



Signs of Our Times

John Margolies, Emily Margolin Gwathmey

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This is an illustrated, survey of the best in America outdoor signs, ranging from the 1920s to the 1960s. Signage is now widely recognized as an important category in the history of American graphic arts. Vintage signs of any kind are exceedingly rare in today's marketplace and command increasingly high prices. In addition to attracting a large body of scholars and collectors, signs are also avidly snapped up by decorators, who have used them for their bold graphic presence in interior decoration ranging from trendy bars and restaurants to yuppie kitchens and studies. Some well-known signs have early origins like the pawnbroker's three golden balls, the cigar store's wooden Indian, and the barber's striped pole, but in signage history the greatest design ingenuity came with the introduction and proliferation of the motor car: Burma-Shave ditties, Chew Mail Pouch barns, See Rock City birdhouses, and Wall Drug mileage markers, to name but a few outstanding examples. This book concentrates on what has been visible through the windscreen: All-American commercial icons organized into categories such as Transportation, Main Street, Food and Drink, Roadside Attractions, and Motels. A special feature of this volume is its coverage of unusual roadside structures that in themselves have functioned as signs, disguised as huge ducks, elephants, hot dogs, teapots, beer barrels, Southern mummies, and gigantic fish, among other things.

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