2007

New Orleans: about face

Kari Rose Cesta

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, karicesta@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses

Part of the Fine Arts Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2764

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
NEW ORLEANS: ABOUT FACE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

In

The School of Art

by

Kari Rose Cesta
B.A., Loyola University New Orleans, 2003
August, 2007
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have made it this far without all of my former art and design professors and teachers. Special thanks to Beverly Stromme, Robert Fisher, John Taube, Dana Bartelt, Daniela Marx, and Tom Varisco for everything they taught me. Thank you to all of my committee members: Lynne Baggett, Gerald Bower, Wei He, Tom Neff, and Darius Spieth for all your time, input and ideas. I want to extend many thanks to each and every one who took the time to participate in my email survey about New Orleans. Your insights and memories were a big inspiration and contribution to my work. Thanks to my family for all the support you have given me through my education. All of you were so willing to help me whenever I asked.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... ii

LIST OF GALLERY IMAGES.......................................................................................... iv

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................................ v

INTRODUCTION................................................................................................................... 1

THE WORK......................................................................................................................... 4
   Oak Street..................................................................................................................... 5
   Canal Street................................................................................................................... 5
   Bourbon Street............................................................................................................. 7
   Magazine Street.......................................................................................................... 8
   The Lower Ninth Ward................................................................................................. 10
   Lakeview...................................................................................................................... 11
   Saint Charles Avenue................................................................................................. 14
   The Warehouse District............................................................................................... 16

CONCLUSION.................................................................................................................... 18

REFERENCES..................................................................................................................... 20

APPENDIX A: GALLERY IMAGES..................................................................................... 22

APPENDIX B: EMAIL SURVEY......................................................................................... 32

VITA................................................................................................................................. 33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF GALLERY IMAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canal Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Warehouse District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourbon Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ninth Ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Shot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

“New Orleans: About Face” investigates the typography found in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. The areas of St. Charles Avenue, Bourbon Street, the Warehouse District, Oak Street, the Lower Ninth Ward, Lakeview, Magazine Street, and Canal Street have very distinctly different styles of typography found on signage, store windows, etc. Each area’s function dictates what the letterforms found in that vicinity look like. A unique kind of beauty is found in these fonts, hand-drawn letters, and three-dimensional signage. This investigation showcases a graphic designer’s perspective of New Orleans in compliment to the emotional attachments and memories other New Orleanians have of the city.
INTRODUCTION

The greater New Orleans area has been my home for all twenty-five years of my life. Although, I come from a suburb, I consider the city as a part of me. I had never lived anywhere else until June 2005 when I accepted a yearlong internship position at Walt Disney World with Disney Design Group. Due to growing up in the New Orleans area, I am very experienced in evacuating whenever a storm in the Gulf threatens the Crescent City. Fortunately, each of the evacuations I have experienced ended without consequence, New Orleans and my life surviving only with minor damage.

When Hurricane Katrina hit in August of 2005, there was no need for me to evacuate; I was already living in Orlando. Everything was different this time. Katrina was the real thing. This category five storm tore New Orleans and the Gulf Coast apart. Areas flooded, homes were demolished, and devastation ensued. As I watched the storm pound the city on television, I felt a sense of guilt because I was not there with my family to help them through the chaos. Living in Orlando during the wrath of Katrina, I felt helpless and out of place.

In August of 2006, I returned to New Orleans and began exploring the city. I wanted to get a better idea of what New Orleanians had to deal with as they tried to put their lives back in order and what they were going through emotionally. Even a year after the storm, I was still able to see the widespread devastation in a big way. Some houses were demolished, some were gutted, and some looked as if they still have not been touched since the storm came through. I began noticing hand made street signs and spray painted messages on homes.

