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Street Critique: The Viewer's Phenomenal Experience of Street Art

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Abstract

Street art is a part of a community atmosphere and influences the way individuals experience a specific space. Artists appropriate public space as a canvas to create works that are frequently unauthorized or even illegal. These artists reclaim community space to share art, as well as, underrepresented opinions and subcultures that may not be expressed in our mainstream media-saturated culture. Doing so, street artists contribute to a larger discourse of social commentary and critique through their artistic practices. Renowned street artist Shepard Fairey and art collectives such as the Street Museum of Art, New York City, artist JR, have significantly changed how and where we view art. Using the theoretical lens of phenomenology and site-responsive art, this paper investigates the ways perception and environment informs the viewer's experience. Additionally, the paper explores how street artists alter museum practices by selectively denying and integrating museum and gallery traditions like display tactics and didactic labels.

1. Introduction

"The delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning – gathering the meaning of things…" [1] – Aristotle

Street art[2] is found throughout the world in public spaces. Many street artists view public space as a free canvas, a place to share their art and ideas with the public. In order to explore the question of how we experience street art as well as how it affects communal areas by altering where art is experienced, this paper will focus on the site-responsive work of Shepard Fairey (b. 1970) and the artists of the Street Museum of Art as relevant examples. Their use of location and environment, to create content and context with display tactics that inform the pieces will be examined. As the interest in public space increases, particularly as urban environments and communities collide with advertisements or social and political propaganda, personal property rights, or municipal control over the public "view-scape," the role of art and the artist is brought into the dialogue, particularly the street artist. Whether approved or not, it affects the viewer's experience of a place and showcases art that is not pre-determined or authorized as art by a museum authorities, municipal boards, or ideological agendas. Street artists use walls and billboards, abandoned buildings or sidewalks, and even roads as canvases that challenge traditional museum and gallery exhibition practices regarding where and how people view and experience art in a community. Street art, while not generally curated by museums or dependent on official commissions for approval and placement, is determined by the artist's personal decision that he/she has an artistic expression or idea that is important to share. In fact, it is frequently the motivation of the street artist to get the viewer's attention with surprising or disruptive content and placement of their work that encourages reflection on the ideas or emotions conveyed in the art thereby altering the way the viewer experiences their environment.

Urban street artists encourage interactions with the viewers through site-responsive art[3] in a way that is not restricted by mainstream media outlets or pre-determined as worthy of cultural consideration by the elite art community or other presumed art authorities. By utilizing abandoned building walls, empty billboards, or even highway underpasses as canvases, street artists have created public venues to present street art through an element of surprise affecting the viewer's expectation of where art should be placed. Altering locations used for selling products, like a billboard, artwork placed there subverts its expected. Many people are not interested in or able to experience museums due to a variety of limitations of access such as time restrictions, financial costs, or even a sense of intimidation; therefore, they often do not participate in the established art world or in viewing art in general. By removing the overwhelming environments of sanctified museum walls, the streets offer an unrestricted canvas for social critique and contemporary art expression crucial for artists to engage the public authentically. This returns art to its traditional purpose "to stimulate the thoughts of the onlooker and satisfy his or her aesthetic requirement."[4]

American street artist Shepard Fairey adds to the growing ranks of creative artist-activists who have received critical acclaim for their art form. He has shown his work in major museum retrospectives and received prestigious accolades as well as countless illegal contributions around the world. His posters, stickers, stencils and large-scale murals are found around the world. By using a mixture of humor, shrewd twists of iconic slogans or text, and common cultural images, Fairey employs the public sphere as a forum to interact with the community, causing reactions and disrupting daily experiences. Fairey expounds on the interest of phenomenology[5] as a way to further understand street arts impact on the public realm. His early manifesto cites phenomenology, or the study of experience and interaction with a space or environment, as part of his motivation for experimenting with repetitive images in unexpected places.[6]

Fairey reclaims public space from the dominance of advertising giants by disrupting it with a subversive style of political and socially critical art. He uses specific sites that are noticeable or symbolic in a way that will contribute to his work. For example, *U.S. Treasury: Bringing Dreams to Life,* 2011, New York City, New York, is placed in an unkempt urban space while the image of a happy white couple unexpectedly cradles a bomb, preparing to nurture it with obvious affection like a child (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Shepard Fairey, *U.S. Treasury: Bringing Dreams to Life,* circa 2011, Paste-Up, NYC, NY, on the Corner of Broome Street and the Bowery. .

The stylized figures are reminiscent of 1950s advertisements of American prosperity and consumerism while simultaneously criticizing the money spent on the US military war machine. The phrase "Bringing dreams to life" is reminiscent of 1950s advertisements selling products to create happiness known mythically as the American dream. The decorative, swirling border initially adds a domestic framing device to the image though upon further inspection one realizes it is patterned from US currency, suggesting references to the way money can be used as a control of the American ideals in society. The location and framing device adds potency to the ironic juxtaposing of the military prosperity and the neglected urban neighborhood, commenting further on social priorities in American society. Text saying "No Cents" can be read with a double meaning. Literally "No Cents" implies dollars rather than cents or coins, or for the military and "skools" in the image or read subversively as ironic commentary on the image of the

subconsciously pacified couple and money spent on military and bombs which makes "no sense."

The viewing experience--on the street is layered with aspects of class and social hierarchy reflected in the trash and dismal urban setting--would not be the same, so effective, or as potent if the image were placed in pristine context of a museum environment. The site itself adds important content to the interpretation of meaning in the piece. Displaying with work in this location also adds the context of urban neglect. In an interview in 2010 Fairey told editors Patrick Nguyen and Stuart Mackenzie "[the artist] must ensure the spot where he puts his art down is effective within the context of the work. It's extremely important that the art can compete with all the other elements that surround it. A gallery can never replicate that."

Furthermore, art collectives such as the Street Museum of Art (SMoA), launched in Brooklyn, New York, 2012, are representing street artists in public exhibits of found[7] street art and graffiti. The SMoA's inaugural show "*Breaking Out of the Box*" established the twenty-four hour public museum as an important art collective transforming the identity of modern museums. The SMoA states that it is reclaiming the power of the museum authority by creating truly public art "museums" in the streets, available free, twenty-four hours a day. The members of the collective employ didactic museum style labels near the found works to increase the public's awareness of the artist, materials, and meaning. This practice encourages "direct interaction with the public."[8] The work remains displayed until municipal order, natural elements, or other street artists destroy it.

An informative label will be placed near the work after it is located with a QR code allowing the viewer to access additional information on the piece. By using internet social networking tools, organizations like SMoA can create richer and broader, even global, participation and thus engage the masses in a contemporary way that is distinctly different from traditional art viewing experiences in a museum or gallery context. SMoA artists are included in the street exhibit once their work has been uploaded by a smart device to the SMoA's website. Information on the artist and work as well as directions to the location of the work are virtually pinned with an image to the SMoA's website.

