personal symbols or signatures, while still deviating from standard artistic practices as well as standard

representations of advertisements. This deviation still allows for the art form to transfix itself into a piece of propagandic material.

In addition, Street art holds to the notion that these art pieces are specifically and distinctly placed in the aim to elicit an intense emotional response and a cognitive kick-start to examining the ideas presented, especially those based on the environment in which these ideas are showcased. Both of these concepts provide stimuli to their audience, aiming to influence their publics (Lasswell, 1927). This also relates to advertising and branding because, through the use of imagery and memorable symbolism, corporations and organizations aim to influence their publics with the goal of sales or product recognition. Street art and propaganda are both linked by a shared notion of visual production for the end goal of relaying information, whether this is sales of physical, emotional or conceptual products.

Community

The unwritten rules of street art allow for respect amongst artists, and a community built upon a want or need for sharing and expressing. The street art community seeks to provide an open platform for information sharing and encourages artists to be individualistic and playful with their incorporation of accepted socially known symbols, while simultaneously pushing back against corporate advertising. Street artists do this by creating an incorporation of their own original pieces with accepted symbolism, thereby branding and marketing themselves uniquely. It is often difficult to differentiate between these well-known brand advertisements and street art.

“This is made possible by an original overlapping of the aesthetic domains of street art and marketing, in which contemporary marketing campaigns and street artists alike work with the aesthetics of subversion and personal liberation. I suggest that street art is to be understood as a self-referential comment on its relationship to marketing” (Droney, 2010).

A shared awareness of the city as a community helps monitor and personalize the city in the eyes of these artists and their community. Their public work is like a diary or map of where an artist has been. The trails, patterns, and ambiguity of their artistic themes allow for specific followers interests and attention. Similarly to a brand's logo or symbol, artists in this community have a memorable image associated with them. This incorporation of individualized personal branding provides an allowance for categorization and memorization that can be credited to the artist if they want it to be (Banet-Weiser, 2011).

Part of the allure of following and noticing street art regardless of its medium is the replication and patterns, perpetuated by the mass production of street art. This brings people together under the umbrella of the street subculture in unison with the street art community. Street art, like other microcultures within other larger cultural communities, aims to touch those who feel as though the mainstream has abandoned them. Street art is rebellious and allows anyone to participate based on its association with anonymity. This community proclaims to be anti-corporate advertising and aims to negate the norms of advertisement, which is often done by defacing or altering corporate advertisements and taking their meaning and attaching an ironic or amusing association with the corporations symbol or logo.

These distinguished members of the street art subculture, often rejoice in the counterculture narrative that they find their works and themselves being placed. Individuals who engage in street art often have a common interest in art as a form of rebellion from the norm. Yes, part of the allure of street art is the fact that it is illegal and unmonitored by corporations and governments. Being a member of the street art community provides a multipass ticket to the opportunities among the art community-based in the street art community. The secretive nature

of this community provides an affiliation of its draw since you have to pay attention to your surroundings you notice the art that is often on a submissive platforms. (Pedro, 2011). This social acceptance acquired amongst community members opens the door for an artist who is looking to get noticed (Droney, 2010).

An aim for fame is a component of this culture and the acceptance of advertising as a method of notice has slowly been accepted in some circumstances, especially if these advertisements represent ideas deemed important and positive by the street art community. Shepard Fairey has collaborated on a few widely marketed advertising campaigns that provide charitable funds for positive causes. These campaigns are mostly accepted by the street art culture, however, in the art world, there will always be some kind of push-back due to a classist dismissal of the legitimacy of the art form.

Some websites are committed to discussing and critiquing the lines between street art and advertising. They discuss the distinctions and reality of what is required to thrive and succeed in this subculture. By partaking in these advertisements are artists, “selling out?” Some people think using street art as a form of advertisement and converging these mediums for mass media presentation is disrespectful to the street art culture. Street art as a form of advertising has become a part of the mainstream economic system. Embracing this reality is a way for the artist who in the past may have been pushed aside as prospective corporate collaborators are now being considered and even sought out for large -scale advertisement projects (Droney, 2011). This provides new opportunities for members of a community that simply did not exist in the realm of mainstream marketing of art.

Branding

Street art is promoted as the counter brand, the alternative for public spaces to be used as a public who inhabits space rather than corporations who purchase public space for selling a product. Branding, by definition is a marketed logo or design specifically used to attach an association. While street art is (as stated above) aimed at influencing rather than marketing. When the separation of street production and mass production converge the corporate sphere enters the street art community. Branding as a form of promotion for street art is a means to an end for many artists. Street art is associated with being ironic, or sarcastic; aiming to bring forth on specific or unspecific topics through humor or slander. As members of society, everyone is expected to contribute in some fiscal/financial manner. Afterall, the starving artist is only cute for so long. The anonymity as a street artist may work for Banksy, who is a nationally recognized street artist known for maintaining his anonymity (2010). However, there still has to be money to buy the art supplies for those artists who are unrecognized. Street artists attach a brand to their art to keep it marketed the way they want it to be: this way they maintain the intended meaning of their art.

