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September 20, 2007 11:00PM

Art has opened many doors for local man

THAD ANGELLOZ

Staff Writer

You may not know his name, but you've seen examples of his art everywhere.

It can be found on West Tunnel Boulevard, La. 311 and West Park Avenue.

His art takes the form of signs outside Creole Lanes, Waterland Louisiana and Clearwater Pools, Spas & Billiards among others.

Many would think owners of these businesses looked outside the state to find someone to create their logos.

Those same people would be surprised to discover that local artist Guy Fanguy sketched the original designs for those signs years ago.

After graduating in 1975 from H. L. Bourgeois, Fanguy, who



Guy Fanguy looks over some of his artwork that he has done over the years in his Houma home Tuesday. (EMILY SCHWARZE/STAFF)

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currently works as the information technology director for the City of Thibodaux, continued his passion for art at Nicholls State University where he majored in art.

After asking his instructors what people did with their degrees, their response shocked him.

“They told me they (art majors) became teachers,” Fanguy said. “I knew right then and there that I needed to switch majors. I switched to computer sciences. I didn’t have anything against teaching, but I just wanted to do something else.”

In the meantime, Fanguy decided to see how he could market his artistic talent.

He dropped out of school and began visiting local businesses.

One thing lead to another and soon Fanguy found himself designing logos for area businesses.

“I didn’t make a killing, but it helped me get by,” he said.

Fanguy also aligned himself with Star Printing Co. in Houma where he helped design business cards.

Fanguy admitted that the field was different 20-plus years ago. He explained that designing projects was time-consuming with no clip art and other technologies around. ‘AN ARTISTS’ ARTIST’

After taking a break from the college life, Fanguy returned to Nicholls at night to study computer science and later graduated in 1985, after teaming up with his cousin, Marshall Canafax in the early ’80s.

Canafax was an airbrush artist.

The two opened a store and were thrust into the life of a starving artist.

“It’s a tough way to make it,” Fanguy said. “We just couldn’t keep it going anymore.”

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Fanguy eventually gave up on being a full-time artist in the late '80s, but Canafax has gone on to have a successful career doing custom airbrush designs on Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

"I think the stress of trying to make a living in art got to me," Fanguy said. "One day I found out I had blown out a disk in my neck which required me to have surgery. Now, I just do it as a hobby and find it much more enjoyable."

Canafax remembers how talented Fanguy was.

"He's an artists' artist," Canafax said. "When it comes to people like Guy and me, our boundaries are limitless. He does a little bit of everything, and I've always admired and looked up to him. If he would have traveled outside the area I have no doubt he'd be a nationally known artist right now."**INTEREST FORMS**

When Fanguy was growing up, he enjoyed art, but didn't foresee what the future would bring him.

The Houma native spent time taking art and music lessons while his friends were out riding bikes.

While attending H.L. Bourgeois in the mid-'70s, he enrolled in art classes where he sharpened his skills.

Fanguy even won an art contest and received an offer from someone to buy his drawing.

"Someone told me that I shouldn't sell it," Fanguy said. "They told me that once I sold it I would be considered a professional and wouldn't be able to enter anything in an amateur contest."

Fanguy said he owes his passion for art to where he lives.

While growing up on the outskirts of Houma, he had the chance to view nature on a daily basis.

He remembers the swamps, the Spanish moss hanging from oak trees and the alligators he would see from time to time.

All of those images helped him learn to appreciate where he lived.

"You can't find what we got anywhere else," Fanguy said. "I believe that's what drove me to want to be an artist."**A NEW HOBBY**

Along the way, Fanguy found himself getting interested in other art-related projects such as film and photography.

As a young man he would take a small, movie camera and direct short Cajun films that involved swamp creatures.

Many of his films can now be viewed on YouTube.com.

Accessing them is easy. All someone needs to do is type in the word Cajun.

“I was always one of those kids who wanted to learn about what made different gadgets tick,” Fanguy said. “I remember when computers first came out, I took one apart and put it back together again.” **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS**

Fanguy will never tell someone he’s never gotten any breaks to go his way.

After befriending current president and owner of Houma’s HTV, Martin Folsé, he received an opportunity to draw the movie poster for the 1983 film, “Terror in the Swamp.”

“I can always say I did a movie poster,” Fanguy said with a laugh. “Martin’s a good guy, but the budget for that film was really small. I really didn’t get paid. What I did get was my name put in the list of credits.”

Fanguy also got involved in designing wooden postcards for a man in Florida.

Fanguy eventually tapped into the professional music side of things thanks to a strange meeting with a psychologist in Lafayette.

After a frustrating stay in a hotel, Fanguy headed to the lobby during a break at a conference he was attending.

He spotted a piano and began playing a few notes.

“It was a way for me to relax,” Fanguy said. “I actually was making people fall asleep. Out of nowhere a man approached me and asked me the strangest question.”

The man wanted to see if he could hire Fanguy to perform for him.

“At first I didn’t know what to say,” Fanguy said. “It seemed strange, but when he started explaining what he was doing I said ‘why not.’ ”

He was interested in getting him to play background music for a CD he was creating for his office complex.

“I got in touch with him and did a recording of me playing the piano,” Fanguy said. “I charged him \$100 and he paid me. Later, I went to check out his Web site, and I could

have probably asked for \$100,000.”

Through art, Fanguy has been able to meet many people. He said the most-interesting thing that’s happened was when someone asked him to draw a sketch on a tombstone.

“I never really would have thought that this would be so popular,” Fanguy said. “It’s amazing, but I probably get more business from this than anything else.”

FUTURE PLANS

Fanguy said he has no plans of going any further with his art.

“I’m content with getting in my boat and heading to the camp I have behind my house,” he said. “I enjoy just going out there and taking a pencil and pad and sketching things.”

Although he has a Web site (www.guyfanguy.com) and items for sale at LA Cajun Stuff in Southland Mall, Fanguy doesn’t want to become a full-time artist again.

“I guess you always hope for that big break, but I don’t really look for that anymore,” he said.

Fanguy said he looks up to his wife and believes hers is a classic case of why making it as an artist is challenging.

“My wife is so gifted with her singing that should be nationally known,” Fanguy said. “Unfortunately it is a matter of getting the right breaks at the right time in life. She hasn’t gotten her break yet, but I still hope she gets her shot to be in the spotlight because I think she deserves it more than me.”

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