Restoration Of A Unique Urban Esthetic While Avoiding The "Boutique City Conundrum": The Case Of New Orleans

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Summary

Since Hurricane Katrina wrought devastation on the city of New Orleans in 2005, the city has seen a renaissance with the return of many of those who fled the storm, as well as an inward migration of young professionals and entrepreneurs who believe there is opportunity for an attractive future in the region in which they can participate. The city exercises a fascination upon many, in large part due to a Latin-French esthetic accompanied by an artistically creative impulse of African influence. In the following pages, we would like to explore in more detail what has happened in the city since the destruction of 2005, and some of the challenges New Orleans faces, while recognizing its resurrection is in large part due to its beauty as a subtropical, almost Caribbean, port city which is a crucible of distinct cultures, yielding a very appealing mix as expressed through music, literature, architecture and food. And this blend is attracting entrepreneurs, artists and artisans of all types. Without these cultural attributes, it is unlikely that New Orleans would have come back in its present form. On the contrary, it would likely have been reduced to a mere touristic museum of a once existent Creole Culture, a sort of "touristic boutique".

Introduction

The city of New Orleans is located on a low lying area between the lower Mississippi River and a quite sizable lake, Pontchartrain (1600 square kilometers), 182 kilometers from the mouth of the river at the Gulf of Mexico. The commonly used term "Crescent City" (which can be seen on the map below) refers to the long bend made by the Mississippi River as it passes around the south and west of the city. Briefly, New Orleans was founded by the French colonizer Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, in 1718. In 1763, following Britain's victory in the Seven Years' War, the French colony west of the Mississippi River—plus New Orleans—was ceded to Spain. In 1800 Spain and France signed the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso stipulating that Spain gives Louisiana back to France. And by April 1803, Napoleon, with diminished interest in the colony and preferring to concentrate his attention on European affairs, sold Louisiana (a part of New France, which then included portions of more than a dozen present-day states) to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase.

During the French colonial times, a tripartite culture formed, consisting of Latin Creoles (descendants of earlier French or Spanish settlers),

Anglo-Saxons who migrated west from the American South, and Blacks, both slaves and free, many whom were descendants of Haitian slaves who arrived following the 1791 slave revolt in Saint Domingue. Members of these three cultural groups generally lived in their own sectors and Canal Street, which divided the old city from the expanding suburbs, became known as "the neutral ground" - the name still used when referring to the median strip along main streets in New Orleans. Creoles lived in the Old City, what is now known as the French Quarter (or Vieux Carré) east of Canal Street, Anglos west of Canal Street and free Blacks north of the limits of the French Quarter above Rampart Street. During the 18th century a very rich subtropical culture created by the mixture of the three groups emerged, including the birth of jazz, Creole cuisine and an architectural housing esthetic influenced by France, Spain and the West Indies, featuring the emblematic shotgun style house, which will be explained further on. The Catholic, Latin ambience of the Creole quarter also attracted southern European, Caribbean, and Latin American immigrants in greater proportions than did the Anglo sector. For most of the years between 1837 and the Civil War, only New York among all American cities attracted more immigrants (Campanella 2007).

Figure 1: View above map (Mappery 2016) at: http://www.mappery.com/map-of/New-Orleans-Neighborhood-Map; viewed August 11, 2016.

To say that the region is surrounded by water is an understatement, as only an extensive network of dikes and levees protect the city from being flooded in the event of a storm. In fact, the central plaza of the city, Jackson Square in the French Quarter, only 1.5 meters above sea level, is below the water level of the river, hence the need for levees which average approximately 3 meters in height. Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans on the morning of August 29, 2005 and when the levees protecting metro New Orleans failed, a true catastrophe ensued. More than 1,000 people died, more than a million were displaced, and total damage to the region was estimated at $150 billion (Data Center 2015a). The long term future viability of this iconic American city was placed in doubt. And some even wondered if the city would be abandoned, leaving only a tiny portion around the historic French Quarter in place as some sort of Disneyesque Mardi Gras theme park island reminiscent of a city that once was great, but had become unsustainable and collapsed due to a natural disaster—a 21st century Pompeii or Babylon. Fortunately, at this juncture some eleven years later, the future does not appear to be so dire, in fact it appears, while admittedly fragile, as showing great promise.

