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Shepard Fairey ReflectSpace Exhibit Showcases 'Peace is Radical'

By **Kennedy Zak** March 12, 2024   👁 2   💬 0

Artist Shepard Fairey's "Peace is Radical" exhibit tackles themes such as environmental justice, racial justice, economic justice and gender equality. - Photos by Kennedy Zak / Glendale News-Press

Renowned street artist Shepard Fairey's "Peace is Radical" exhibit uplifts social justice advocates and sheds light on a wide range of injustices through a powerful collection on display at Glendale Central Library's ReflectSpace Gallery.

"My work primarily revolves around concepts of and aspirations for justice," the L.A.-based artist said. "Whether it be environmental justice, racial justice, economic justice, gender equality, etc., the themes in my art often address injustices in several areas."

Fairey creates cohesion among his various pieces through his "methodical use of grids and lines," ReflectSpace Gallery co-curator Anahid Oshagan said, calling his work "beautiful and captivating." He also

creates cohesion in his color scheme of blues, reds, yellows and blacks.

"He has a vision, and he executes on and fulfills that vision," Oshagan said.

Fairey said his "creative process varies from image to image." The artist first gained notoriety for his "Andre the Giant Has a Posse" sticker and the "Obama Hope" poster.

"Sometimes I'm inspired by a song lyric, sometimes I see something inspiring, sometimes I think about a specific message or idea I want to convey and then go look for the right symbols and images to compose; sometimes the pieces include a few or all of those approaches."

"Peace is Radical" features prints of historical figures that inspire Fairey because of their commitment to standing up for justice, including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, John Lewis, Rosario Dawson, Frida Kahlo, Ai Weiwei and more.

With respect to Fairey's portraits, Oshagan said, "They're looking at you, imploring you to hear whatever message they are after."

In addition to highlighting specific figures, Fairey also tackles societal pitfalls more broadly in his prints through symbolic imagery. These include fossil fuel pollution and sustaining Earth's "fragile ecosystems."

"I wanted to use art and messages that touched on the topics that I find incredibly important in the world, especially since humanity seems to be in a perpetual state of conflict," Fairey said. "Through my art, I want to remind people of the equal humanity of all people, regardless of their race, religion, nation or culture."

Fairey's exhibit will be on display through April 14 at ReflectSpace and first opened Jan. 20. During the grand opening, Oshagan said more than 400 attendees filled the library from each corner, describing the crowd as "charged and energetic."

In visiting the exhibit, community members can learn more specifically about what inspired Fairey's works and the philosophies behind his art process.
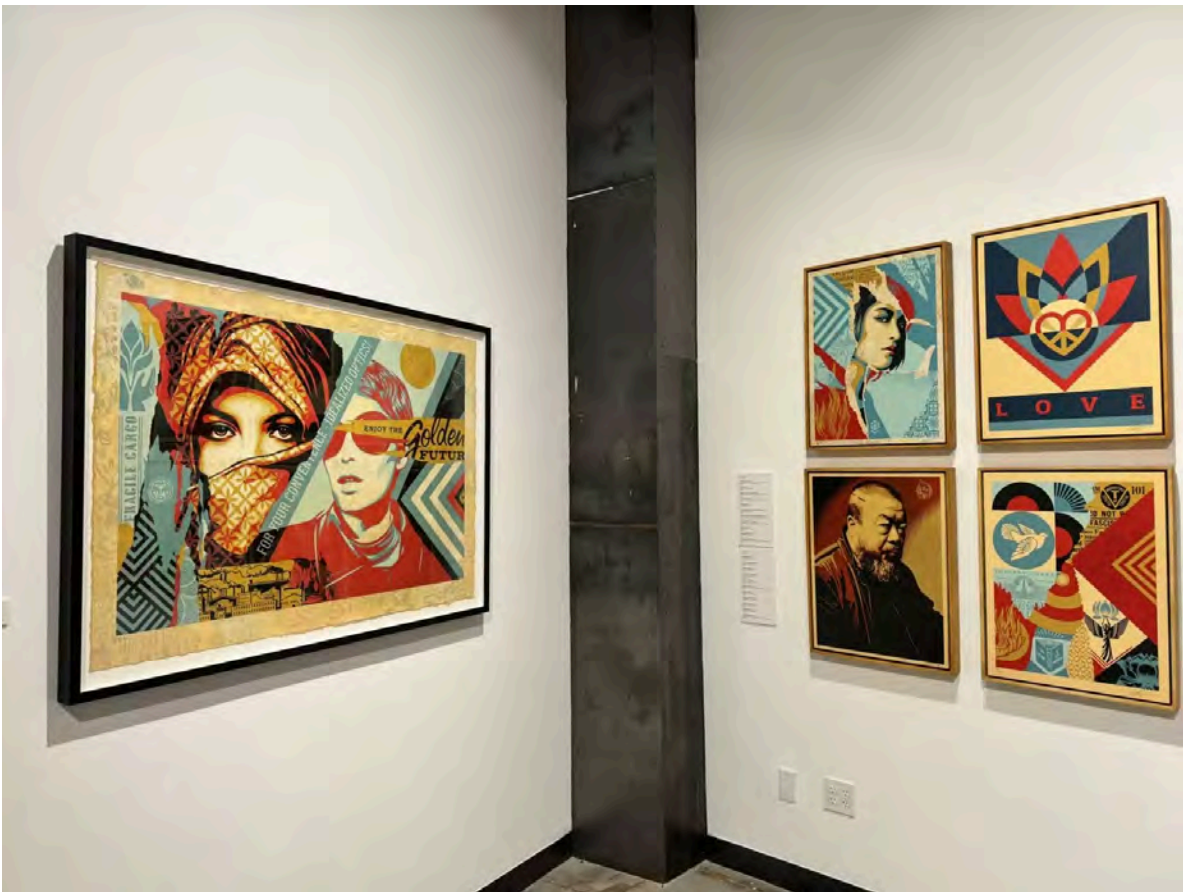
"My philosophy has always been that violence is the first resort of the weak-minded," Fairey said in an artist's statement. "I would like to see people use diplomacy and creativity to find mutually beneficial solutions to problems rather than using violence as the first reaction to conflict."

As a street artist, Fairey has always strived to make art that is accessible to all types of people and expressed his sense of pride in showing his work in the Glendale Central Library, a free and public institution.

"The support of the curators and the Glendale community in showing my art and encouraging thoughtful dialogue around radical peace is important to me," he said. "American ideals are not rooted in fear and censorship but in the freedom of information and using that knowledge to carry you through."

"Peace is Radical" features Shepard Fairey's iconic "Obama Hope" poster, as well as "Unlimited Screen Time," an installation of various screen printing frames.

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