Social theorist Miwon Kwon considers the works of artists who respond to the social, political, or economic conditions of a site in their work as being "site-responsive."[9] For example, a location's historical or symbolic meaning or the state or conditions of the environment are site-responsive qualities that can be used to inform a piece. The use of a deteriorating wall as a site for a piece of work may add further commentary on the piece itself because of its direct representation of the idea of neglect or decay as well as its symbolic interpretation as it relates to ideas of emotional or spiritual neglect or decay. SMOA exhibiter JR (b. 1983) uses the pocked, neglected wall to inform his photo-graffiti collaboration series "*Wrinkles of the City"*[10] on the elderly Cuban revolution ex-patriots living in New York City (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. JR's collaboration with José Parlá, "*Wrinkles of the City*" project, *Untitled,* 2013, "*Breaking out of the Box"* SMoA exhibit, wheat-pasted black and white photography and white paint collaboration, Chelsea, New York.

The lively marks of collaborator José Parlá whose energetic calligraphic style contrasts the aged face that is textured further against the walls rough surface. The quiet solitude of the lone figure implies a forgotten history or legacy of these people and their political struggles echoed in the anonymous decay of urban environment. The stoic figure holds a power that is intriguing but by displaying her alone, enlarged above the street she seems disconnected from the present day, a person displaced from the community. The site's location but also the textural quality contributes to the perception and interpretation of the image.

In this sense, a site is not simply the place itself, public or institutional, but how the location and materials work together to create a work that contributes to mutually informing the viewer of additional meanings or interpretations. The oversized scale of the figure is imposing, reinforcing her solitude, her separateness. Swirls of energy and movement of white chalk-like marks contrast her lonely stance. The same vital energy is active around the image as the busy daily existence in the city unfolds beneath the gaze of the figure. The black and white photo divides her, already appearing like as a piece of history though her eyes watch over the vibrant, hurried life in the city. Donald Landes breaks down ideas of space describing our lived experience as having certain prior knowledge above the level of literal experience considering Merleau-Ponty's thought on spatiality and phenomenology "to stand in wonder before the world and cease to be complicit with it in order to reveal the flow of motivations an carry me into it, in order to awaken my life and make it entirely explicit."[11] Thus space creates art that is conceptual as well as contextual. The street itself then emerges as an important tool for triggering social context and sharing ideas that reflect current issues and concerns of the community such as aging populations, safe housing, or good employment prospects. Do people stop to muse on her purpose, her history? Are they intrigued to discover her role in the community, the reason she is represented in such a large scale, with such a sense of strength?

The lens of phenomenology considers the observer's involvement as a way to understand the artists' work. Street artists consider location and display as important parts of creating a successful art experience for a viewer. Expounding on this idea Craig Robertson and Jean McDaniel quote curator and critic Simon Sheikh saying, "We have also come to realize that the conception of a public space, the arena in which one meets and engages, is likewise dematerialized and/or expanded. We no longer conceive of the public sphere as an entity, as one location and/or formation." [12] The public sphere is a constant dialogue of consumerism, political and commercial propaganda that artists try to break through to represent alternative views and choices. Public space is then a synthesis of diverse ideas and voices.

Communities are enhanced with street art as a forum to exchange a variety of uncensored ideas and opinions and to involve the public in creative discourse. The materials surfaces, such as course bricks or cracked cement, may contribute meaning or context, to literally and symbolically, to an artwork. Therefore the street as a place to view art becomes important for art as tool for public discussion and free exchange of ideas without authorative controls. Public sites, authorized or not, create a physical space to express ideas through different mediums encouraging an authentic community canvas.

2. Differentiating Graffiti and Street Art

Artists over the ages have used graffiti and marked walls to share their ideas and social critique to public opinion and dialogue. For thousands of years, beginning with early cave paintings, people have marked the spaces they lived with handprints, drawings, maps, and carvings. Early graffiti marking has been found preserved in the ash-covered ruins of first century Pompeii, Italy, and other ancient Roman walls (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Graffiti from ancient Roman wall, 1st century. Artists unknown.

Art researcher Russell Howze recognized historical Paleolithic stencils as important examples of calculated forms of communicating with creative expression or artistic purpose, as well as to say 'I was here.'[13] Therefore it can be said since ancient times the importance of connecting with a viewer, sharing knowledge, opinions, and experiences

has always influenced humans visual culture. Street art evokes images and ideas through creative semiotic [14] expressions to which the public responds, even if the level of engagement is simply to consider the artworks meaning.

The Oxford English Dictionary's (OED) definition of "street art" contains interesting attributes important to the discussion of art, experience, and public space as a place to communicate ideas. According to the OED, to be from the "street" correlates to the ancient Roman world as a public forum or square, the realm of ordinary people, and the source of popular political support for a cause or party. As a contemporary adjective it describes a characteristic of the urban subculture of the streets.[15] Robertson and McClain suggest that contemporary street art has been a tactic for engaging the public in social dialogue and expressing ideas and opinions that are different from mainstream media messages of political and corporate mass consumerism.[16] Street artists add to the communal fabric of ideas including social critique and public dialogue. In contrast, "graffiti" carries associations of destructive and rebellious social behavior particularly in urban environments and is not generally considered the same as street art.

Often differentiated from graffiti, scholars recognize that street art has often been deliberately created to share a message or idea, while also being site-responsive for the viewer, thus it is not simply "tagging"[17] a name on a space or vandalism. The ideas expressed in street art may be represented in many art forms like a simple symbol or icon, a cartoon or stylized image, text or photograph. German scholar and cultural critic Diedrich Diederichsen notes it is not pre-determined by the art world regarding who can participate.[18] Street art does not have any stylistic parameters and therefore a predetermination of who is qualified to create in this medium is open-ended. With the availability of inexpensive materials such as markers, spray paint, and paper for stencils, especially in economically depressed urban areas, artists are able to communicate their ideas. Diederichsen attributes changes in the 1970s as turning point when artists began to use street art for mass communication of a specific idea or message. This has helped establish it as a legitimate art form. By this time period graffiti and street art had become increasingly sophisticated. Inspiration from other artists and positive recognition from the art world elite and the public spurred the growing art form around the globe. Particularly art that "directly intervened with the [mass] media."[19] In fact he stipulates the ideas found with-in street art are "self-sufficient…immanent structure is clear and straightforward; based on well-established visual traditions, often including those of other media."[20]

Scholar Anna Waclawek thinks of contemporary street art and graffiti in the United States has evolved from signature graffiti or tagging of names or letters that started in the Philadelphia area in the late 1960s. Tagging to mark your place in the neighborhood or turf progressed into more elaborate "throwies" that used larger, more colorful designs.[21] Throwies are often highly stylized text that is outlined then filled with glowing, contrasting color. The lettering style and colors combinations are often unique, linked to a particular artist helping to build their reputation. "Pieces," stemming from the term masterpieces, are considered more elaborate murals that take a much longer time to design and execute, frequently incorporating multiple styles and iconography. Graffiti artists use markers, spray paint, and modified spray-can tips that give different size sprays of paint.

