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Iconic Obama portrait headed to Smithsonian museum

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January 7, 2009

BY BRETT ZONGKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Even before he takes office, President-elect Barack Obama's image will become part of the permanent collection at the National Portrait Gallery, the museum announced today.

The gallery acquired the iconic red, white and blue collage by Los Angeles street artist Shepard Fairey, depicting Obama with the word "Hope." The image — later modified with the messages of "Change" and "Vote" for the Obama campaign — became one of the most memorable images from the 2008 election. The curators at the Smithsonian Institution museum plan to hang it by Inauguration Day.

» [Click to enlarge image](#)



Detail of the signature portrait of Barack Obama, by Los Angeles street artist Shepard Fairey.

(AP file)

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The full image of the portrait.

(AP file)

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"What I think is so fascinating is the ubiquitous nature," said Carolyn Carr, deputy director of the Portrait Gallery. "When people think of a portrait of Obama, they think of this image."

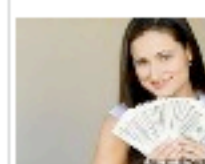
Gallery officials would not reveal how much they paid Fairey for the five-foot tall, mixed-media stenciled collage. Art collectors Heather and Tony Podesta of Washington donated money for the Smithsonian to purchase the work.

Typically, the gallery acquires official portraits of presidents as they are leaving office, and an official Obama portrait will be added later. A portrait of President George W. Bush was unveiled at the gallery in December.

Fairey's collage appeared on thousands of stickers, posters and T-shirts across the country. Time magazine recently commissioned Fairey to create a similar image of Obama for its Person of the Year cover.

Fairey's works are also in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

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