



JOHN FERN



# PRINT WORK / PUBLISHING HE MIGHT BE GIANT



## He might be **GIANT**

By Michael Dooley

Once a renegade who dropped up absently onto socialist propaganda in the dark of night, artist Shepard Fairey is now an ambassador for the same corporations he once skewered. Shepard Fairey boldly repeats: inside

as he slips a sticker on an electrical box. Then another one on a newspaper rack. A street sign. A bus bench. A few people who recognize the 29-year-old Fairey warmly greet and cheer him as though he were a celebrity, but most of the passersby in Silver Lake, a hip but ready neighborhood that separates Hollywood from downtown Los Angeles, barely pay any attention. It's only afterward that he

small, glossy one- and two-color graphic novels that way. The most striking has the word "OBEY" in heavy capital letters beside a tightly cropped face with a beard, but no eyes, skin

The face is a stark, flat, stylized image rendered in a heavy black with the symmetry and tone of a Rorschach blot. And in fact, it's intended to be open to individual, often conflicting, interpretations. It could be taken as an

Christian threat, an unrequited cult, or a sneaky sales play. Anyone who recognizes the face as that of the late obnoxious, a seven-foot-four, 520-pound pro wrestler, might think it has something to do with the recent resurgence in popularity of the World Wrestling Federation. But the actual meaning has been evolving for over a decade, even for its creator.

The pictures above are on the left were created by John Fern.



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## Giant

Fairey knocked out his first version of the “Giant” sticker in five minutes at a kinko’s back in 1997 when he was a teenager attending the Rhode Island School of Design. The black-and-white artwork, smaller than three inches, was a grungy photocopy swiped from a newspaper ad. The hastily scrawled text read, “Andre Has a Fosse.” Fairey was poking fun at his fellow skateboarders, who travel in cliques called poses and unthinkingly decorate their boards with corporate logos. As the crude little stickers increasingly appeared around Providence, they began to capture the imagination of a wider audience.

By taking something with no intrinsic value, like the image of an athlete from a bogus white-trash sport and elevating it into an icon, Fairey feels he’s exposing and subverting consumer culture’s susceptibility to propaganda. He prefers using an oblique approach because “I hate stuff that’s too self-righteous.” Rather than subject people to sloganeering, he wants them to have their own epiphany.

The closest he’s come to didacticism is a manifesto he wrote in 1990 and has since posted on his Web site. He equated his work to the philosopher Heidegger’s concept of phenomenology: “The process of letting things manifest themselves.” Although he believes “Giant” is something people should grasp intuitively, he came up with a bunch of big words to convince the “intellectual ostholes” who require an explanation that there’s some legit timeliness behind what he’s doing. He also thinks it makes them feel they’re part of an exclusive clique with access to privileged information.

What began as an inside joke has become for Fairey a single-minded obsession. Every weekend he sets out from San Diego, his car packed with stickers, hand-out-stencils, posters,

and wheat paste. Nowhere near as large as Andre, he also brings along a 16oz of fold-up ladder to allow him access to pole tops, roofs of abandoned buildings, and other hard-to-reach spots that provide dramatic exposure for his larger pieces. Billboards are a favorite location. He once hijacked a cozier Scripps “Obey Your Thrift” boards up and down the California coast, obliterated everything but “obey,” and pasting them into “Giant” boards. For him, “any unadorned surface that isn’t going to lower property value” is fair game.

Fairey usually works alone, but he’s pulled off several huge installations that involve elaborate planning sessions and accommodations with walkie-talkies on the alert for cops. He also mails his stickers and posters, which now include hundreds of variations with figures such as Jimi Hendrix, Joseph Stalin, and Ming the Merciless, to legions of kindred spirits. Thanks to his own global volunteer posse, there have been “Giant” sightings in Singapore, Russia, and on the Paris gravesite of Doors singer Jim Morrison. Supporters consider him a courageous street activist, a contemporary Dadaist or Situationist, or a post-graffitiist who uses the print medium instead of the spray can for tagging.

Along with “Giant,” Fairey himself has unwittingly become an urban legend, famous for being obscure. But he finds it “totally ironic” that people think he’s cool. “I’m a dot. I’m a loser. I’m not cool at all. Everybody just projects their idea of what’s cool on me. I’m boring. I never go out. I don’t know what’s hip in music right now or anything.”

The self-proclaimed loser has been the subject of a documentary short, *Obey Giant* has a Fosse, that’s screened at New York’s Museum of Modern Art as well as Sundance and other festivals. Its own work is now being shown at galleries around the world. And his e-cigarette.com Web site gets 15,000 hits daily.