Contemporary street art leans toward urban painting, such as wheat-pasted posters and stenciling that uses spray paint. Stenciling and pasting emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a popular medium because of its speed in application and the ability to prepare them in advance. The improvement of materials helped expand the letter-based graffiti styles. Predesigned posters could be more elaborate or precise. All these application methods are still completed very quickly due to the continued criminality associated with graffiti and street art.[22] Preparation and teamwork are important though many say it is the risk that adds to the excitement of the art form.

There continues to be an unusual balance between creating recognition of an unique artist's style or tag in the street art world and maintaining an anonymity of the creator(s) due to the illegal associations such as trespassing, vandalism, or property destruction. On one hand, artists want to be prolific, spreading their artwork to build a reputation and a name in the art world. Conversely, criminal charges related to trespassing, destruction of property, or vandalism can occur if an artist is caught putting up unauthorized pieces, even on abandoned or neglected property often requires stealth and anonymity. Municipalities deal with the issue in different ways. New York City has removed the graffiti with chemicals and fenced off their once iconic trains. Los Angles has made it a felony-level crime linking it to gang activity. San Francisco imposes fines on individual property owners if they do not remove graffiti.[23] In fact, Fairey has a long police record involving over a dozen of these types of charges for works created on abandoned property or neglected walls.[24]

The increased awareness of street art as a public, unedited social commentary has changed the street into an open forum. Public spaces continue to have street art, authorized or illegal, enhanced by artists who see public space as a means to reach people and engage them creatively. Using public space for art displays has also challenged the role of the elite museum and the sterile, white-walled gallery as being "the" place to view art. By utilizing the street as a canvas, artists are reclaiming the authority of the museum and gallery elite as well as advertisers, who generally control, commodify, and determine the declaration of "art." Street artists and organizations like SMoA are

"exhibiting" in the authentic, real world environments from which the work was inspired. They use real world sites to add deeper meaning and commentary to their artwork.

3. Phenomenology and Site-responsive Experience

Art in public spaces affects our awareness of our daily environment, disrupting our expectations and "normal" experience or routine. Fairey states repeatedly that phenomenology strongly influenced his work and career as a street artist. He built his style and work on his growing awareness of the effects regarding the sociological influence of repetitive images and the way a viewer reacts when they experience art in unforeseen places, like a large water tower or even a small sticker at the top of a lamppost. A viewer may stop, consider the work, possibly wondering how it was placed, or by whom, and why someone would place art there. Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience, originally proposed by Edmund Husserl in 1905, extrapolated on by philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes it as the study of structures of experience or consciousness, or literally, the study of phenomena:

> Phenomena: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience that affect our thoughts and actions, memories, imagination, beliefs and desires; the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'life-world.'[25]

To engage a viewer, even if it is only to consider the location of a work, if not its deeper meaning associated with that particular piece street art, is to have created a work that is successful because it capture the attention of the viewer, layering it into their life experience. As philosopher Merleau-Ponty considers phenomenology relating to art and perception "if the artist has a new vision of things or people which can be communicated to large numbers of people, then the artist will be able to change the ways of seeing of at least those people."[26] That engagement with art may be taken further in the community as they carry the experience with them.

Our experiences are typically more meaningful and richer in content than mere sensation because we apply individual significance, personal values, and experiences to images that create unique semiotic responses. Scholar Mark Wrathall suggests that art "trains us to perceive things we haven't picked up on before."[27] Further, Wrathall states "art can both show us what we see, but also attune us to see things in a different kind of way. Those are not sharply distinguished tasks - art educates the eye, and thus can be understood, as Heidegger argued, as performing a world-disclosive function."[28] Our phenomenological experience is directed toward the intentionality that represents or intends that particular avenues, such as concepts and ideas, are displayed in a manner that is recognized or noticed. Our perception then applies meaning and personal interpretations influenced by aspects of perception such as scale, color, or the site it is situated in. These make up the meaning or content of a given experience and are distinct from the ideas they present or mean.[29] Street artists use a variety of styles, mediums, and cultural imagery that adds personal or social meaning to affect change in environments through people's awareness and interaction with art. A site reinforces ideas and artistic meanings. Eric Matthews expounds on Merleau-Ponty's theories of phenomenology when considering the role of the artist:[30]

> The artist conveys to his or her audience a personal vision of things, not by describing that vision in rule-governed language, but by creating something which embodies the vision and which can awaken the same experience in those who are willing and able to respond to it. The truth communicated in this way is not something which exists already, waiting to be discovered, but a something which is inseparable from the means by which it is communicated—the work of art.

Waclawek suggests that street art should not be sheltered in institutional walls. Literally suggesting works "at the street level have the very real capacity to engage people in the experience of art and foster change."[31] The Fairey piece *Hope,* 2007, is an example of the positive influence of street art engaging the public with visual empowerment (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Fairey, *Hope,* 2007, mixed media stenciled screen print. Smithsonian Presidential Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

People applied meanings of community building, social and economic opportunity, racial unity, and civil rights advancements to name just a few ideas that became inherently communicated with the artwork.

The street work of Shepard Fairey, for example, brings up many issues that relate to the social dialogue it elicits. The "messages" of street art, which are often deliberately critical of social and political policies, typically represent alternative opinions outside of the mainstream populations. For example, Fairey's *U.S. Treasury: Bringing Dreams to Life,* has multiple, sarcastic interpretations found in the text and symbols he uses (Fig.1). The intentional misspelling of 'skool' reflects criticism of the US education system and/or the limited employment options of undereducated people lead them to the military. In turn, this can be read as criticism of the military's low education standards for its soldiers. As they spend time examining the work they may consider the humorous paradox employed in the text or title of the piece. By layering his pieces with social and political criticism and dualistic meanings of slogans or text, viewers are engaged more fully. Surprising details of a patterned edge of bombs or frames of financial iconography allows Fairey to be critical in a subtle, even decorative, satirical way.

The work has added significance and understanding because the location or site or where the art is viewed (i.e., not a gallery or museum) relates to the artistic message. In this case, the piece *U.S. Treasury: Bringing Dreams to Life* Fairey directly comments on U.S. policies of education and poverty seen in the misspellings of text (Fig.1). The derelict, impoverished environment underlines the government's choice to spend money on military budgets versus the undereducated and poor. The perception this irony is enhanced because of its setting. This may not be evident in a white-walled gallery or museum displays that have become the norm since the early twentieth century. Scholar Victoria Newhouse suggests the Modernist movement began to display works "in so-called neutral spaces, removed from everyday life."[32] While this aspect of display may attempt to focus the eye on a specific work the authenticity of the artistic objective may be altered and affect its meaning, particularly if the work may be political or social commentary where environmental context may inform the work.

