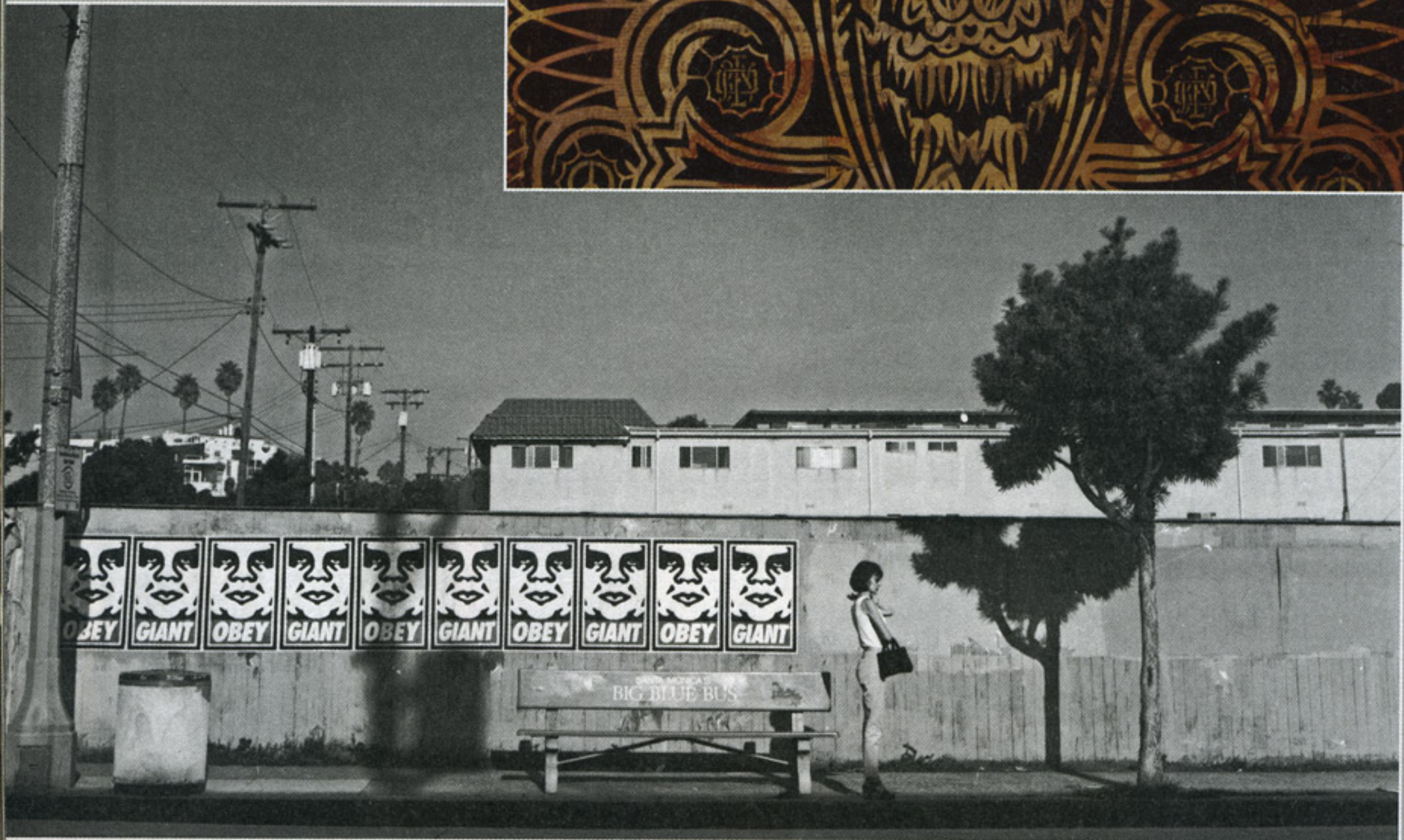
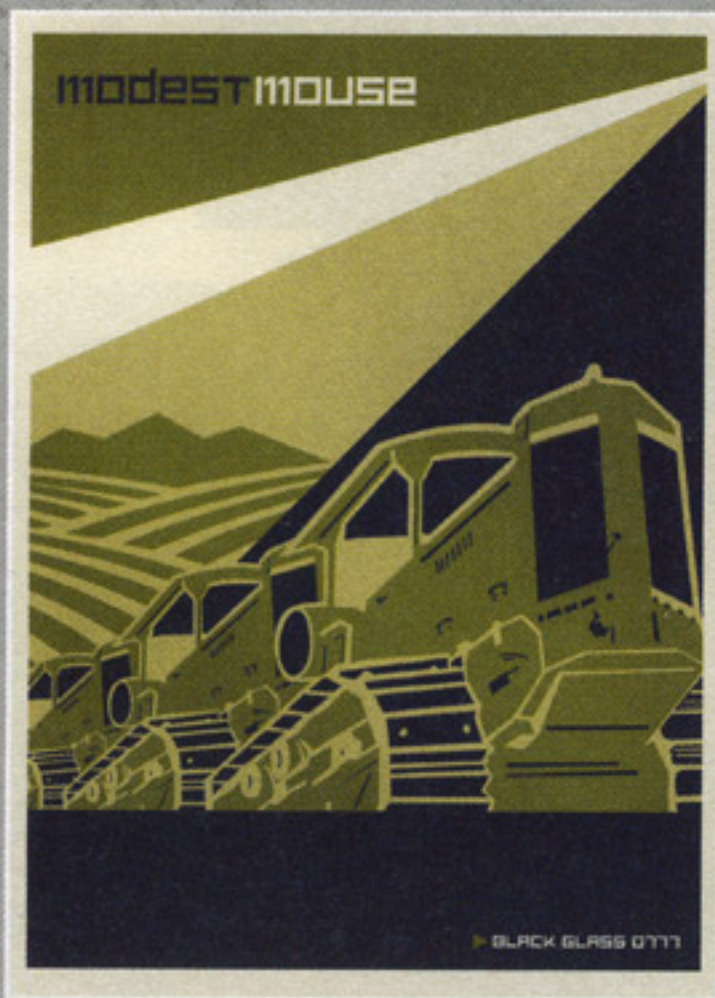


