

Art Critic or Vandal? ‘The Splasher’ Leaves Clues

By [COLIN MOYNIHAN](#)

Street artists have speculated for months about the identity of a mysterious figure who has become known as “the Splasher” because he or she hurled colorful blobs of paint at prominent pieces of art on exterior walls in Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan.

The only clues left behind in the paint assaults were bold manifestoes — phrases like “destroy the museums, in the streets and everywhere” — that appeared to critique the commercialization of art.

Now it appears that there may be more than one Splasher, and those claiming responsibility for the attacks have offered additional information about themselves.

One hint came Saturday night, when several people showed up at the Jonathan LeVine Gallery in Chelsea during a reception for the artist Shepard Fairey, who is known for his stenciled images of the wrestler Andre the Giant. They distributed a 16-page newsprint tabloid with the title, “If We Did It, This Is How It Would’ve Happened.” The cover was illustrated by a photograph of a piece of art by Mr. Fairey that had been splattered by paint.

The publication’s opening essay said that last summer, a group of “co-conspirators and provocateurs” began splashing paint on pieces of art, many of them created by street artists, like Mr. Fairey, who have achieved mainstream recognition.

On another page, the group’s members said they had learned the location of a show held in early June by a street art collective called Faile and “subsequently penetrated their sanctum.” During that show, a member of the Faile collective said, a stink bomb was ignited.

Last Thursday, during a show of Mr. Fairey’s work in the Dumbo section of Brooklyn, James Cooper, 24, was arrested and accused of lighting a homemade stink bomb. Mr. Cooper, facing arson and other charges, has denied any wrongdoing.