Alternately, Fairey's *Hope,* 2007, image used in the official Obama presidential campaign and was perceived as an important symbol of unity and empowerment by the many in the public (Fig. 4). The image was used for critical political commentary, inspirational campaign propaganda, and fine art; worthy to be hung in the Smithsonian galleries. The patriotic screen print was red, white, and blue, with a profile of Obama whose eyes are uplifted idealistically, as if seeing a brighter tomorrow for all Americans. Fairey's characteristically simple text "Hope" expressed the mood of the campaign and the American people. The posters were mass produced and widely distributed throughout the country. The paste-up, billboards, and stickers were seen everywhere and galvanized minority communities into participation in government on unprecedented levels. The image helped propel Fairey and his work into the prominent art world and, ironically, into the American mainstream. Seen as an important image of a contemporary social movement, additional meaning and symbolism is applied by the viewer. Its reception has generally been better received then some of the unauthorized contributions he has contributed to the public.

Fairey and the artists represented by the SMoA exemplify the intentional merging of art exhibitions and social commentary important to street art. Their practice lends itself to the discussions concerning the phenomenological experience of art and the influence of how and where works are displayed. Street art can have positive and negative influences on an environment and therefore people interact in different ways with the space. This art can be viewed as either liberated social expression or renegade vandalism. Some people feel the rogue creation of art disregards property rights and is seen as a negative reflection on a community. Others may view it as an authentic expression of free thought that enhances a community decoratively or expressively.

4. Shepard Fairey

Fairey showcases a specific, notable style in his work. His designs are often based in strong, familiar graphics containing simple color palettes that are often contrast red, white, and black. Fairey also uses bold, clever text often accompanied by the now well known OBEY imagery that has been worked into hundreds of designs. His slick style has developed over a career spanning more then twenty years. His work has been influenced and motivated largely by skateboard culture, graphic art, and sub-culture music, particularly socially rebellious punk bands. Fairey primarily uses combinations of screen-printing, spray painting, and stenciling when creating works that integrate images and text with basic color schemes. He is extremely prolific, creating a variety of formats and sizes of his work. Smaller individual pieces may be created for a gallery with a stencil that is then reused for a large-scale street mural. New computerized technology contributes to more elaborate design development and intricate stencil cuttings. The use of stencil and screens allows him to reuse images and patterns that contribute to continuity in his pieces. This reuse and resale of images he created successful brand identification of Fairey. Alternately, it can be viewed as problematic by some as Fairey frequently criticizes mass-consumerism while encouraging people to purchase his artworks, clothing and merchandise lines.

Fairey's work draws from many influences and artistic traditions. Artists who utilize silk-screening and stenciling techniques or texts have had strong impacts. For example, artist Barbara Kruger has been a major influence on Fairey. Her work with bold text and simple color schemes are similar to his graphic style. Kruger frequently uses text with dual meanings to add irony to her work such as *Your Body is a Battleground, 1989* (Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Barbara Kruger, *Your Body is a Battleground*, 1989, screen print on vinyl.

They both use contrasts of bold red and black colors against bright whites. Fairey says her work influenced the Obey campaign. Her work was based "on juxtaposing slogans that might not relate to the original intent of an image but ultimately change its meaning."[33] Obviously, Andy Warhol's silk-screening Factory is reminiscent of Fairey's work style. They both used multiple prints in different ways, recreating and utilizing pop themes from contemporary culture, and using the media's slogans and techniques while simultaneously criticizing it. Fairey acknowledges Warhol's work as a taking "an important step for fine art away from the aristocratic elitism."[34]

Fairey's iconic OBEY GIANT logo actually evolved from humble beginnings over the span of his career. While studying art at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1992, Fairey created a simple, visually crude sticker based on a newspaper picture of Andre the Giant, a wrestling celebrity. This simple black and white sticker's ink was smudged, crude text indicating (Andre) 'has a posse' was added to the image as well as Andre's height and weight, a staggering 7'4' and 520Lbs (Fig 6).

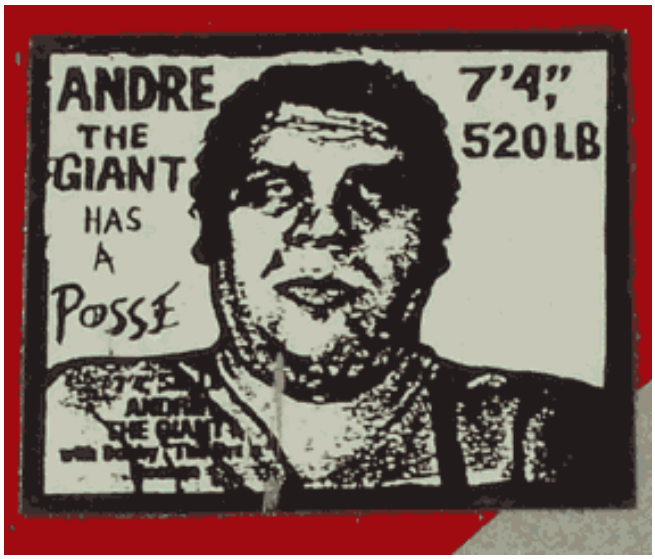

Figure 6. Fairey, *Andre the Giant Has a Posse*, 1989, vinyl sticker. Fairey's original Giant image on a sticker.

The crack-and-peel style of sticker was placed randomly throughout Providence on stop signs, electric boxes, and billboards; Fairey's sticker tagging career had begun.

Changes to the original *Andre Has a Posse* sticker came about in 1995 both as a result of a cease and desist order Fairey received from the wrestling firm representing the real Andre the Giant and a conscious style change.[35] Fairey had become more interested in Russian Constructivist poster style and George Orwell's *1984* "Big Brother" propaganda themes and images. Russian constructivism style has strongly influenced Fairey's graphic style because of the direct stylistic parallel.[36] By utilizing methods of identifiable, repetitive logos, and propaganda style imagery and techniques, he criticizes commodification and consumerism while establishing his own recognizable branding and marketing strategy for his art. Fairey streamlined the original Giant face into a simple black and white image and combined it with OBEY text below the face (Fig. 7).

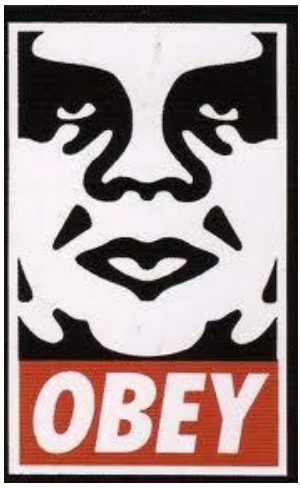

Figure 7. Fairey, *Obey Giant*, 1995, screen-print.