My major interest in graphic design is typography, or the study of letterforms. I have always been interested in fonts and the shapes that make up various styles of letterforms and what they can communicate. Therefore, as I surveyed the city I started noticing distinct differences in the typography of each different area of New Orleans; each style, beautiful in its
own way, speaks about the area where it is found. Hence, I began documenting the typography in the city. I photographed interesting letterforms all over New Orleans including the heavily damaged neighborhoods of Lakeview, New Orleans East, and the Ninth Ward. Using an Olympus Evolt 500 camera, I collected approximately 800 images of type.

A city is not a city without the people that live there. We, the inhabitants of the greater New Orleans area, create the city; we build the buildings, we live through disaster and make this place our home. How could I complete a thesis project on New Orleans, without the perspective of other New Orleans natives? As a way to hear residents’ thoughts and feelings about New Orleans, I sent out a survey in the form of an email questionnaire. I asked the recipients to describe a special memory that they have about New Orleans and asked them to describe their favorite things about New Orleans (see Appendix B). I also welcomed any comments they wanted to add about the city. People responded and then forwarded the email to their New Orleans friends who did the same. I received thirty-three responses from the initial email.

People have emotional attachments to this city, and this is why, in the wake of disaster, they are still continuing their lives in this place. They see the beauty of the city through their own personal experiences and memories. In contrast, my typographical investigation of New Orleans displays the beauty of the city in a curious way with the hope of inspiring others to look for beauty in less obvious places.

Graphic designers make choices about precisely designed fonts for signs, logos, brochures, etc. to communicate something specific. For designers, equally important is the way the letters themselves look and the meaning of what they say. Meaning is found in the shapes of each letter. Each area of the city of New Orleans has its own individual style of typography that is seen
throughout that particular area. The styles found in each particular region are a result of and indicative of the history and function of that place. The letterforms contribute to the beauty of that section of the city but are also influenced by that particular locality.
THE WORK

The major part of my work consists of eight 18 inch by 36 inch posters of digital images of typography, recreated as a collage of found typography. There is one poster for each of the eight featured: Oak Street, Magazine Street, The Warehouse District, Bourbon Street, St. Charles Avenue, The Lower Ninth Ward, and Lakeview. Each composition reflects the feeling of each of the specific sections.

Accompanying these posters are several three-inch square photographic references taken from the original locations. The photos are color-coded to relate to the corresponding large typographic composition. These squares guide the viewers’ eye from one section of the exhibit to the next.

In addition to these items, I created small posters of varying sizes with selected quotes from the respondents to my survey reflecting their thoughts about these familiar sections of New Orleans. All of these panels hang in groups together representing each particular area in a pattern that will imply an abstract city skyline.

The following is a description of each of the areas of New Orleans that I focused on. I will include some history explain the significance of each area related to the typography found in these places.

**Oak Street**

Oak Street is located in Uptown New Orleans in the Carrollton neighborhood and runs from River Road to Broadway. Oak Street was once the home to many larger businesses like Woolworth’s, but now the street is lined with locally owned businesses: the family barber, consignment shops, shoe repair, coffee shops, etc. (bigeasy.com).
On this street one can find Jacques-Imo’s, a great restaurant that offers Creole and Cajun specialties. Oak Street has been home to Haase’s shoes since 1921. The Oak Street Café prides itself on being a friendly neighborhood café reminiscent of the old donut shops that existed before the “fast food invasion.” On the Other Hand Consignment Boutique, established in 1987 (8204 Oak Street ) sells fine quality clothing from the most prestigious labels.

At 8316 Oak Street sits the Maple Leaf Bar, a live music club where the Rebirth Brass Band plays every Tuesday night. Carmen talks about her experience there:

“After leaving the city due to Katrina, I returned to New Orleans in December 2005 and during my first week back, I attended a Rebirth Brass Band show at the Maple Leaf. I have lived in New Orleans my entire life, but had never seen them before. It was probably the most fun I EVER had in the city. There was something about seeing a room full of smiling faces. That night I realized how I had been taking for granted the great musicians and artists that can only be found in New Orleans and I realized the important role that music plays in boosting the city’s morale.”

