

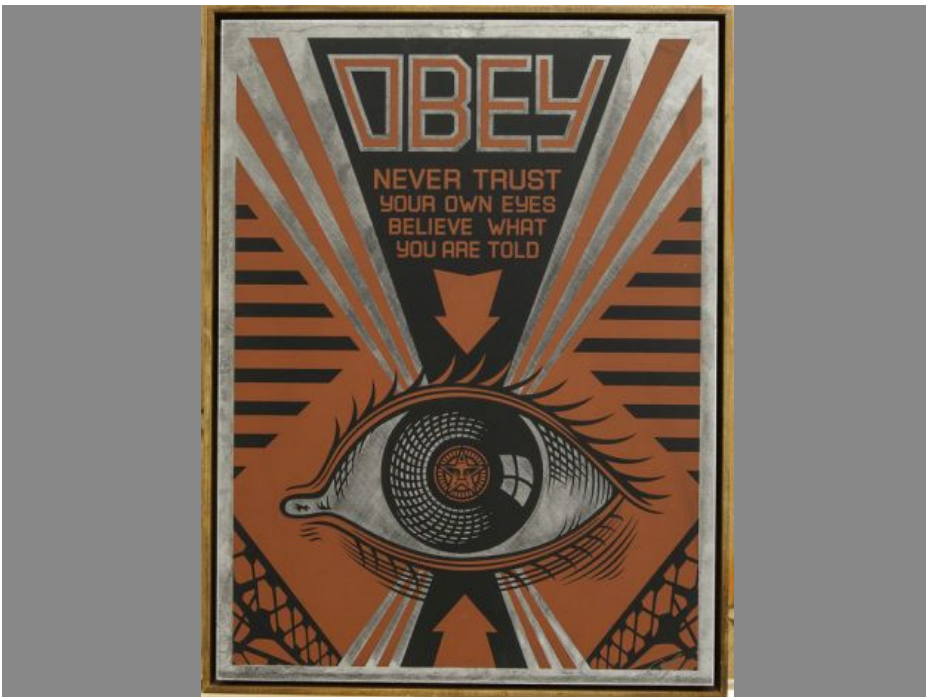
## Works by 'Obey' artist Shepard Fairey on view in Greenwich gallery

Scott Gargan

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"Obey Eye," a screen print on metal by reknown street artist Shepard Fairey, is on view in an exhibition of the artist's work at the Samuel Owen Gallery in Greenwich. Photo: Contributed Photo



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For as long as [Lee Milazzo](#) attended [Parsons School of Design](#), no stop sign was safe from [Shepard Fairey's](#) "Andre the Giant Has a Posse" sticker.

If you happened to spot the brawny visage of the 7-foot-4-inch professional wrestling star -- an image appropriated by Fairey for his popular street art campaign -- chances were Milazzo wasn't far behind.

"I'd stick them up on back of chairs, signs," Milazzo, who graduated from college in 2003, said. "You'd see them everywhere."

Since then, the dynamic between artist and admirer (fundamentally, at least) hasn't changed -- Fairey is still making art and Milazzo is still collecting and displaying it.



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What has changed, however, is the mode of Fairey's work (it's expressed through much more elaborate mediums) and the platform with which Milazzo presents it (he owns a contemporary art gallery).

Art lovers will get to experience a more refined, and certainly more grown-up, manifestation of Fairey and Milazzo's relationship with the viewing of a new exhibition, "Shepard Fairey: OBEY."

On view at the Samuel Owen Gallery in Greenwich through the end of the month, the exhibition features more than 50 examples of Fairey's bold, graphic images, many of them culled from Milazzo's private collection (the remainder were contributed by the artist himself and third parties).

Rare hand-painted multiples, screen-prints on wood, screens on metal and skateboards are on display, as well as popular Fairey images, such as the "Obey Eye."

Fairey, the internationally renowned, Los Angeles-based street artist, has long had a fan in Milazzo.

"Shepard and I are the same age -- we were both born in 1970 -- and we both went to art school around the same time," said Milazzo, of Greenwich. "He's an important figure in art history."

The gallerist praised Fairey for his "striking and beautiful work" and for the organic nature of his success. He noted that Fairey's Barack Obama "Hope" poster was originally intended as a fundraising mechanism for Obama's presidential campaign, but later evolved into an iconic image.

"At first, he sold the poster on his website for \$45 apiece with a limited edition of 300," Milazzo said. "The idea was that he would give all that money to the Obama campaign. Now, that original poster sells for \$10,000. He didn't plan it out that way. His success was instantaneous."

A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, Fairey garnered widespread public attention through his "Andre the Giant Has a Posse" sticker, which grew into the "Obey Giant" campaign and an international street art phenomenon. Over time, the artist has tackled issues relating to social injustice, politics and the environment while maintaining his street art aesthetic.

While Fairey's work has often been displayed in New York galleries in Brooklyn, Chelsea and in Los Angeles, rarely has it appeared in Fairfield County. Milazzo was unsure of how the exhibition would be received. But if opening night sales are any indication (half of the works in the exhibition have been spoken for), Milazzo isn't alone in his enthusiasm for the legendary street artist.

"People here are hungry for new art, to experience something that's different, cutting edge," he said. "From his Andre the Giant stickers to the work he's making today, Fairey has created a pioneering medium."

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Samuel Owen Gallery, 378 Greenwich Ave., Greenwich. On view Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m.-3 p.m. 203-422-6500, www.samuelowen.com.

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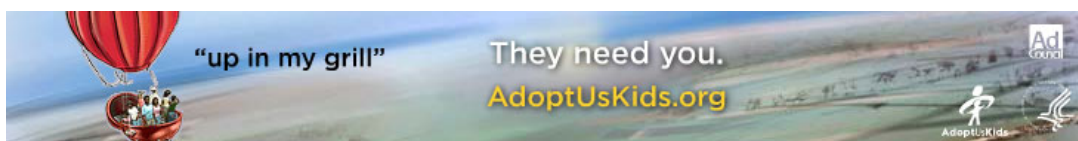
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