

Saturday, January 09, 2010



The Purple Cow

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The Drive-By Gallery

Written by Alex V. Cook



One of the best folk art shows around can be viewed from your car in north Baton Rouge.

Plank Road, North Street and Scenic Highway are thoroughfares most see as wastelands, once vibrant business districts blighted by crime and neglect, and there is a fair share of both to support those claims. But if you look a little closer, you will find a community striving against adversity and expressing an individuality that the tonier parts of town are sorely lacking. Garages, lounges, neighborhood groceries are festooned with flourishes of hand painted script, a remnant of a time when a community was more than another link for corporate chains and the endless permutation of the same logos.

Veni Harlan describes her website signsofbatonrouge.com as "a visual survey of hand painted signage specifically created for commercial use. Everyone is selling something and in the frenzy of competition, we are bludgeoned by the multitude of messages to buy, dine, fix, or finance. Hidden in this sea of advertisements is the hand painted sign, an endangered art that stands apart as a unique reflection of place, time, and culture."

The site provides dozens of photos to explore the lost art of hand-painted signage and through that, a way to see how personal business can be when it operates on a truly local level. Consider the image of the sign for Ethel's Snack Shack. The letters don't line up perfectly, there are a few punctuation idiosyncrasies, and there is a glut of information on it that would probably be difficult to grasp from a moving car. But unlike a succinct logo you can identify a mile away, the Ethel's sign is a masterpiece of hand-painted congeniality. Sadly it was badly damaged during Hurricane Gustav.

Ms. Harlan's site also features brief profiles of some of the painters of these signs, guys like Wayne Jones, who despite lacking phone, agent or advertising has created work that not only helps out the businesses of Baton Rouge, but also adds a personal brushstroke to the landscape.



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Sunday, 13 December 2009

SIGN ART IS ONE THING.....BUT BUILDING ART ON THE SIDE OF BUILDINGS IS A LITTLE MUCH.....FOR INSTANCE OSSIE BROWN'S BLDG...HOW FULL OF HIMSELF IS DANA BROWN ? AND THE ROUX HOUSE.....OLD HISTORIC BUILDINGS SHOULD NOT BE "TATOOD".....I CONSIDER IT TASTELESS.....ROBBY HUEY

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