Frequent targeting of Los Angeles has also gained him the attention of the entertainment media. As a result his handwork occasionally pops up in the background on MTV and HBO shows and can also be glimpsed in movies like *Gene in Sixty Seconds*, *The Devil’s Own*, and *8mm*. He claims the “Giant” graphic in *Batman Forever* was digitally inserted without official approval by a fan working on the film.

Not everyone is a devotee, though. Some people find him naive and delusional about the ability of his graphics to affect change. Most critics simply consider him a vandal. And, in fact he’s willfully engaged in civil disobedience, reclaiming pockets of public space already gutted with establishment propaganda. Consequently, he’s been busted five times and continues to risk imprisonment. But he remains unfazed, saying he doesn’t care

whether people love him or hate him, as long as they respond to what he’s doing.

The roots of Fairey’s style are diverse. His visual minimalism was inspired by skateboard graphics, which have to jump off the wall in stores to compete with all the other on display. His appropriation of preprinted source material and his hand-drafted production methods grew out of the do-it-yourself punk music aesthetic. His humorous use of mass-media characters is akin to the Church of the SubGenius, a satirical mock-religion that anointed a 1950s clip-art drawing of a pipe-smoking dad as the divine savior. And like Andy Warhol, Fairey has an affinity for high-contrast visuals and for elevating the mundane to the iconic. Covering large surfaces with multiple posters also evokes the Pop artist’s style, but the repetition motif is based on necessity rather than homage.

Fairey’s strongest early influence was L.A.-based guerrilla poster maker Robbie Conal. When he saw Conal’s 1987 yellow-and-black “Contra Dictum” poster, an attack on President Reagan’s public lies and infatuations regarding covert government operations in Iran, “I thought it was so powerful. He had this really unflattering portrait that was a great painting, well-executed, but with clever, bold type. Just though it was a beautiful way to combine art and politics. Loved it!” Since then, Fairey and Conal have participated in joint exhibitions.

And like Conal, Fairey has run afoul of the law. He believes his harassment is largely based on community fear of copyright infringement, and suggests that he’s being unfairly singled out. “If there’s anything that’s going to overturn the city, it’s movie posters.

They’re coming down on me for my stuff when it’s mostly Universal Pictures or Warner Bros. Records that are paying these stickers to go out and do it. And they’re probably a lot easier to track down than I am.” He says he’s stopped canvassing his home base of San Diego because the city found him out and threatened his company with a lawsuit.

That company is Black Market Inc., which he started with partners Dave Kinsey and Phil DeWolff shortly after his 1996 move from Providence to the West Coast. Hidden in a building on the outskirts of downtown San Diego, Black Market’s a ten-person visual communications agency that proclaims

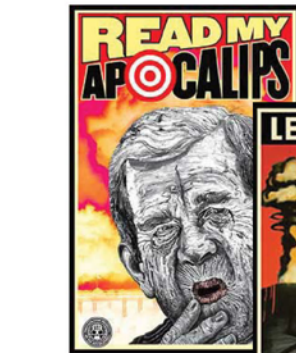
itself an anomaly. They conduct “guerrilla marketing on a corporate scale” that operates in the gap between underground subculture and the public at large. Specializing in the development of high-impact marketing campaigns, they number Pepsi, Heineken, Nike, and QTE, as well as film studios and record labels, among their clientele. They’re sought out by corporations, started by, as Fairey puts it “a bunch of 50-year-old schmucks who don’t know what’s going on,” who want to achieve credibility with the youth-culture crowd, the ones who resent and resist typical corporate sales strategies. He now finds himself in a position of designing Mountain Dew graphics during the work week while liberating Sprite billboards in his free time.

Fairey recently created two-color illustrations of bad-boy comedian Andy Kaufman and his alter ego, Tony Clifton, for Universal’s *Man on the Moon* biopic. It was a secondary, supplemental campaign that deviated from the traditional broad-based mainstream ads. Vibrant, harshly colored stickers, stencils, and posters with the words “Many Lives” were rolled out to 15 major cities as a way of stimulating curiosity and creating pre-release buzz. He also helped put some of the posters.

DeeDee Gordon, co-president of Look-look, the marketing and trend analysis firm that assigned the project, said Fairey was hired “to create his little art installations and pointers who do beautiful work that I either don’t have the skill or the patience to do,” he says. “But you don’t have to be God’s gift to art to be effective. My technique is not that newsworthy. Anybody can steal images and refine them with a little practice. But for me, it’s all about impact, and an illustration that’s well-crafted but doesn’t capture somebody’s attention is not serving its purpose.”