Bob, another local, recognizes how music is intertwined into the city through Oak Street’s commerce and special role in the community by recalling how

“The WDSU Radio mobile studio used to occasionally park in front of a shoe store on Oak Street next to Mater Dolorosa. Every day after school I’d go pester the DJ for free records!”

The typography found on Oak Street largely consists of lettering painted on the windows of storefronts and hand-painted signs. These businesses are family owned, not chain stores, and the feel of the area is very community oriented. It is the type of area where regular customers frequent the stores and know their owners by name. The simple typography reflects the long established friendly, family oriented atmosphere of the street.

**Canal Street**

Canal Street runs from the Mississippi River on the downtown end to City Park Avenue at the Mid-City end. In the downtown section of Canal Street, there are three lanes of traffic
flowing in each direction separated by the streetcar line that runs between them on the neutral ground. There are liquor stores, gift shops, hotels, fast food restaurants, jewelry stores and chain store shopping locations like Footlocker, Payless, and Rainbow.

The street was laid out in the early 19th century. During the 1840s, D.H. Holmes moved into a location on Canal Street as other shops followed. Krauss Department store opened in 1903 (Pontchartrain). Walgreens, appreciated for its streamline style opened in September 1938.

At one point in time, Canal Street was the prestigious place to shop. Marilyn says:

“I often think about the times my mother took us shopping on Canal Street. We always had to be well dressed, complete with white gloves. Cars did not have air conditioning then so we were always concerned about looking “wilted” when we finally arrived. Lunch at Holmes Department Store Restaurant was always fun as was the shopping up and down Canal Street. The stores were always so beautifully decorated for Christmas.”

Maria also remembers going to Canal Street as a child:

“This was a special time and we would get dressed up to shop and go to the movies. We would always go to the New Woolsworth to get Italian Bread out the oven at 2:00 so we could eat it on the bus or streetcar home.”

Woolworth’s opened in 1939 and was a popular place to shop, and its soda fountain lunch counter will always be remembered by the baby boomers. What now remains of Woolworth’s is merely stains on the boarded-up building where the letters spelling out the name of the store use to hang.

At 442 Canal St stands the Sanlin Building. A 1950s aluminum façade with a huge logo on it – the S is eight stories tall. Despite its beautiful exterior, the building now holds a souvenir shop, filled with cliché New Orleans gift items.

As of 1991, the Palace Café resides in what was the Werlein Music building on Canal Street. Since the 1850’s the Werlein Company has been a New Orleans landmark. The huge
Werlein’s Music sign still rises above Canal Street on metal supports. It is interesting that the layers of history are left behind through the typography.

In addition to being a shopping district, Canal Street is home to several theatres. Bill says:

“I grew up near downtown, where on any given day I could walk over and roam up and down Canal Street and visit any number of large and small department stores or go to any of six movie theaters and blow off the afternoon for fifty cents.”

Probably the most popular theater, the Saenger Theatre, built in 1927 in the Atmospheric style, is still closed due to damage by Hurricane Katrina. The Joy Theatre at 1200 Canal Street opened in 1947 and has been closed since 2003 (cinematreasures.org). The Lowe’s State Palace Theatre and the Orpheum – built in 1918. The typography that marks these buildings is beautiful. The three-dimensional letterforms on the Saenger and the Lowe’s are lit with individual round light bulbs lining the inside of the letters.

Presently on Canal Street, one can find anything from a 1922 vintage hotel to a tattoo and piercing parlor or discount jewelry store. It is a strange mix of remains of a rich, classy history and a generic present. Therefore, the typography on Canal Street reflects this shift. Some buildings boast great typography while others convey the generic, touristy area.

