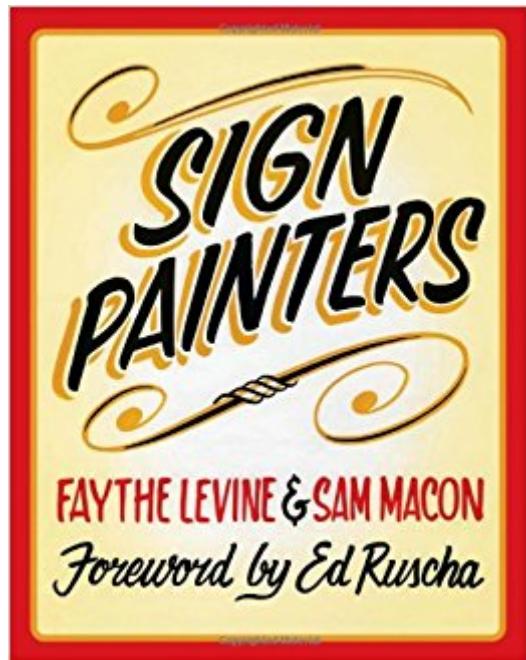


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# Sign Painters



## Synopsis

There was a time-as recently as the 1980s-when storefronts, murals, banners, barn signs, billboards, and even street signs were all hand-lettered with brush and paint. But, like many skilled trades, the sign industry has been overrun by the techno-fueled promise of quicker and cheaper. The resulting proliferation of computer-designed, die-cut vinyl lettering and inkjet printers has ushered a creeping sameness into our visual landscape. Fortunately, there is a growing trend to seek out traditional sign painters and a renaissance in the trade. In 2010 filmmakers Faythe Levine, coauthor of *Handmade Nation*, and Sam Macon began documenting these dedicated practitioners, their time-honored methods, and their appreciation for quality and craftsmanship. *Sign Painters*, the first anecdotal history of the craft, features stories and photographs of more than two dozen sign painters working in cities throughout the United States.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A lovely paean to a vanishing art... Ms. Levine and Mr. Macon have hopscotched the country, interviewing many of the best remaining old-school sign painters and printing their best work... This book, with an introduction by the artist Ed Ruscha, is a funky and necessary work of preservation."

-- New York Times "With hand-painted signs rapidly going the way of the film camera, documentarians Levine and Macon offer a welcome look at some of the remaining artists and their work, which adorns storefronts, walls and billboards. New Yorker Stephen Powers began as a graffiti artist; Las Vegas painters Mark and Rosie Oatis met in sign school; Ernie Gosnell, in Seattle,

learned the trade as a teen from a sign-painting lady wrestler who "tattooed a little bit on the side." It's a toss-up as to what's better - these characters or their art." -- New York Post "This is not only a wonderful book, a delight to take in, rich and telling in its details and a visual pleasure with its gorgeous photography. It's an important book that captures a largely untold story." -- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel "Sign Painters is a great source of inspiration about this often-overlooked industry, and a good reminder to pay a little extra attention while out in the city, on the highway, or wherever. Beautiful hand-painted signs are everywhere." -- Smithsonian.com "Full of stunning full-color shots of finished signs and works-in-progress of folks from San Francisco and Iowa City to Mazeppa and Boston. Even artist Ed Ruscha gets in on the action." -- Fast Company "Every now and again, a book comes my way on a topic that is utterly and completely unexpected. Faythe Levine and Sam Macon's Sign Painters is the sort of artistic celebration that should be commonplace on the shelves. This is graphic design at its best; these signs command attention, enliven the landscape, and bring customers in... good stuff, and damned inspiring." -- Bookslut "As lovingly hand made as the signs it celebrates... What comes across clearly is the respect for good work, letter by letter, that helps their clients' businesses succeed. This book captures the renaissance of the sign painter." --- Juxtapoz "Artist Clark Byers may not be a household name, but if you've lived or traveled in the southeast U.S., you're probably familiar with his work. Byers, whose death in 2004 was commemorated with an obituary in the New York Times, painted the advertising slogan, "See Rock City," on the roofs of more than 900 barns from the late 1930s until the 1960s. Byers' and other artists' signs inspired filmmakers Sam Macon and Faythe Levine's great new book, Sign Painters, an homage to the craft and its craftsmen (and a great gift for the Americana-lover on your holiday shopping list)." -- Reader's Digest