Turning street art into a brand provides an artist with a whole new level of credibility as an artist making it in the real economic world. Taking a production of a piece from the walls of the streets to the walls of a store allows these artists to make a living and market their art as their own. Since corporations have adopted a relationship with street art as a form of advertising, those pieces of art that once rebelled against corporate America are now extended into providing meaning to corporate America. This reaches out to the subversives of the world by promoting and showcasing unconventional ideas of beauty. These street-art-influenced advertisements

provide pleasant emotional connections to art in a refreshed presentation and break from traditional product promotion by corporations.

Street art provides a new lens to produce advertisements and brands that are not overused or exhausted in the eyes of the public view. Since street art is still on the outskirts of the norm, the components and structures of these concepts and mediums are viewed as fresh and imaginative by a generalized public. Street art is associated with emotionally stemming aesthetic draws, building from the environment. These emotional associations are normally specifically implemented by the artists to involve feelings of joy, amusement, intrigue, playfulness, and connectivity, to a relationship between artist, the art and the community.

Case Study

Street artists often promote their work as a form of propaganda. For example, Shepard Fairey's website suggests his campaign is a "do it yourself counterculture" that, "goads viewers, using the memorable "OBEY" slogan to take notice of the propagandists out to bend the world to their agendas" (Fairey, 1995). He not only has images available as an open domain for personal use but he even has instructions on how and what to do to create and use stencils, providing a recipe for personal use. These instructions are detailed and aim to teach as well as propagate. Additional, there is a warning section of the website, outright reminding participants that unsanctioned street art is illegal and destroying others art is unacceptable in within the community. He has even cunningly made a "you are under surveillance" sign (see Figure 8). This is to remind participants that as a movement the aim is to not perpetuate the vilification of street artists but to make a greater societal impact.

The OBEY campaign was just the beginning for Shepard Fairey, producing a variety of

different campaigns since. These campaigns are his way of speaking up in society about paying attention and doing something about changing the world. My thesis begins with a quote of Fairey's in which he states, "art should aspire to do great things" (2010) his art has done this.

"Because people are not used to seeing advertisements or propaganda for which the product promotion is not obvious, frequent and novel encounters with the sticker provoke thought, and possible frustration, nevertheless revitalizing the viewer's perception and attention to detail. The sticker has no meaning but exists only to cause people to react, to contemplate and search for meaning in the sticker (1989)."

The OBEY campaign is a call to action in Fairey's eyes: something that reminds individuals to question the world around them and wonder about what the images that are immersed in everyday society mean or could mean.

In 1990 Shepard Fairey wrote his OBEY Manifesto, which details the meaning, mindset, and task of one of his street pieces. In this situation the art is a sticker with an image of Andre the Giant on it. A very basic outline of the face often without words just an up close image as seen in figure 7, other time it was slightly zoomed out and would include a phrase "Andre the giant has a Posse", (figure 1) this image was something Fairey created to teach a friend how to stencil. The aim originally had no purpose, and in according to Fairey there still is not any meaning assigned to the image. The OBEY campaign is for everyone, a statement that covers the walls and signs in the public spaces that surround everyone. Some have even called it the "catalyst that helped start a trend of this street art based graffiti which is different from original graffiti lettering that is commonly thought of as vandalism" (Droney 2010.)

This has become possible because of the notion Fairey portrays that this image is for individuals to question the images around them and assign personalized meanings to these images. Fairey uses the term phenomenology to represent this idea that individuals can discover

their own meaning in the images. Phenomenology means that individuals can discover their own meanings about the nature of these visual articles they encounter, specifically through personally assigned association to repetitive symbols on the streets. A prime example of street artists utilizing their works as a personal brand can be found in the origins of Fairey's OBEY campaign (1989) and its transformation to a worldwide branded platform that markets OBEY apparel (2001). Fairey used his street roots art and created a nationally known name of an actual brand and marketed the, "it has no meaning" propaganda into the mainstream as a company. So: has Shepard undermined the manifesto by becoming mainstream? No, as his manifesto suggests, Shepard has provided the groundwork for how his conversion works. Since individuals associate their own meanings and associations to his campaign he has in turn, helped them create their own loyalty for their interest in his brand. The clothing line is "an extension of Shepard's range of work" (Fairey, 2018). The public assigns the meaning as well as the importance; his image has merely monetized on the opportunity provided by the "Conspicuously Consumptive nature of society" (Fairey, 1990) that we are all a part of as members of this society.

