

Fairey bruhaha enhances coffers—especially lawyers'.

After spending Friday night in jail, today, street artist Shepard Fairey was arraigned today in Boston for allegedly pasting “Andre The Giant” graffiti near an entrance to the Massachusetts Turnpike and the Boston University bridge across the Charles River—nine years ago. Fairey also countersued the Associated Press—who sued him last week for basing his now famous Obama “Hope” poster on a copyrighted AP photograph.

Having seen the poster at Fairey’s opening at the Institute of Contemporary Art last week, I agree with him that the poster significantly transformed the photo (actually, I think, improved it and turned it into art) and, thus, does not violate copyright law. What’s more, Fairey has not sold the work—and, while he might have enhanced (and now harmed) his reputation by distributing it for free, he did not directly use it for financial gain.

The “tagging” of public places and ensuing arrests are part and parcel of Fairey’s art. He and his work present a provocative and humorous challenge to authority; the bruhaha publicizes Fairey’s image and images, delights upstarts, and, I suppose, infuriates the powers that be. It also promises to enlarge the coffers of Fairey, of the ICA (whose director, Jill Medvedow recently sent out an email of support on Fairey’s behalf) and, especially, of the lawyers.

Still, with the world going to rack and ruin, it’s nice to know that some people are making money— and fun to have a new set of old issues to focus on.

AMH

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