

Issue No. 02 — Episode 2
Keeping Creativity Divine with AI

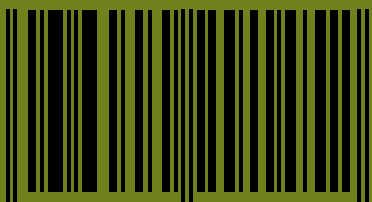
Interview with

SHEPARD FAIREY

on hacking authorship, punk ethics,
and why creative vision reigns supreme

SPILL MAGAZINE
ISSUE 02 EPISODE 2

KEEPING CREATIVITY DIVINE
WITH AI
18 PAGES



Artist, Graphic Designer
and Activist, Shepard
Fairey. Leonardo's Senior
Designer, Matt Momtaz.
Editor, Jessie Hughes.

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Words by Jessie Hughes



By all accounts, Shepard Fairey should be allergic to AI. The man came up in the punk '80s—razor blades, wheatpaste, hand-cut stencils. A rebel at heart and a provocateur by design, the LA-based street artist has spent decades turning walls, stickers, and subways into battlegrounds of visual dissent. From the cult-classic *Obey* series to that era-defining Obama *Hope* poster,

Fairey's work fuses propaganda aesthetics with political bite. Art, for him, isn't about making things pretty—it's about shaking people awake.

So when Leonardo.Ai pitched to collaborate—train an AI model on his archive and see what happens—it wasn't about nostalgia or novelty. It was about pushing form. Testing authorship. Breaking default settings. The result? Motion graphics warped by protest graphics. Stencil logic filtered through machine learning. It isn't imitation—it's translation. And it hits hard.

Interview
with
*Shepard
Fairley*

Artist, Graphic
Designer and
Activist

“When I moved from traditional drawing and painting into screen printing,

it unlocked a lot of freedom for experimentation.

Later, when I started using digital tools, I realized I could replicate that same iterative process faster, without wasting materials or time.



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For Fairey, AI is simply another tool in the arsenal—like a photocopier or a spray can. What matters is how you use it.

“Never
settle for
the default
settings.”



S.F.

Whether AI or analog,
creative excellence comes
down to intention, effort, and
pushing the limits.

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This project—equal parts experiment and statement—takes that ethos to its edge. Leonardo's team trained two bespoke video pipelines on Fairey's portfolio as the aesthetic core, bringing pieces like *Swan Song* and his Frida Kahlo portrait into kinetic new forms.

But the machine didn't lead. Fairey did.

S.F.

AI might generate an idea, but the artist still decides whether to use it. I use laser cutters now for stencils I used to cut by hand. But the designs are still mine. The machine just speeds up the manual labor. With AI image generation, I use it to brainstorm references. It gives me options I wouldn't find easily elsewhere—but ultimately, I make the call. It's not doing the work for me—it's expanding what's possible.

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He calls it democratic. Punk, even. Not because it's subversive for subversion's sake—but because it hands the megaphone to whoever has something to say.

S.F.

AI brings that to visual art. People without training can now express ideas in sophisticated ways. And that's democratizing.



Creativity is one of the most human impulses. If more people have the tools to express themselves, the world becomes more interesting.

08

“You don’t need to be a
virtuoso—just make
something that hits hard.”

SHEPARD FAIREY

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That matters. Because for Fairey, art has always been about access. He remembers scraping together \$5K for a 9-gig hard drive to edit a skate video. Now, AI tools can animate a full idea without going through a gatekeeper.

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But freedom without direction is just noise. Even with infinite outputs, you still need a point of view.

S.F.

Sometimes I create artificial limits—color palettes, flat tones—to stay grounded. Too many options can be paralyzing. Tools offer infinite possibilities, but you still need a strong, personal direction.

S.F.

Animation is a great example—AI is accelerating that field rapidly. And when a great idea can now be executed without having to go through an elite pipeline, that's powerful. It gives creators more freedom.

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This isn't about abandoning craft. It's about refocusing it. Fairey's not here for retro Luddite nostalgia.

S.F.

Craft is important when it adds to the end result—but working under a magnifying glass by candlelight just to say you did? That's not the point.

Focus on what delivers the most powerful, resonant outcome.

“Tools change.
Creativity stays
divine.”

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Interview
with
*Matt
Montaz*
Leonardo's
Senior
Designer



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Hey Matt, how'd you make the machine move like Shepard Fairey?

So here's the brief: Shepard Fairey—yes, *that* Shepard Fairey—hands you 24 of his original artworks and says, “Let's see what AI can do.”

No pressure.

That's the setup designer Matt Momtaz and the team at Leonardo.AI walked into. Not just to copy Fairey's work, but to build a system that could riff on it, move with it, and still feel punk as hell.

14



M.M.

We didn't want to treat it like a style transfer gimmick. This was about building two custom video pipelines that could actually think in Shepard's aesthetic.

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First up was a real-time *Stable Diffusion* pipeline—first unveiled with Leo's *Realtime Canvas*—paired with a specially crafted *LoRA*, trained on Fairey's graphic signatures: bold typography, iconic motifs, and punchy, flat colors. The team ran real-world footage through the model, and boom: videos that looked like animated protest posters.

Pipeline two dialed the experimentation way up. Using a *Flux* model fine-tuned by Leonardo's AI research team—plus a bit of Canva wizardry—they created sequences that felt less like Shepard's greatest hits, and more like a remix album.

M.M.

It's like... what would Shepard's work look like if it evolved in real time?

That's what we were chasing.

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The final clips premiered at *Canva Create 25*, glitching, morphing, and moving like Fairey's graphics had a pulse. But behind the chaos? Full creative control.



M.M

This wasn't about automation—it was collaboration. The tech doesn't replace the artist. It just gives them more ways to yell.



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AND WHEN
IT COMES TO
SHEPARD
FAIREY,

YELLING'S
KIND OF
THE POINT.

Issue No. 02—Episode 3

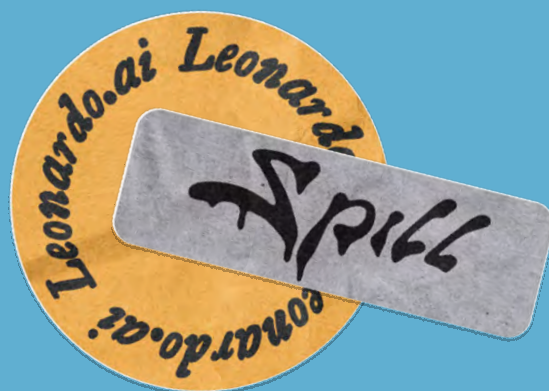
COMING SOON

*WTF is
Vibe Marketing*

with

JESSIE
HUGHES
& RODOLFO
OCAMPO

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EPISODE 1



EPISODE 2



EPISODE 3