This juxtaposition with its message and disturbing comical face created a propagandistic quality, adding a layer of mystery to its purpose The image style is borrowed from Kruger's work but with Fairey's unique sarcastic humor; the irony was the lack of meaning or message in his piece and that "people can be manipulated just by a stylistic approach—style over substance."[37] Fairey said in an article in 2004 "the use of the word Obey (inspired by Orwell's film) in much of my art as a form of reverse psychology."[38] This interplay with meaningful social critique and a tongue and cheek dark humor continue to be hallmarks of his work.

As Fairey intended, people considered the meaning of the image and texts generating interest in his work and building his reputation. Many may ask, "What does OBEY mean? Is it selling something? Why is it everywhere?" What started as an inside joke and a fun art experiment would become the foundation for Fairey's street and fine art works. Encouraged by people's support of the sticker project and their willingness to proliferate the stickers of the Giant in other cities and countries, the OBEY GIANT meaningless art campaign was established.

The OBEY image styling is very graphic, similar to an advertisement logo for a product that urges the viewer to follow orders its strange command. Fairey laughs that there was no message, no meaning to OBEY: "The irony was there was that I didn't have a message at all: the lack of a message was part of my idea that people can be manipulated just by a stylistic approach--style over substance."[39] The new image, combined with simple text on a red background saying things such as OBEY GIANT confounded viewers. The OBEY five-pointed star motif was also developed at this time (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Fairey, *Obey Star*, 1995, screen-print.

The simplified graphic black and white face of the GIANT is at the center peering out of a five-pointed star. It is centered on a circular red background. Like the original image, this revised one is black, white, or red and often accompanied with block text, such as his traditional sarcastic phrase OBEY. Both images are still used regularly as clothing logos or layered into collages or mural designs. The image can be seen as sarcastic, both menacing and silly, the viewer is unsure as to how to process the work ironically keeping it on your mind.

Fairey frequently states that recognizing the power of street art to communicate with the public has shaped his work and career. Fairey's work connects to viewers due to the lens of phenomenology and display tactics by including surprising or contrasting elements. By subverting the use of marketing strategies like branding and logo recognition through repetition in his art, Fairey has created a distinct style. Beginning as a localized sticker campaign, the OBEY series has grown into a worldwide art phenomenon. In his 1990 "Manifesto" he claims phenomenology as a major influence in proliferating the OBEY icon in his work that we still see today.[40] Fairey says,

> The OBEY sticker attempts to stimulate curiosity and bring people to question both the sticker [41]and their relationship with their surroundings. Because people are not used to seeing advertisements or propaganda for which the product or motive 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.

This insight is significant in the viral quality Fairey encouraged using his street art images. It has helped his work become recognizable to many people. Artist like him have a unifying style that is recognized when it spreads. Often copies of posters or stickers are spread intentionally, like the Obama *Hope* image. His website offers downloads of stencil patterns, otherwise known as urban enhancement kits.

Fairey's appropriated images, cultural symbols, and phrases in his works have been seen as both controversial plagiarisms or relevant to continuing social discourse. The controversy in turn adds another layer of significance to his social or political references like Andy Warhol's work with public personas did. Marshall McLuhan and Jerome Agel suggest that the printing press influenced the idea of authenticity and ownership because "copyright--the exclusive right to reproduce, publish, and sell the matter and form of literary and artistic works—became profitable."[42] They suggest too much emphasis is placed on that. Fairey argues the uses of popular images are already common in the public and do not infringe but in fact help promote the people and ideas they represent. It must be said he has been sued several times, requiring him to desist from sales or producing likenesses of people he had not received appropriate permission from. This dichotomy has created controversy with his diverse fan base. This cyclical layering of symbolism and cultural imagery adds meaning that causes the viewer to "question everything"[43] about Fairey's work and thereby fulfilling his philosophy to create dialogue with the viewer about the work, thus engaging communal discussions. A person may contemplate how he displays iconic imagery, text, and placement while finding their own interpretations of meaning. Works commanding OBEY have proliferated the globe and, by the new millennium, have brought Fairey recognition and critical and commercial success.

The OBEY GIANT is represented around the world in almost all of Fairey's work to date, instilling his body of work with a recognizable style and a consistent touch of sarcastic humor. For example, one of Fairey's most recent murals is in Brooklyn, New York, and uses the face in a subtle but important manner. It is entitles *Lotus Woman*, 2013, and exemplifies Fairey's current refined style (Fig. 9, 10, and 11).

Figure 9. Fairey, *Lotus Woman*, location prior to installation, Brooklyn, New York.

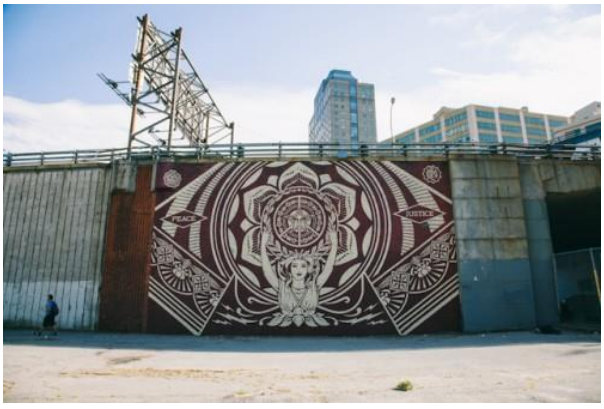

Figure 10. Fairey, *Lotus Woman*, 2013, mural in Brooklyn, New York.

Figure 11. Fairey, *Lotus Woman*, 2013, mural in Brooklyn, New York. Detail with incorporation of the Giant.

The image is beautiful with its swirling lines, energetic patterns, and bold maroon red monotone coloring. The woman is jubilant, her arms held triumphantly supporting the floral emblem of peace. The piece is reminiscent of the beautiful organic flowing line work found in art nouveau. The Giant's face in the central image jars the viewer's gaze, triggering a second look at the image, tantalizing you to evaluate what you're seeing for other subversive and unexpected imagery. This in turns causes the viewer to consider the work longer, more thoroughly, and possibly apply alternative meanings upon deeper reflections.

The critical response to Fairey's recent work is a way to explore his changing effect and influence in the art world, street and elite. For example, art reviews and critical response to the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art solo retrospective *SHEPARD FAIREY: SUPPLY & DEMAND,* 2009, were generally positive as evidenced by his website, pricing and the proliferation of his designs are increasing. However, some people in the public sphere condemn his street work and also readily critique his fine art. Many street artists must contend with the perceived duality of artistic recognition or commercial success decries their reputation as a dissenting, authentic artist. As his work moves more and more into galleries and high end art markets he has deviated from the artist's rebel image and his ability to critique wealth, success, and industry. Adding to this blurred line Fairey was asked about the importance of museum acceptance by the art communities. He was quoted saying "Museums and galleries legitimize [street] art and secure its place in history. I think any artist should focus on communicating the way they want regardless of whether it will find favor with the museums or galleries."[44]

Alternately, other response to another of Fairey's work is more a negative reaction. One of several murals commissioned throughout Copenhagen during his art show, the mural *Peace* covered a large wall of the renowned Ungdomhuset, was at a location known historically for its social anarchy and civil defiance views. An emblematic dove is encircled with a pattern of traditional Danish lace. Strong bands of black and red target the white dove and lace, focusing the viewer. After completion local graffiti artists bombed it. The condemnation by taggers as a "Yankee hipster" implies to some Fairey no longer speaks with an authentic voice of the street. The negative graffiti tagging or "bombing"[45] of his public commission, *Peace, 2011,* for the "Your Ad Here" art show in Copenhagen demonstrates a specific negative criticism and public response (Figs. 12 and 13).