**Bourbon Street**

Bourbon Street is probably the area of New Orleans most well known to tourists. This street in the runs the length of the French Quarter and is lined with bars, strip clubs, restaurants and souvenir shops. Many of the buildings on Bourbon Street date back to the 1700s. Bourbon Street is a place for excitement, loud music, intoxication and lots of people. Sean says:

“One Monday night after carousing the town, it was like 4 a.m. and we didn’t want to go home. Pat O’Brien’s and Bourbon were shutting down, so we decided to head down to Frenchman for one last chance at doing something. There were only about 20 people on the street by the time we got there at like 4:30, but there was music blaring out of one bar,
The Apple Barrel. There was a zydeco band just wailing away there for like ten people. They said they started playing at midnight, and they didn’t stop when we left well after sunup. Everyone has a million stories like this that just don’t happen other places.”

Beth claims, “I love the fact that the bars do not ever close before you’re ready to go home.”

Because the street is busiest at night, the signage that marks each establishment is laced with neon. The function of the typography found on Bourbon Street is to attract customers. Because the signs are created from neon, there are limitations on how letterforms can look. The typography is simple; most of it is made of tubular glass lighting creating single lines and outlines that make up the letterforms.

There also exists some hand painted signs on older places like Preservation Hall, a jazz establishment that opened in 1961, and the Famous Door, a bar that has been around since 1934. Another wooden painted sign on Pat O’Brien’s has been displayed since 1933.

Quite often one typeface on a sign in New Orleans is simply not enough. Many of the signs, especially on Bourbon Street, utilize two, three, even four or more fonts. The neon typography usually overlaps some other typeface printed on the wooden or plastic sign.

**Magazine Street**

“Magazine Street was named for a "magazin," a warehouse, that Spanish Governor Esteban Rodriguez Miro y Sabater (1782-1792) built to house products awaiting export, according to story.” (magazinestreet.com). The street runs parallel to St. Charles Avenue but is a bit more fun and diverse. There are several boutiques, antique shops, restaurants, coffee shops and bars each with their own character.
Erica states “I love the people, the architecture, the passion of the city, the eclectic nature of the city, the fact that you can walk down Magazine Street and do anything from furnish your house to buy a dog.”

A few popular establishments on this street include St. Joe’s Bar, at 5535 Magazine Street, is a funky hang out with a strange religious theme. At 4437 Magazine Street is Igor’s Buddha Belly where you can do your laundry while having a beer and a burger. Reginelli’s Pizzeria at 3244 Magazine Street is a great place to grab a bite to eat.

The whimsical nature of Magazine Street is taken to yet another dimension as Tanya relates her memory of her happy times at Audubon Zoo, which is located at the Uptown end of Magazine Street:

“Most afternoons were spent at Audubon Park or the zoo. My daughter, then 4, called the old oaks ‘lazy trees’ because some of the branches touch the ground and the oaks she said didn’t hold their arms up. Our favorite lazy tree is the one in Audubon Zoo next to Monkey Hill.”

The typography found on Magazine Street is a mix of fancy and trendy. A collection of several different capital letter “A’s” from various signs depict the street’s diversity. The “A” on the hand painted sign from St. Joe’s Bar has a diamond shape on its crossbar. The “A” from the Shoe Nami sign is made from pointed triangle shapes. The “A” from an antique store is written in a classic calligraphy style.

On Magazine Street, one finds lots of fancy curly swirling lettering with embellishments. Many of the signs are hand painted in decorative lettering. Many serif fonts are used on signage to make the shops appear to be high class. Lili Vintage Boutique at 4514 Magazine St. uses a pointy art nouveau style hand lettering to spell out...
“VINTAGE BOUTIQUE NEW ORLEANS” underneath curvy script lettering that spells out “Lili.” At 3955 Magazine Street there is a boutique called Fancy that specializes in “clothes that create images.” The sign boasts the name Fancy written in a curvy script with a swirly flourish underneath.

In contrast, various signs on Magazine are painted in simple straight sans-serif letters like the sign at Tee Eva’s Delicious Snowball stand and the signs for Edwards Shoe Service. This typography signifies a “mom-and-pop-shop” type of business that has probably been around for a while.