Since graduating from High School Faythe Levine hasn't stopped working on project after project. Her interest in outsider communities, artists and the stories and people whom often get overlooked have propelled her to travel extensively. The constant in Faythe's 20 years of creative work is her dedication to documenting her day to day life and travels through photographs and correspondence (once handwritten letters, now more commonly through social networking sites). This dedication has allowed her creative community to have an international reach full of a variety of both famous and infamous people of all types. Sam Macon is a filmmaker. He directs television commercials, music videos, short form documentaries and Web based video content through production company Radar Studios. He also helms commercial projects in Paris through Cosa Productions and in Moscow with Bazaleves Films. He is currently working on the feature length documentary Sign Painters. In

addition to directing, Sam has taught video production at the Chicago Portfolio School and has been a guest lecturer at DePaul University and Syracuse University.

Love, love, love this book. My entire life I have been fascinated with hand lettered/painted signs (calligraphy, sign painting, pinstriping, etc.) The more I got into graphic design, illustration, photography the more I appreciated this art form and how it is slowing going the way of the dinosaur. These artists created some amazing designs with minimal tools in their kits. No computers or fonts just their years of experience and loads of creativity. It is always nice to see an old building with some hand painted signage on the bricks outside. The book does a wonderful job of showing examples of their work along with a few stories along the way. One thing I would have liked to have seen however is more acknowledgement and interviews with some of the veterans of the craft (think Mike Stevens)

Very Insightful. If you ever wanted to paint signs or had an interest in Typography, it is a calling. Nobody really plans on it, its something you are just drawn to. I enjoyed reading about how the different painters they interviewed got involved in sign painting. So theres some stories and a lot of cool pics. As far as books on this subject go, i thought this one felt authentic and its a cross section of people and their passion for sign painting, and lettering. Its a dying art and its cool to see there are people out there trying to keep it alive and part of true Americana culture.

A documentary look at some of America's most talented, and unpretentious, typographers. A quick, well-illustrated read with a foreword by famous artist and sign-painter, Ed Ruscha.

This book is an incredible "blast from the past" for us experienced old school sign painters. The book posits the notion sign painting is enjoying a renaissance after nearly three decades of computer driven cookie cutter signs being made by people without traditional design skills or talents. I'm slowly seeing this happening in my market area and couldn't be more happy. Excellent read with very high quality images.

I bought this for a family member who is one of the last true sign painters. He and the craftsmen in this book create some of the most gorgeous sign work out there-- refreshing when almost all you see nowadays are vinyl letters slapped on a sign. A very interesting read with great pictures and interviews. Not just commentary on current practices, but some explanation of why there are so few

real sign painters left. Even if you aren't in the trade of sign painting or lettering, it is a good look into a unique trade that I hope never goes extinct.

This book will make you want to drop everything and just go paint signs for the rest of your life.

So glad someone wrote a book about the art of sign-painting. The book is well-designed and has lots of photos to accompany the bios of the sign-painters. The sign-painting biz tends to be pretty well dominated by men so it was nice to see a couple of women sign-painters featured as well. Thanks Faythe and Sam for making this book. I would recommend it to anyone who has an interest in hand-painting signs. There are also some great design tips in the appendix that I think would be beneficial to anyone interested in graphic design.

I had done some research in sign painting in my design courses in school. Time and time again, this book was recommended to quench my interest in the art form. The seller was super friendly and helpful, and the package came in excellent condition. Now I work with a girl whose husband is a professional sign painter; I am passing this book on as a gift now that I have finished it. I highly recommend this book! A very interesting read indeed.

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