Shepard Fairey has a posse and you'd better believe it. ROCK SOUND joins his crew to discover what happens when art, music, and politics collide...

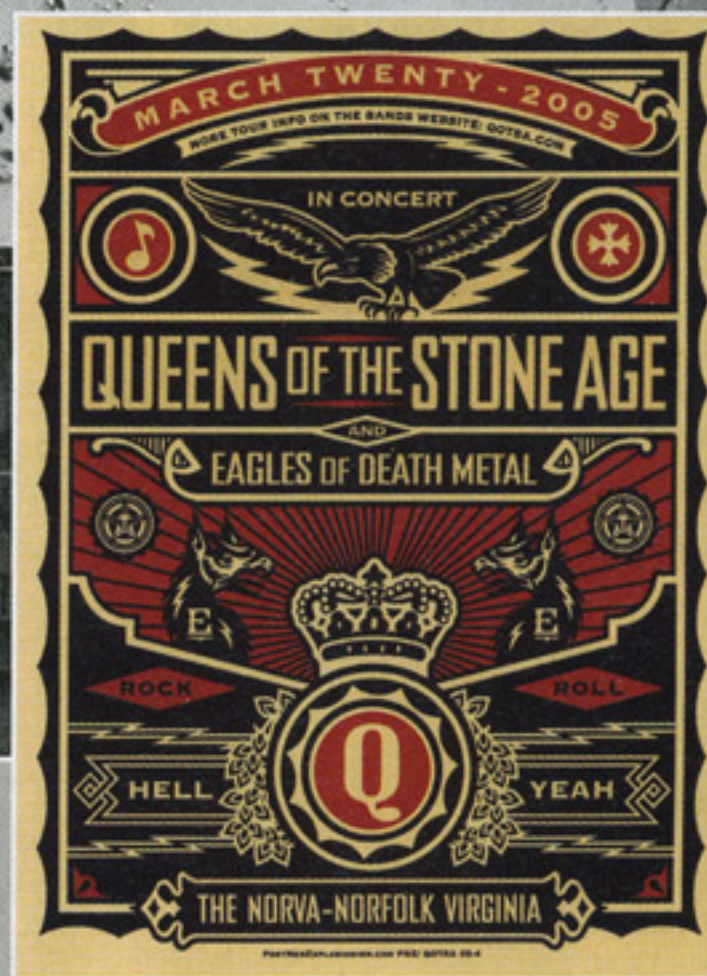


GRAND DESIGNS



ARTIST: Shepard Fairey

ACTS WORKED FOR: The Smashing Pumpkins, Interpol, DJ Shadow, Flogging Molly, Black Eyed Peas, Mission Of Burma, Queens Of The Stone Age, The Flaming Lips, Modest Mouse, The Cult, Black Sabbath, Slayer, Unsane, and many more...



Iconic artist, subversive culture-jammer and counter culture propagandist; California-based innovator Shepard Fairey has gone from being an art student with a penchant for exploring the nature of phenomenology through subversive stickers and late night fly-posting to being the founder of a design empire known by the pervasive moniker OBEY. Meet one of the modern world's most iconic artists to discover just what makes him tick.

Has music played a role in your development as a designer? "I have a wall full of framed record covers that I'm looking at right now, everything from the Ramones, KISS, The Police, and The Cult, to the Misfits, Led Zeppelin, Bad Brains, The Clash, Public Enemy and Iggy Pop. I have those there to remind me about the strength of art and music married. The Sex Pistols and The Clash, early on, were tremendous influences and their artwork was always really great. Then later on, Public Enemy was a really big influence on me and they always had really strong graphics that went with what they were doing."

How did you get involved with the new Smashing Pumpkins record? "Well, Billy Corgan brought me in and he described the content of the album. There's a lot of commentary on American consumer culture, media culture, and what he (Billy) thinks is going wrong. I think he picked me because he's looked at the content of my work and seen that I'm making some of the same commentary in my artwork. I was one of the only people he could think of that could come up with an image that was, I suppose, iconic and attention-grabbing but also could address a multitude of issues simultaneously."

What's been the project that's excited you the most? "I pretty much throw myself into everything. Black Sabbath asked me to do their tour poster the summer before last, and that's one of my favourite bands of all time. Public Enemy just asked me to do a collaboration with them too which is awesome. It's really surreal when someone I really respect reaches out to me and says they like my work - like Henry Rollins, I did his poster for his tour this past summer, and he and Black Flag were really influential (on me). I'm now feeding into someone's output that helped create who I am. That's exciting."