**Lower Ninth Ward**

The Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans is the neighborhood area bordered by the Industrial Canal to the west, the Southern Railway Railroad and Florida Avenue Canal to the north, Jackson Barracks to the east and St. Claude Avenue to the south. This neighborhood’s isolation from the rest of the city and lack of adequate drainage systems contributed to its slow growth. The Ninth Ward is home to musical celebrities such as Fats Domino and Kermit Ruffins.

The Ninth Ward is all about the people who grew up there. This residential area is the only home a lot of New Orleanians ever knew. Sharon states:

> “I went to high school in the Ninth Ward. Most of the buildings of our high school pre-dated the civil war, and once my friend Jean and I spent a whole week in detention for sneaking into the attic to read diaries from young girls who lived at the school with the nuns during the civil war.”

And Vera, an eighty-one year old native says:

> “Every night of our life until the storm, my family, we would all eat supper together. I did the cookin’ they did the working. Every night we’d all be together. We had a Sunday and Wednesday guest, Ms. Williams. When the boy across the street felt like it, he’d come over. It was good living to me.”
As a result of Hurricane Katrina, most of the Lower Ninth Ward has disappeared. The first levee breach during the storm was at the Industrial Canal. This flooded the area and destroyed all of the homes. Driving through this neighborhood is a shocking site. All of the street signs are gone; most of the houses are gone, and the ones that still stand are incredibly damaged.

The former residents of the area and relief workers have made hand lettered signs to mark every street corner. Some are stenciled on pieces of wood or hand lettered and some street names are spray painted onto telephone polls to direct people where to go. The people have taken action into their own hands instead of waiting on the government to fix this problem. Otherwise, relief workers and outside contractors would not know where to go.

People have spray painted house numbers onto their homes in order to identify them. There are still markings from the National Guard visible on doors and walls of houses. Large X’s and numbers remind us of the house-to-house searches that were made as soon as possible after the hurricane. Disturbing messages can also be found. One house says “HOME This was HOME.” Another fragment of a home has spray painted in red “Part of 5007 Roman.” Another says “Asking for donations to Rebuild. Please Help” and lists a phone number to call. Another home says in big red spray painted lettering: “America needs help.”

This typography stems from a feeling of desperation and immediacy. There was an urgent need for residents of the Ninth Ward to communicate with their neighbors and any other outsiders coming into the area. This allowed for the imperfection in the typography. The letterforms are crude, simple forms. However, their message is clear.

**Lakeview**

Lakeview is bounded by water on the north by Lake Ponchartrain, and water on the west by the 17th Street Canal. This is another mostly residential area of New Orleans that was badly
damaged by Hurricane Katrina. It’s western boundary was destroyed when the levee breeched at the 17th Street Canal. This enviable neighborhood is (was) a moderately wealthy residential area of New Orleans. Most houses are still standing in this area, unlike the Lower Ninth Ward, but they are heavily damaged. Will Lakeview be as enticing as it used to be? This is a big question.

In the past, Lakeview provided an area for recreation and entertainment. Jeremy shares his memory:

“We spent a lot of time at the lakefront on picnics and fishing on the seawall. I remember seeing people catching some big fish from Lake Pontchartrain right on the seawall, including small sharks. A lot of people crabbed on the seawall, pulling in hampers full of beautiful blue lake crabs. They were actually an orange color with a blue streak.”

Mike, a lifelong New Orleans resident remembers:

“Driving past the restaurants and the boat houses, you would come to a point, which actually acted as a breaker for the mariner. Young people would drive out to the point at night to park and watch the ‘submarine races’. My wife and I met in high school, so we spent quite a few evenings at the point. One evening we were parked and were just sitting in my car talking. We watched as a levee board policeman parked about a hundred feet behind us, snuck up on us, crawled next to our car, and jumped up with his flashlight. He was quite disappointed to find that there was no extracurricular activity going on.”

