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NAVY PIER® TEAMS WITH INTERNATIONALLY-RENOVATED STREET ARTIST TO TRANSFORM AN URBAN SITE INTO EYE-CATCHING ARTWORK

Shepard Fairey installs mural at Grand Avenue/Lake Shore Drive viaduct as part of Navy Pier Walk 2011 public art project

Chicago (April 28, 2011) — An artistic transformation is taking place today at an unlikely spot near Chicago’s lakefront. Navy Pier officials have joined forces with renowned American contemporary artist, Shepard Fairey, to install a giant poster mural at the Lake Shore Drive viaduct at Grand Avenue. Millions of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians use the area to travel to and from Navy Pier each year. Instead of a blank wall, passersby will now see the work of a street artist who is perhaps best known for the Barack Obama “Hope” poster he created during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign.

The giant “Obey” album cover-style imagery, measuring 130’ by 10’, is the initial piece of artwork to go on display as part of this year’s Navy Pier Walk 2011 public art exhibition. The largest outdoor installation of its kind in the country, Navy Pier Walk 2011 will showcase public art in Gateway Park and along Navy Pier’s Dock Street when it opens July 1. The project returns to Navy Pier after a 5-year hiatus.

“We’re very proud to have the renowned Shepard Fairey participate in Navy Pier Walk 2011 and to work with him to beautify a space seen by so many Chicagoans and visitors from around the world,” said Marilynn Gardner, Navy Pier General Manager. “Now, we will have a gateway to Navy Pier and the lakefront that will entertain, amuse, and inspire visitors, and enhance Chicago’s reputation as one of the most beautiful and art-friendly cities in the world.”

Navy Pier partnered with the Streeterville Organization of Active Residents (SOAR) to spearhead the mural’s installation at the Grand Avenue site.

“For many years, SOAR has overseen a number of neighborhood improvements in Streeterville, and successfully partnered with Navy Pier on several community projects,” said Gail Spreen, SOAR board member. “Getting such a talented artist to tackle a site that long needed beautification will enhance the lakefront for residents and visitors alike.”

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The mural is printed on standard copy paper using an oversized blueprint printer, and is applied to the surface of the viaduct with standard wall paper glue. After installation, there is a water-based, protective coat applied to the artwork to protect against weather and graffiti. The installation process will be completed in 24 – 36 hours, and will require no city maintenance. Street art, traditionally, adapts to its environment, becoming weathered and worn over time.

Navy Pier officials, including the curator of Navy Pier Walk 2011, look forward to seeing how the artwork beautifies a space that most people never stop to notice.

“Public art, especially when it is of such high quality and scale, benefits our community,” said Joseph Tabet, curator of Navy Pier Walk 2011. “As people examine Shepard Fairey’s work on their way to Navy Pier or the lakefront, I hope they will enjoy seeing it, will think about the issues it raises, and also gain a new appreciation of the transformative power of public art.”

Shepard Fairey grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, became inspired by punk rock, and began making drawings for skateboards and t-shirts in the mid-1980s. In 1992, he graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration. Today, he is acclaimed for his artwork around the world. The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston calls Fairey one of today's most influential street artists. His work is included in art collections in The Smithsonian, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The Grand Avenue mural is Fairey’s first such installation in Chicago. It will remain at that site through October, 2011.

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Located on Lake Michigan, just East of Chicago’s downtown, Navy Pier® (www.navypier.com) is the top-visited tourist and leisure destination in the Midwest, welcoming more than eight million visitors annually for entertainment, cultural and educational events and attractions, as well as business meetings and tradeshows. It has an economic impact of more than one billion dollars annually. Originally opened in 1916 as a shipping and recreation facility, it is now one of the country’s unique recreation and exposition facilities, showcasing more than 50 acres of parks, gardens, restaurants, shops, attractions, sightseeing and dining cruise boats, exhibition facilities and more. Navy Pier is owned and operated by the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (www.mpea.com). You can follow Navy Pier at: www.facebook.com/navypier and www.twitter.com/navypier.