What artists have influenced you in terms of your design development? "Russian constructivism was a big influence, but I (have) moved away from using obvious graphic cues, arrows and big red stars and things like that. I've started to incorporate some art nouveau and 30s European design, because I think it has some of the same strengths as the constructivist stuff but it's a little bit more organic, not quite as harsh. Also the hippies and the psychedelic posters of the late 60s borrowed from art nouveau so there's this sort of 'peace association with that style. There's an Asian pattern influence in a lot of stuff too, it's a total melting pot. One thing that I think is pretty much a consistent trademark of mine is a limited colour palette. But my influences are everyone from Jamie Reid who did the Sex Pistols art to Barbara Kruger and the Sternberg brothers. There's not one specific artist anywhere that I'm pulling from repeatedly, it's more a synthesis of several influences."

Rumour has it you're doing a big exhibition here in the UK later this year... "In November I'm doing a big show with StolenSpace, D*face's gallery in (London's) Truman Brewery. We're actually not using his gallery as its not big enough, but we're gonna use something nearby that's a really huge space and do a really, really big show. I've been working really hard, I'm excited about the new work, and I think it's the best stuff I've ever done."

Do you have any advice for aspiring designers? "My advice is, if you stick to what you believe in long enough and keep making work, eventually it's gonna find an audience. People should always find an outlet for their artistic passion and make it happen on nights or weekends if they can't do it full-time. Never give up. Also, don't chase design and art world trends in order to try to succeed more quickly. You've got to just do what you believe in and then your day will come. No one ever gets anywhere or any respect for just jumping on art or design trends. There are a million Banksy copycats out there but there's still only one Banksy. I'm just too stubborn to give up, so it eventually had to work out for me. There was no other way out I could operate. But it is totally hard."

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