As stated promptly at the top of his webpage, Fairey has been "Manufacturing quality dissent since 1989" (1995), and as a man of his word, he has been involved in a variety of artistic activism campaigns since his youth. Fairey's work has morphed into a very politically known name since the 2008 Obama Hope Campaign (see Figure 2 for reference). This work was followed by his 2017 work for the Women's March in Washington, DC, with the "we the people" three poster series (see Figure 5,6, and 7). The work produced and marketed by Fairey has been charged with many messages about the current state of the world in regards to war, equality, economics, and religion. The Obama hope posters were related very closely to the "Uncle Sam

Wants You” poster (see Figure 3) which is a form of American propaganda produced by U.S. Army recruiters in 1917 to influence people to join the war effort (Andrews, 2017). In the case of Fairey’s work, he is promoting hope instead of nationalism, using the Obama poster to spread a positive emotion attached to the presidential campaign.

The OBEY community is one of Fairey’s communities, which represents the lost line between art and advertisement, converging the artistically based cultural concept to influence the notion that reputation creates influence, which provides power, and reminds people that simply knowing and acknowledging brand labels falls under the influence of corporate propaganda (Lasswell 1927). Using human nature to “manufacture quality dissent” as an action of good doing, street art has evolved a criminalized activity for rebels to practice in the streets to a recognized art form by the high art world, and paves the road for future street artists to move beyond the constraints socially attached to their artistic practice. Fairey has changed the view of street art for the better. Allowing for future evolutions of advertising, branding and propaganda by using street artist’s work in campaigns to reach the rebellious demographic.

Future Examination

Street art is vandalism and vandalism is illegal, and studying this can be tricky due to the anonymity and secrecy associated with this practice. The studies examined touch on the difficulties of examining street art due to this constraint. However, street art does skirt a fine line between the illegal and the elite. Future studies should examine the evolution of street art as an ever-growing form of propaganda as well as advertising for corporate use. I also recommend that they further examine the relationship between propaganda and advertising as they can at time , work in unison for the promotion of products, ideas, and movements. Shepard Fairey is currently

one of the most studied artists, and therefore is associated with being the most influential. He is someone who has attached his name and his face to his work. However, discovering how this notion works with abstract and private artists such as Banksy would be a very interesting examination, which could involve the connection between mass publicised media as a face or an idea. As street art and corporate advertisement converge, what does this mean for graffiti and graffiti art as a medium amongst art practitioners? Has the convergence of street art, propaganda, branding, and advertisement blurred the boundaries of each individual construct to the point of creating a new concept of art all together?

Conclusion

Street art has evolved tremendously in standing as viewed by the social world, while the action of tagging a public space has even been adopted in a variety of advertising campaigns over the years. Shepard Fairey has been an extremely influential artist in the acceptance of street art, along with the adaptation of street art into mass advertising campaigns. By establishing individual brands, street artists can market themselves and their art to the mass public, this allows them to establish standing within the artistic community. This case study examines what street art is and how it is more than vandalism or graffiti. Through the process of branding, street artists can utilize their personal symbol and signatures as categorizable markings, allowing for interested individuals to follow the career or a specific artist. When this art is used for advertising, the lines between sanctioned and unsanctioned art can be blurred, which allows for propagandic messages to slip past a viewer's understanding and perception. Accepting street art into society as an artform to be recognised and idolized allows for street artists to evolve their practice into a career. The normalization of this counter-culture provides a space within the art

community for rebels to be recognized and appreciated. The relationship between street art, advertising, branding and propaganda walks the line of a very grey area, since each component on its own means something individually. Fairey's OBEY Campaign is an example of a positively related collaboration because of how it evolved over time. An image with no meaning has been inundated into popular culture, the streets and walls of our cities and even a clothing line created by Fairey.

Fairey may be one of the most recognized names in the street art world according to mass media, but there are countless artists who also have influenced this movements evolution. Street art is inundated into society's daily lives, its movement into advertising is not surprising, or unrealistic. As publics accept street art the opportunity for its community grows, which provides space for street art displays in public places. This community has become a part of the cities of our world and the public that admires it. Street art is part of our civilization and as it evolves so will the broader understanding of artistic practice and a means for message sharing on a community level.

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Figure 3.
(1917)

*Uncle Sam' wants you poster
WWI Army Recruiting Poster James Montgomery*

Figure 4

5

January, 16 2017

We The People Protect Each Other

*Photographer: Delphine Diallo
Artist: Shepard Fairey*

6

We The People Defend Dignity

*We The People Are Greater Than
Fear*

Figure 7.
1989
OBEY GIANT
Shepard Fairey
ObeyGiant.com

Figure 8.
December 31, 2000
OBEY GIANT
Surveillance Sign
Shepard Fairey
ObeyGiant.com