Figures 12 and 13. Fairey, *Peace*, at Jagtvej 69 on Nørrebro, where The Youth House (Ungdomshuset) Copenhagen NV used to be, AUG. 2011. Before and after the controversial vandalism.

The true engagement with the public at large, though possibly not the type he anticipated regarding his early ideas of phenomenology.[46] His gallery and museum success has been perceived as anti-street or creating inauthentic street art for the bourgeoisie.

Both celebrated and criticized, Fairey's successful career brings attention to the complications that street artists grapple with as their work and style becomes known to the general public and enters the realm of fine art galleries and museums. It is difficult to balance branding or commodifying art while maintaining the integrity of art as a tool for social commentary and criticism. Fairey's work is politically and socially charged, often with layered, subversive, and even humorous critiques of war and profiteering, consumerism, and other social issues. He continues his role as social critic and commentator as he straddles the fine art world, consumer demands, and the street. Some critics view the repetition of these themes and OBEY street art campaign as a shallow branding and overdone commodification of his art and products; however, the social and political messages within the work are current with contemporary global issues like democracy and money's influence. Then again, after the success of the Hope image and the Obama campaign he received a letter from now-President Obama in 2008. The letter stated, "[Fairey's] images have a profound effect on people, whether seen in a gallery or on a stop sign. I am proud to be a part of your artwork."[47] The image now hangs in the Smithsonian Presidential Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. (Fig. 4).[48]

5. Street Museum of Art

As noted earlier, a new collective of street artists have gathered to create an alternative public museum called the Street Museum of Art (SMoA). The collective, SMoA, has intentionally created a free, open street museum to expose the most people possible to their work in its "real" or authentic street environment.[49] Established in Brooklyn, New York, in 2012, the SMoA has produced three exhibitions to date. A current exhibit, *Breaking Out of the Box,* Chelsea, New York, is open for viewing in the fall of 2013. The artists in the exhibits each have a unique, individual style, but they are collectively unified by the desire to create and share art in the community utilizing alternative exhibition spaces and practices. As a means to maintain an authentic environment for experiencing street art, the SMoA artists engage the viewer directly on the street, expanding on the opportunities for the audience to create open-ended meanings and content for the work itself. The works are exhibited until another artist claims the space or the elements destroy the piece, or municipal crews or property owners who see graffiti or street art as destructive vandalism remove it.

By showcasing "found" works in their original environment SMoA is very different from traditional art museums. For example, their curating is accomplished with a term they coined, "guerilla curating."[50] It encourages the viewer of a found art piece to contribute photographs, descriptions, or artist information to the SMoA's virtual museum guide. The SMoA then "curates" the submission by finalizing it into the virtual component of the gallery. Using

internet technology of mapping locations with e-maps and pins like Google Maps or QR codes, a viewer can locate the work and the label via the SMoA's website.[51] This direct involvement with the public is boosting reaction and participation in SMoA and may be attributed to the appropriation of certain traditional display practices. Newhouse suggests museums are needing to recreate a presence that is not isolated or removed by "fortress-like walls" and be a part of the community. To engage the public authentically "[museums] instead of being protected from the turmoil of their surroundings, they now acknowledge, and can even reflect, these complexities."[52] SMoA suggests that it is important to the nature of the exhibition to not "displace these inherently public works of art within a gallery setting."[53]

A viewer may happen to simply find a museum label on a wall first and be inspired to stop and search the environment for the artwork, thereby experiencing the street or public space in an altered or site-responsive way, as an interactive public gallery of art and ideas. SMoA further distorts the traditional museum or gallery experience by placing traditional didactic labels near the art on poles, electric boxes, or walls to "encourage a more direct interaction between the viewer, the art and New York City's urban landscape."[54] The people with in the community begin to interact with art reading the labels to learn more about a piece through mass media. As scholar Sean Ulmer considers trends in the changing museum experience he recommends a balance of display practices. "It is important to provide the key but to let the visitor unlock the work; to open the dialogue but to let the viewer have the actual conversation; to give the tools but let the museum goer build the bridge to the work."[55] This facilitates direct engagement with art, the viewing experience and the assigning of personal meaning or interpretation. SMoA combines the virtual and physical environment in a way that helps promote artistic dialogue and visual tourism. The SMoA recognizes like other museums its important role as a public exhibition forum. SMoA leads the trend of a transitioning museum experience.

The contemporary experience of Western museum culture is derived from European "princely collections." The practice of showcasing important works of a universal survey museum[56] to create an iconographical programme of wealth and power is directly connected to the display practices used by monarchies of the past to impress, inform, and even intimidate visitors. In the early eighteenth-century, one primary example would be the Louvre during the French Revolution. The placement of Nike, winged goddess of victory reinforced Napoléon's conquests and association with the empirical power of ancient Greece.[57]

As power structures changed to more secular states, private collections amassed by the wealthy monarchies began to be donated, or seized, by the public or other wealthy private collectors. Keeping the ceremonial pomp and ritual experiences found in famous princely collections public art museums reinforced the power and values of newly emerging nation states and their citizens. For example, formal architectural features, such as imposing staircases or tall columns create a processional quality when entering a museum, establishing the importance of the collection, and the humbleness of the viewer. Stately passageways that declare entry into a specific collection or gallery separated for its prominence from other works or use of pedestals or lighting to create focus on a particular work are ways of creating a ritualized experience. The viewer assumes added cultural value or significance because of the display tactic. Furthermore, the museum configuration intentionally guides the visitor to "identify with an elite culture at the same time it spells out his [or her] place in the social hierarchy."[58]

In this manner, museums assume the authority to represent the selected hierarchy of cultures, citizens, and history. By showcasing certain artists, styles, and art movements museums give validity to an art historical canon and inform society of their worth. In turn the devaluing or excluding of certain subcultures or art genres from the ideological program of national museums creates an artificial sense of worthlessness onto certain art forms. Author Jerome Agel views the museum as a "storehouse of human values, a cultural blood bank"[59] though it is arguable it only accepts a certain class of donors or participants. Additionally, the ceremonial viewing experience may exclude people who feel they do not have the education, background, or social invitation to participate in the ritual contemplation of art. Sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel note, "Even in their smallest details…museums reveal their real function, which is to reinforce among some people the feeling of belonging and among others the feeling of exclusion."[60]

These tendencies have influenced street artists to circumvent the museum authority for validation and recognition of their works as meaningful. Many street artists feel their work is not represented correctly in these pseudo-sacred shrine-like environments, preferring the authenticity of the site of inspiration that adds meaning to their work. Kwon infers this is why location or site-specific works are important to street artists.[61]

> The modern gallery/museum space, for instance, with its stark white walls, artificial lighting (no windows), controlled climate, and pristine architectonics, was perceived not solely in terms of basic dimensions and proportion but as an institutional disguise, a normative exhibition convention serving an ideological function. The seemingly benign architectural features of a gallery/museum, in other words,

> were deemed to be coded mechanisms that actively disassociate the space of art from the outer world, furthering the institution's idealist imperative of rendering itself and its hierarchization of values "objective," "disinterested," and "true."

