

Robert “Dr. Bob” Shaffer

Over 15 years, Dr. Bob has taken a simple sentiment - "Be Nice or Leave" - and the lowly beer bottle cap and transformed the two uniquely representative symbols of Crescent City culture into a heretofore unseen art world sensation, from the hipper-than-thou streets of New Orleans' Bywater neighborhood to the hallowed walls of the Smithsonian Institution.

Shaffer employs oil, spray paints, house paint, stencils, \$5-tablecloths, chicken wire, cypress, architectural salvage, driftwood and even lace in his distinctly colorful and irreverent work. He is a master carver and sculptor. Subjects and themes include alligators, juke joints, landscapes, Catahoula dogs and Creole cottages. Signage, however, is Shaffer's bread-and-butter.



Collectors include Mariah Carey, Aerosmith, Chef Susan Spicer and the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, N.M.

“My art impacts a community. Tourists never delve into neighborhoods. I’m interjecting the places other people from a different side of the tracks don’t normally venture in to,” Shaffer says. “My goal is to re-adjust their mindset and re-imagine the environment.”

Shaffer earned the moniker "Dr. Bob" 32 years ago from a nurse, after assisting in the emergency C-section birth of his son Isaac, now himself a father.

Dr. Bob's latest obsession is incorporating antique signage - think Barq's Root Beer and Regal Beer, among others - and local advertisements into new art and assemblages. “I know what I’m doing,” says the artist, who sometimes jokes that he can put excrement on a board and it sells.

“He doesn't miss a beat. You’ve gotta admire a guy who takes bottle caps and turns it into a minor empire,” says John McDonald, an artist and adjunct professor of art appreciation at Gulf Coast Community College in Gulfport, MS.

“Bob offers up a catalog of ideas. His artwork is a high-illustration form of something almost photographic or journalistic. He is not lost in a petty expression.”

After 30 years of proffering “Outsider” - or folk - art from his Ninth Ward warehouse- studio; The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival; and other regional and national festivals, Shaffer says he absolutely considers himself a success.

“I’ve worked hard and taken lots of abuse. I was censored by *Smithsonian Magazine*,” Shaffer says. “That’s a pretty good achievement, knowing that your country accepts you.”