A popular attraction near Lakeview that closed in September 1983 was an amusement park called Pontchartrain Beach. Many people have fond memories of summertime fun with family and friends at the boardwalk. Linda says:

“I remember being scared witless at Ponchartrain Beach of that huge clown’s head, nearly wetting my pants on the Zephyr and Wild Maus, falling on my butt over and over in the funhouse and those pig and lion talking trashcans that sucked up paper—the lion never worked when I was there, but the Pig, called Porky The Paper-eater, was funny. There was also a make-your-own-record booth and my cousins Kate and Carol and I gleefully shrieked out our own version of ‘Henry the VIII’ by the then-popular Herman's Hermits.”
Hurricane Katrina wiped out much of Lakeview and the lakefront. So many waterfront seafood restaurants and boathouses were destroyed. Many New Orleanians lost their favorite recreational pastime.

Surprisingly, the typography found in Lakeview is somewhat different from what is found in the Ninth Ward. There are countless signs posted that say “For Sale By Owner.” These signs are the standard “For Sale” signs typeset with a sans-serif font (most likely a version of Helvetica) written on a red background. People write in their phone numbers with black marker. One real estate company has some signs out that attempt to be high class by using script fonts. However, there are also handmade “For Sale” signs. At one house, on a long skinny white piece of wood is written in black paint “4 RENT 2 BD 1 BA APT 810-4488.”

Although street signs in Lakeview were blown down, they have not all been replaced by the hand-lettered signs as in the Lower Ninth Ward. There are a few handmade street signs tacked up on telephone poles, but the attention to correct this problem is not as evident in Lakeview. Signs with advertisements for roofing companies are stuck in yards. Spray paint on plywood shows the address on some houses. Messages spray-painted on boats are found on the edge of some people’s yards.

The confusion of the residents (or former residents) of Lakeview is evident. Some houses have signs in the front yard that say “We’re coming home to Lakeview” while others have signs that say “For Sale” or have signs posted for demolition companies.

Of course, just like in the Ninth Ward, there are leftover spray paint markings on houses from the National Guard. “Keep Out” signs are spray painted onto some houses and standard ready-made “Keep Out” signs are posted on other houses’ doors and windows.
Without realizing it, in Lakeview people took graphic design into their own hands. In times of need, they recognized problems and solved them themselves with simple design solutions. There was such a sense of desperation in some cases that they were forced to grab a can of spray paint or a paintbrush and take care of what needed to be done immediately, right on the spot. A trained graphic designer has clearly not designed even the printed signs for demolition companies. In a “We’re Coming Home” sign posted in someone’s yard, the designer used an inch mark instead of an apostrophe. Any educated designer knows the difference between these marks. Haste was the controlling factor in design the signage found in the Lakeview area.

**St. Charles Avenue**

St. Charles Avenue is a historic street running from downtown at Canal Street through the central business district continuing on throughout the entire stretch of uptown to the Mississippi River. The Uptown section of this street is lined with beautiful old mansions and huge oak trees. This street also houses Loyola and Tulane Universities, restaurants, bars, and churches. The historic streetcar line runs along the neutral ground of St. Charles Avenue.

St. Charles Avenue’s majestic and mysterious quality is recognized by just about everyone who has ridden along the famous and unforgettable street. Amanda recalls:

“The first time I went to New Orleans and drove down St. Charles it was like I was in a snow-globe, but not the cold kind. Those houses, the way the sun hit the big old trees and fell through the big old glass windows, the grand porches – it all held a sort of enchanting, storied aura for me. I could imagine the many wild parties at night and relaxed afternoons on Sundays spent on those porches.”

During her childhood, M’Liss remembers:

“a particular home on St. Charles Avenue, that had a playhouse size replica of the family home built on the large front lawn. My mother and I would often go to Canal Street on
the bus, then transfer to a street car, which is when I would pass in front of this beautiful home with the playhouse in front of it. I always imagined the little girl who surely must live there, and hoped that on one of our trips, that I would see her coming out to play in her special house.”