Street artists attempt to circumvent this hierarchy by using environments and spaces that add to a work's discourse or interpretation. Whether using a billboard to contrast advertisements control of public media or an abandoned business that speaks to urban decline or economic depression, a street artist's selection of space is an important consideration to create context. The consideration of place adds to the viewer's phenomenological experience and understanding of a work based on its specific location or site.

Works displayed in the first show *In Plain Sight*, 2012, by SMoA in the streets of Brooklyn used banal white labels to identify the work, artist, materials, and dates like a conventional museum. The label is adhered to a grungy electrical box on the street corner near the art piece. For example, JR (b. 1983) is an artist exhibiting in the Brooklyn show *In Plain Sight* has a work, *Untitled*, that is a large thirty-foot photograph of an eye on the side of a building (Fig. 14).

Figure 14. JR. *Untitled*, (large-scale black and white photograph) exhibited in the SMoA show "*In Plain Sight*" is near the corner of Whythe and Berry Street and South 5th, Brooklyn, New York with didactic "museum" label.

Like Fairey, JR pastes his large-scale black and white photographs on walls, rooftops, and building facades to bring attention to communities and their values and concerns. The untitled black and white photograph is an enlarged eye, appearing to be feminine because of the delicate curving brow. The open-eyed expression is inquisitive, curiously gazing at the city street scene below.

The huge anonymous eye watching you affects a shift in experience and perception of self in the public sphere reinforcing the phenomenological influence of street art. The facial fragment adds to the possibility that this can be anyone watching us, causing the viewer to reflect on the meaning of the work and ponder whom it may be, or why the artist's representation was displayed above the pedestrians, gazing down. JR said in an interview in 2010, "when you bring something like art to the streets with no political message or anything for sale—when you just put up huge photographs of people from the community—then suddenly you raise so many questions that people have to stop."[62] This engages the public, contributing to their perception of space. Further, by displaying street art with labels it formalizes the experience of viewing by adding additional knowledge such as a title or description from the artist. Because the piece is still displayed in its authentic, "found" state, it is not compromised by a museum sterility or hierarchal program. The context found in the specific site is preserved, further contributing to the piece in a manner a museum setting may not provide.

6. Conclusion

Street art is a free form of expression not controlled or regulated by organized media outlets, government bureaucracy, or the influence of acknowledged tastemakers--gallery dealers and owners, art critics and curators, and the art elite; artists are free to create works or messages that are not restricted to an authorized or ascribed art ideal approved by a patron, municipal board, and curatorial authority. Art collectives like SMoA and artists like Fairey and JR will allow the viewer to make his or her own associations of meaning in a work. This freedom to create

without need for approval allows a street artist to express their ideas and opinions about their experiences in society. To represent figures of dissent or alternative interpretations or criticisms of the policies and messages around us is important to our society. The viewer who shares this public expression often understands this emotive, potent quality found in direct phenomenological incidences. The site of display reinforces the ideas or meaning conveyed in the work creating a context and reinforcing the content.

The proliferation of street art suggests a continuing evolution of its important contributions to the contemporary art canon. The SMoA's selective use of traditional museum practices of display such as didactic labels helps legitimize works some in the art world might dismiss without threatening the authenticity of the artists selection of site. Understanding that location and environmental conditions inform street art is vital to appreciating its full meaning. As a street artist Fairey's and the artists of the SMoA will continue to be motivate to create a community canvas filled with our collective visual voice.

7. Endnotes

1 Excerpt from Aristotle, *Poetics*, in Art and Phenomenology, Joseph D. Parry, ed., (London: Rutledge, 2011), Crowell, Steven, "Art and Aesthetics," Chap.2, 32.
2 Street art is differentiated from graffiti frequently by medium and style of the work. As well as having additional sub-categories and meanings. A fuller description of begins on page 7.
3 Craig McDaniel and Jean Robertson, *Themes of Contemporary Art*, Third Ed., (Oxford University Press, 2013), 203. "Site-responsive" is a term used by Miwon Kwon in reference to how a specific site informs the viewer of additional meaning or interpretation that the site lends to the piece created or placed there. See page 5 for further explanation of "site-responsiveness."
4 Louise Redstone, *Public Art: New Directions*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), v.
5 It is used in the context of considering the experiencing a work of art in a particular environment or setting, often unexpected in regards to street art, versus the experience with n an anticipated environment such as a museum. The *Stanford Encyclopedia's* definition of phenomenology is described further on page 11.
6 *Obey, Supply and Demand, The Art of Shepard Fairey*, (Gingko Press, 2009), 5.
7 SMoA describes street art as *found* art, "found on the street it was originally created on" to contribute to the discourse of authenticity of street art. http://streetmuseumofart.org. (March 17, 2013).
8 Exhibitor Faile's artistic statement from SMoA website. http://streetmuseumofart.org. (March 3, 2013).
9 McDaniel and Robertson, *Themes of Contemporary Art*, 203.
10 *"Wrinkles of the City"* is the title of JR's series. The image selected is from SMOA 2013 fall exhibit. http://streetmuseumofart.org/jose-parla-jr/. (September 17, 2013).
11 Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), "Phenomenology of Perception," 162.
12 McDaniel and Robertson, *Themes of Contemporary Art*, 203.
13 Russell Howze, *Stencil Nation: Graffiti, Community, and Art*, (San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2008), 106.
14 "Semiotics:" The science of communication studied through the interpretation of signs and symbols as they operate in various fields, esp. language. Online.
www.oed.com.wncln.wncln.org/view/Entry/175724?redirectedFrom=semiotics#eid
15 "Street art." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford Press, 2013, Online.
http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191431?redirectedFrom=street+art#contentWrapper (accessed March 3, 2013).
16 McDaniel-Ibid. 212.
17 "Tagging" is contemporary slang term referring to a graffiti signature that uses a person's pseudonym or street name in a unique style to mark or claim a space. OED defines tagging as: The action or process of decorating with graffiti tags; also, these tags collectively. *slang* (orig. *U.S.*).
18 Jeffrey Deitch, ed., *Art in the Streets*, "Diedrich Diederichsen," (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publishing and MOCA, 2011), 282.
19 Ibid., 284.
20 Ibid., 282.
21 Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2011), 12.
22 Ibid., 16.
23 Howze, *Stencil Nation*, 107.
24 Fairey's police records are widely discussed and available for review through any official public records.