“It seems to me there’s more visual stuff than ever out there, more billboards, more ads, more everything. It’s gruelier than ever, and there just isn’t as much room for time-consuming illustrations. Hook at everything commercially, supply and demand. If people aren’t willing to pay for it, how do you justify the time?”

These days, Fairey’s personal project is funded with Black Market profits. “I don’t even think about ‘Giant’ as making money, even. I only think that the more money I make from it, the more stuff I can put out there.” He recently agreed to let *Listen.com*, a music Web site, create 3,500 posters and 40,000 stickers with



Two of the more recent political posters made by Fairey.

“Giant” as its centerpiece. He figures it’s another way to mess with people’s minds, to have them wonder if “Giant” has just been a far-year lesser campaign. He also says he was well compensated in the deal.

Fairey is ambivalent about his role in capitalizing on the capitalists. “I want to encourage people to do not just posters but anything creative that is contrary to being spoon-fed your culture by MTV and all the uber-hip companies. So it’s kind of ironic that I’m doing work for those companies, but somebody’s going to do it. There are a few different forces battling here, and I’m just to the point where I don’t have a problem with the contradictions. The world is full of contradictions.”

In a 1996 *Wired* magazine article, Fairey was quoted as saying, “I don’t like advertising.” He now claims his remark was taken out of context: “I was never trying to say advertising in and of itself is wrong. What I was saying was, I don’t like the way advertising tries to manipulate, to make people insecure. It’s very, very competitive psychological warfare with no rules of combat. It’s definitely fair game for vandalizing and critiquing, especially the national campaigns. But everybody makes their own decisions. Nobody has your arm to smoke or drink. Nobody’s making you puke your lunch up to be like women in fashion magazines.

Once upon a time, “Giant” was anti-advertising, a silent spokesperson without a product. Now it’s become its own brand, with Fairey negotiating licensing deals for T-shirts, hats, and backpacks. He figures it’s still has enough street credibility to last a while longer. When he began his project, he fantasized it could

be taken pretty far, but he never imagined it would be as big as it is now.

Reflecting on the trajectory of his own life, he recalls his childhood in the conservative old-money section of Charleston, South Carolina, as being very repressed, fraught with frustrations and insecurities. His family discouraged his involvement in punk rock, skateboarding, and other rebellious behavior. “Finally in eighth grade, I had to take a stand for myself and stop fading into the woodwork, even though I liked getting persecuted by my parents and teachers and friends. But I’m glad it happened. I think a lot of people, even if they’re unhappy, spend all their lives following the path of least resistance. They’re just very meek and obedient.”

When asked about the extent his youthful anxieties contribute to his prolonged preoccupation with “Giant,” Fairey pauses, then declares, “All the stuff I critique I’m totally guilty of. Which is why I can comment on it so effectively. I have made, and am still making, the mistakes I’m ridiculing.

“If you had to sum up who I am, ‘Giant’ is like a mirror to me. It totally reflects my need to get my imprint out there, to satisfy my adrenaline craving, and my artistic craving. You can really understand me quickly just by looking at ‘Giant.’ There’s not much more to it.”

When the time comes to canvas another area of town, Fairey climbs into his car and drives off, continuing to obey his inner “Giant.”



One of the first OBEY posters made by Fairey.



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# PRINT WORK / PUBLISHING WESCO - PULSE

**PULSE**  
DATACOM AND SECURITY      ISSUE 7 • 2019

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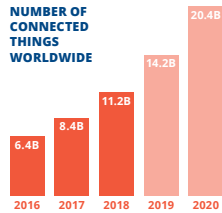
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# PRINT WORK / PUBLISHING WESCO - PULSE

With an increased demand on data centers caused by the massive expansion of the Internet of Things (IoT) and its associated technology requirements, many infrastructures need upgrading in order to keep up. With 20.4 billion connected things expected to be in use worldwide by 2020, the amount of data captured, processed, and stored in the future will be exponential. The costs and resources involved in building a data center—as well as storing and managing that data—are immense. Additionally, keeping a data center fully optimized while eliminating latency, reducing downtime, and maintaining compliance with ever-evolving standards is quite a challenge.



What can your business do to capture immense amounts of data and meet demand for real-time access—all while keeping costs down? What could be an effective data center strategy for your business? For many organizations, the answer lies in the multi-tenant data center.

### WHAT IS A MULTI-TENANT DATA CENTER?

A multi-tenant data center (MTDC), also known as a collocation data center, is a facility where organizations can rent space to host their data. MTDCs provide the space and networking equipment to connect an organization to service providers at a minimal cost. Businesses can rent to meet varying needs—from a server rack to a complete purpose-built module. The scalability of usage provides the business benefits of a data center without the high price.