Deena also states:

“I had the pleasure of living on St. Charles Avenue for a couple of years, and the most fascinating sounds always came from the streetcars. The brakes used to make a clicking sound, and the slow hum of the engine was very soothing. The streetcar became a rather intimate and familiar experience to me, as I would know many of the drivers by name, and often while walking down the street under the majestic live oaks, they would chime the streetcar bells and wave hello!! The sight of the streetcar was a gentle reminder of the past of New Orleans, and its elegant and decadent present.”

The typography found in this section of New Orleans consists mainly of house numbers and signs from a few bars, restaurants, and named homes. Because this area is mostly residential, the main typographical emphasis is on the house numbers. The numbers themselves represent the address of people’s homes, but do not really identify the people that live there. These numbers symbolize the private lives of the people that go in and out of the homes each day.

House numbers are a common item of typography found in every area of New Orleans. Numbers on houses or buildings that have no other markings on them identify the address of the place, but nothing more is revealed; this is a sign of a private place. Three or four characters do not reveal anything more than the identification of a specific location. The people who originally chose the house numbers for a home may not even be the people who live in the particular home now. The fonts used for each house number are different. Some are thin numbers; some are thick, plain, fancy, serif, sans serif. Some are made of metal and some are printed on tiles. Doors are locked. One must be invited to be admitted. Keep out signs are not needed here.
**The Warehouse District**

The Warehouse District is located in downtown New Orleans between the Mississippi River, the Crescent City Connection bridge of Interstate 10, Tchopitoulas Street, and Canal Street. This area includes the art district on Julia Street, the National D-Day Museum, the Contemporary Arts Center, bars, restaurants, and the convention center. This section was originally established in the 19th century as an industrial area to store grains, coffee, and produce shipped through the port of New Orleans. Later, this area became an urban wasteland due to changes in the trade practices.

Around 1980, this area started to be rejuvenated in preparation for the World’s Fair to be held in New Orleans in 1984. During this time, architect Leonard Salvato began converting the warehouses for residential uses (obituary, New York Times). This encouraged young artists and professionals to move to the area; in turn creating a population rise of sixty percent in the 1990’s (Pandolfi, 1).

Despite the Warehouse District’s industrial past, the area has been transformed into an arts district. Tiffany says “My favorite event is the Julia Street Party in August for the White Linen Night. Everyone eats, drinks, socializes, and discovers art through a variety of galleries.” This event happens every August on Julia Street.

At 1107 S. Peters stands the building of the Federal Fibre Mills. This warehouse was originally built in 1907 for the production of rope. Now, one hundred years have passed and the building has been converted to condominiums. The sign for the Fibre Mills on the building still remains on the exterior of the building. The letterforms are attached to the building, not painted on, and have pointed serifs on them.
The National Fruit Flavor Company was formed in 1917 in New Orleans. This company is a manufacturer of flavor concentrates, syrups and extracts for the beverage, food service, dairy, bakery and vitamin supplement industries. (nationalfruitflavor.com). This business has since moved Harahan, but the original building is located in the Warehouse District on the corner of 6th Street and Constance. The name of the company along with “Orange Squeeze,” the name of their signature product is painted on the bricks of the building in bold block letters.

Dixie Machine & Metal Works, Inc. has been in business since 1919. Unlike many of the other buildings in the Warehouse District, this company is still operating from their building on 1031 Annunciation Street. Because the buildings still have a company’s name painted on it, an outsider cannot really tell which companies are still there and which are not.

There are several other warehouse buildings that are currently being used for new uses. These huge brick buildings still stand somewhat untouched on their exterior. Most of them have hand painted lettering on their facades. The typography of the Warehouse District consists mainly of thick letters painted on brick buildings. The buildings are old and the paint is slowly peeling off giving the lettering a weathered look.