25 "Phenomenology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta David and Woodruff Smith, (eds.). Online. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/phenomenology/ (accessed February 13, 2013).
26 Eric Matthews, *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Continuum Int. Publishing, 2006), 147.
27 Art and Phenomenology, Joseph D. Parry, ed., (London: Rutledge, 2011), Mark Wrathall, "The Phenomenological Relevance of Art," Chap.1, 28.
28 Ibid.
29 *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*: "Phenomenology." Online. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/phenomenology/ (accessed February 13, 2013).
30 Matthews, *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 146.
31 Waclawek, Graffiti and Street Art. 111.
32 Victoria Newhouse, Art and the Power of Placement, (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005), 23.
33 Obey, Supply, and Demand, 34.
34 Ibid., 317.
35 Ibid., 35.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 34.
38 Ibid., 139. Article originally appearing in "Tokion" issue 39, 2004.
39 Ibid., 35.
40 Ibid., 5. Excerpt from Fairey's "Manifesto," first published in 1990.
41 "Obey Giant, World Wide Propaganda Delivery," http://www.obeygiant.com, (accessed January 20, 2013).
42 Marshal McLuhan and Jerome Agel, *The Medium is the Massage, an Inventory of Effects*, 1996, 122.
43 *Obey, Supply and Demand*, 139.
44 Nguyen, and Mackenzie, eds., *Beyond the Street*, 379.
45 "Bombing" is contemporary street slang for doing graffiti. Particularly on a clean space as a challenge or over another artist's work which is often seen as a criticism . It is not currently found as slang reference for graffiti in the OED but is defined in the contemporary urban dictionaries. http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bombing, Online, (accessed Sept, 27, 2013).
46 Fairey suggests there was a misunderstanding over his artwork at the demolition site of the Ungdomhuset (youth house) at Jagtvej 69. The house is known for anti-establishment and anarchist youth movements in Denmark. His mural "Peace" was vandalized within 24 hours of its unveiling with graffiti saying, "go home, Yankee hipster" and "no peace." Copenhagen, Denmark, August, 2011. http://www.thegiant.org, (accessed January 20, 2013).
47 *Obey, Supply and Demand*, 273.
48 http://www.npg.si.edu/collection/obamaportrait.html, (accessed Sept, 18, 2013).
49 http://streetmuseumofart.org. (March 3, 2013).
50 "Guerilla curating" is a term used by SMoA describing their approach to curating. They find street art that may or may not be identifiable, aligning to a certain artist to include in their exhibit. The art is photographed, identified, if possible, labeled with a description and date, and then uploaded to the virtual site with a link to directions for finding the work. http://streetmuseumofart.org. (March 17, 2013).
51 Viewers can access information about the artist, work, materials, and dates in a high tech form that mimics conventional identification labels found in traditional survey museums. Additional information about SMoA, the artist, and other works can be found using the QR code on the label. A QR code is a barcode is an optically machine-readable label that is attached to an item and that records information related to that item. By scanning the electronic code with a smart phone or other device a link to the SMoA site shares additional knowledge about the exhibitors. An artist statement is available on the labels near works give an opportunity for a passive discourse to be initiated between the artist and the masses.
52 Newhouse, "Is "The Idea of a Museum" Possible Today?" *Daedalus* Vol. 128, No. 3, America's Museums (MIT Press, Summer, 1999), 323.
53 http://streetmuseumofart.org. (March 3, 2013).
54 http://streetmuseumofart.org/exhibition-5/. (September 17, 2013).
55 Sean Ulmer, **"**Museums in Transition: Thoughts from an Empiricist," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* Vol. 41, No. 2 (University of Illinois Press, Summer, 2007), 4-11.
56 Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History*, Vol. 3:4 (December 1980): 53. Universal survey museums developed from nineteenth century private collections of art that have become public collections. Survey museums showcase collections of art arranged in various categories or chronological order.

These museums attempt to showcase works throughout art history and emphasis their value socially, artistically, and economically.

57 Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement*, 58.

58 Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," 59.

In the eighteenth century, public art museums were referred to as "Temples of Art."58 Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach associate this idea with a ceremonial or ritualistic temple or church-like experience. The reorganization of public art collections by eighteen and nineteenth-century Enlightenment principles of categorization was an opportunity for new nation states, like France and United States, to selectively place emphasis on certain historical views of civilizations, cultures, and their art. Practices of identifying works according to an art-historical context, using regional school or styles, with clear labeling began to categorize works. With an emphasis on certain works and times in history, museums reinforced the iconic program of the values and ideals of a nation or culture as more important than others and served as propaganda to the masses.

Universal survey museums were often styled architecturally and their collections organized to create a ritualized experience for the viewer that reinforced the ideas of social authority and values of civilization. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City is housed in a large building with huge columns and stairs that reflects Roman-Greco architectural influences. When you enter a hushed atmosphere creates a quality of reverence that can be unnerving and intimidating. The works are protected from vandalism and theft by the guards who monitor viewers moving through the collections. This experience of viewing art in a temple-like environment can be nerve-racking even when the viewer's motivations are perfectly normal. The quiet atmosphere can encourage deep contemplation but may also discourage an open dialogue between visitors while they view works. Additionally, many museums, particularly American museums that were formed from personal donations or loans of works, rather than princely collections, masquerade as public museums because they are dependent on private collections on loan from their patrons. The public citizens frequently do not actually own the national collections.

Museum board members and curators choose the artists and works that are deemed meaningful to art history and, therefore, our societies. Museums hire curators who will fulfill the ideological messaging related to their mission directive and patronage. For example, the Renaissance may be touted as the major turning point of Western art with extensive examples and biographies. Simultaneously African art may compiled in a generalized collection of primitive masks possibly for ceremonial use, with out specific artists, tribes, or dates identified, and certainly without much known influence in the Western world. This iconographical programming can be read that Western art had contributed more to civilization while African art is not as significant. The museum visitor has become a citizen stakeholder in the museum program, though understanding this relationship is often dependent on a person's class, education, and cultural background. Duncan and Wallach suggest that, "since art appeared as art history only in the museum, and since only art history made visible the spiritual truths of art, the museum was the only proper repository."

59 Agel, *The Medium is the Massage, an Inventory of Effects,* 139.

60 Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," 59.

61 Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October*, Vol. 80 (Spring, 1997), 88.

62 Nguyen and Mackenzie, eds., *Beyond the Street,* 352.