### SHOULD I OUTSOURCE MY DATA CENTER OPERATIONS?

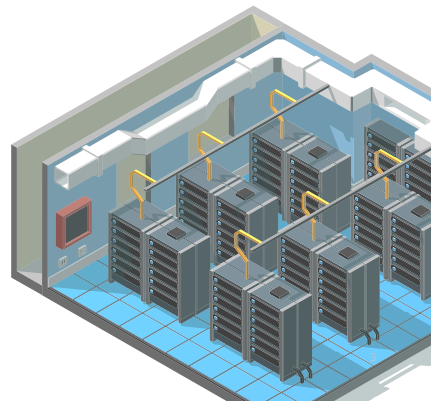
The advantages of outsourcing data operations come down to three key factors: 1) cost, 2) uptime, and 3) security.

You can expect to see drastic improvement to your IT team's capacity and ability to support the business when you begin to outsource your data center operations. Any IT team managing its own data center must constantly be focused on maintaining, upgrading, and ensuring the data center is working at an optimum level at all times. There must also be the capability to expedite work when demand spikes, along with addressing downtime and data loss.

The costs involved with keeping your data center onsite extends to the wider business: building and maintaining data storage in-house, maintaining power, making repairs, ensuring security, and the physical footprint of the data center impact the business beyond these factors alone. This constant focus of managing the data center results in a lack of IT resources dedicated to business strategy. By outsourcing to an MTDC facility, your business will be able to redeploy capital and resources into critical business initiatives for growth.

#### ADVANTAGES OF OUTSOURCING DATA OPERATIONS

- COST
- UPTIME
- SECURITY



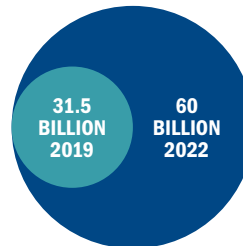
### WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS INVOLVED?

Reliability is critical. The key challenge is to ensure that the MTDC will allow you to access data quickly and at a moment's notice—it is no easy task to deliver seamless bandwidth capacity for every provision.

Examples of overcoming this challenge can be found across the globe. For example, Pier DC is a Tier III certified MTDC in Western Australia. Tier III certification requires 100-percent uptime and multiple distribution paths to allow for no downtime for maintenance, repair, or replacement of equipment. To meet this, Pier DC deployed an all-optical fiber cabling infrastructure. The high-density pre-terminated optical solution supports integrated control systems as well as passive optical cabling for customer cross-connects. This enabled Pier DC to provide their customers with the assurance that they will have access to their entrusted data and services at all times, regardless of demand spikes, capacity requirements, and moves, adds, and changes (MACs) that occur during the lifetime of any data center.

A major benefit that makes the investment worthwhile is the longevity of data centers. More and more organizations are looking to outsource their data storage and services. In fact, spend on outsourcing to MTDCs is expected to double by 2022, increasing the current amount of \$31.5 billion to \$60 billion. As data continues to explode, it continues to be imperative that every data center meets future capacity requirements—and fast.

### COSTS ON OUTSOURCING TO MULTI-TENANT DATA CENTERS



For many businesses, outsourcing to an MTDC facility is important for even more specific reasons.

- Accessing rapid deployment for low and high-density applications
- Leveraging the assurance of stringent service-level agreements (SLAs)
- Scaling quickly to meet higher-speed technologies and applications
- Sourcing maximum flexibility to assure future-readiness
- Reducing total cost of ownership (TCO)

*Pier DC deployed an all-optical fiber cabling infrastructure...This enabled Pier DC to provide their customers with the assurance that they will have access to their entrusted data and services at all times*

MTDCs are focused on enabling rapid connections for their customers and providing offerings to meet a range of business, enterprise, and cloud needs. Because of this focus, operators typically undertake a hardware and technology refresh at least every three years. This refresh, combined with the anticipated 10-year lifespan of a data center, is a major business saver in capital expenditure, time, and resources.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN LOOKING FOR AN MTDC

One of the most important factors when it comes to looking for an MTDC is locality. Your business should be close to your facility, because reducing latency and increasing bandwidth are two of the biggest challenges associated with outsourcing. For example, if businesses outsource to MTDCs in another country, connection speeds drop and cause unnecessary latency, which ultimately can cause customer frustration and loss of business.

#### TWO BIGGEST OUTSOURCING CHALLENGES

- REDUCE LATENCY
- INCREASE BANDWIDTH