However, there are some newer signs in the area – in particular Lucy’s Retired Surfer’s Bar (a bar and restaurant) and The Foundary (a catering/reception hall). Both of these signs are new but have been made to look old and fit in with the other brick buildings. The Republic, a new nightclub that has opened in the warehouse district post-Katrina, has a sign that is hand-painted with deliberately rough-edged letters. These newer businesses allow the other buildings in the area to influence how their signage looks.
CONCLUSION

What would the world or a city be like without typography? There would be no street signs, no advertisements, no signage on buildings, no communication. Letterforms are so important in every aspect of life. They can say so much more beyond the simple meanings of the words they spell. By studying only the typography in New Orleans, one can grasp the diversity and carefree, eclectic nature of the city.

In New Orleans, historical buildings are still identified by the names and addresses of previous owners and places of business. Layers of history are documented through the typography that still exists. Signs and symbols written in spray paint mark the streets and homes of present day residents struggling to rebuild.

In Graphic Design and Typography classes and textbooks we learn so much about the classic typefaces like Helvetica, Garamond, Univers, Arial, Goudy, Baskerville, etc. Through this investigation, I have noticed that these typefaces are not the ones that usually stand out to us and are affected by in our everyday lives. The letterforms that mean something to us are more likely hand-drawn, spray-painted letterforms, or three-dimensional letterforms that express more meaning, passion and emotion and contribute to the feel of an area. Typography is not just a way of communicating; it contributes to the character of a city and at the same time is created by the character of a city.

Upon completion of this project I have built a foundation for my future endeavors in the areas of typeface design. The research and images I have collected are perfectly suited as inspiration for font development.
Through my exhibit “New Orleans: About Face”, I have provided one venue for people to share their emotional memories of New Orleans. These thoughts are shown in compliment to my interpretation of the typography of New Orleans. The exhibit is an expression of why New Orleans is so special and what it means to its people. It is a reminder for residents and outsiders to recognize the beauty that lies underneath and amidst the shock of Katrina. It is an inspiration to find beauty and meaning in the obscure places. I am presenting the past, present and hope for the future of New Orleans as it rebuilds and regenerates a new identity.
REFERENCES


“Arts District (Warehouse District).” Neworleansonline.org. 5 Feb. 2007  


Thursday, Late Edition – Final, Section D; Page 21; Column 6.


497-517 < http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0016-7428%28199510%2985%3A4%3C497%3ADD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>


“NEW ORLEANS MAPS - The Uptown Carrollton History.” 2 Feb. 2007  


APPENDIX A: GALLERY IMAGES

Canal Street
The Warehouse District
Bourbon Street
Lakeview
Magazine Street
The Ninth Ward
St. Charles Avenue
Hi everyone,

I am working on my master's thesis project, and I'm wondering if you can help me out a little bit. Please answer the following questions for me:

1. Describe a special memory you have about New Orleans. (It can be any small moment that stands out in your mind when you think about New Orleans. If you can't pick just one, share as many as you wish.)

2. What are your favorite things about New Orleans? (Are there any unique things that you love about the city? explain.)

Feel free to share anything else you want to say about New Orleans.

Also, PLEASE forward this email to anyone you know who grew up/lived in New Orleans who you think wouldn't mind helping me out (family members, friends, co-workers no matter where they are living now). It would be really great to get some different responses from people of all ages, backgrounds, etc. Just make sure they reply to me at karicesta@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your help; I greatly appreciate it!!

Kari
VITA

Kari Rose Cesta was born in Metairie, Louisiana, on July 18, 1981. She grew up in Destrehan, a small suburb of New Orleans. Her interest in graphic design must have stemmed from elementary school where she learned to use Macintosh computers and Logo programming language. Throughout middle and high school she loved taking art classes. Kari graduated from Loyola University New Orleans in May of 2003 with a bachelors of arts degree in studio art with an emphasis in graphic design. She has gained so much knowledge through her International travels especially through the University of New Orleans summer study abroad program in Innsbruck, Austria. The following semester after graduating from Loyola, Kari began attending Louisiana State University. She plans to graduate with a Masters of Fine Arts in studio art with a concentration in graphic design in August of 2007 when she will begin a new phase in her career.