Ahead we will discuss the urbanization trends in New Orleans after Katrina, how it avoided for the time being complete destruction, how it has come back perhaps better than before and its efforts to remain an economically and culturally vital, viable city. A "viable city" refers to the avoidance of an unfortunate destiny of becoming a mere short term tourist destination or "museum city" in the fashion of an upscale boutique or a kitschy site where conventioneers eat, drink and view Bourbon Street's fleshly attractions with little else to recommend it. Those of us who love New Orleans wish it to always be much more than that, and all things considered, it seems that the city has indeed avoided such a dismal fate, becoming better than it was prior to Katrina. This story shows that while natural disasters caused untold suffering and human misery, if a locale has sufficient attractiveness and esthetic appeal, it can survive and come back quickly even with advances in addressing long term unresolved problems which affect the area.

New Orleans Before Hurricane Katrina

At the beginning of the 21st century, New Orleans was the 31st largest city in the country (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The population of Orleans Parish in 2005 was 454,863, accounting for about one-third of the total population of 1,338,000 in the metropolitan

Figure 2: View above map (48ovvi.org) at: http://www.48ovvi.org/neworleansinset.jpg; viewed August 16, 2016.

area (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). According to 2004 census estimates, the majority (69%) of the population in New Orleans was black. Whites accounted for 28% of the city's population and Asians 2% (Sastry 2009).

The city had been losing population since 1960 in large part because new technologies meant that commercial trade no longer needed access to its port, and with containerization the port employed fewer workers (Glaeser 2011), and also the migration of much of the petroleum industry to Houston. The population decreased by 18% (109,000 residents) between 1970 and 2000 (Brookings Institution 2005) and fell by a further 6% (30,000 residents) from 2000 to 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). Declining population in New Orleans meant that many people probably had been considering leaving the city and, after being forced to evacuate, decided not to return, accelerating demographic shifts of depopulation that were already under way (Solecki 1999).

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans experienced high rates of poverty, which, as elsewhere,

were associated with crime, inadequate provision of basic services such as health care and education, substandard housing, and lack of opportunity. Around 23% of New Orleans residents lived below the poverty line in 2004, ten percentage points higher than the national average; and the median family income was only two-thirds of the national average (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). Blacks in New Orleans had a poverty rate of 35%, which was the highest among large cities in the country (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) and almost all of the extreme-poverty neighborhoods in New Orleans were predominantly black by the time of Hurricane Katrina. Rates of college education for blacks in the city were only about one-fourth of those for whites; and only two-thirds of black adults had at least a high school degree compared to 89% of whites. The city's unemployment rate in 2004 was nearly 12%—twice the national rate (U.S. Census Bureau 2005). In addition, the New Orleans public school system was among the worst in the country (Hill and Hannaway 2006). Finally, black and low-income families in New Orleans had far lower rates of homeownership than

whites and higher-income families. Only 41% of blacks in New Orleans owned their homes, compared to 56% of white households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In short there were many marks of a somewhat dysfunctional city.

The aftermath

The magnitude of the population displacement that resulted was immense: the city's entire population of 455,000 was forced to evacuate the city and resettle, which some did temporarily and others permanently. Several weeks after Hurricane Katrina, the levee breaches were closed and the floodwaters were drained from the city, and by the end of September 2005 former residents were allowed to begin returning the city. Initially, only residents of areas that were not flooded were allowed back. However, as water was pumped out of the flooded areas and basic services and infrastructure were restored, residents from more of the affected areas were allowed to return. Still, the depth of the floodwaters and the duration of flooding meant that most housing in areas flooded with water depths of 0.6 meters or more was substantially damaged and, for the most part, was not habitable (McCarthy et al. 2006). Many residents who had fled and expected to return shortly were displaced for substantial periods.

The first reliable post-Katrina estimate of the New Orleans population was based on the American Community Survey and placed the city's January 1, 2006 population at 158,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006)—about one-third of the pre-Katrina population. By mid-2006, the population of New Orleans was estimated to have reached 223,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2007), about half of its previous size. Latest US census estimates as of 2015 reveal that the city's population has grown to 389,617, a healthy 13.3% increase over the equivalent figure for 2010 and about 85% of the immediate pre-Katrina figure (US Census Bureau 2016). The composition of returned residents is somewhat different from the pre-Katrina population, influenced by factors such as job opportunities and the availability of public services that have distinct effects on different groups. At first, few families with children returned to New Orleans—at the end of the 2005–06 school year, less than 5,000 children were enrolled in the city's public schools, compared to about 66,000 when Katrina struck (Pane et al. 2006).

The present socio-economic situation

Ten years later, in 2015, a new picture of the city and surrounding area had emerged, much of it quite positive, yet still revealing many areas for improvement. An exhaustive 2015 study by the New Orleans Data Center in conjunction with the Brookings Institution (Data Center 2015) identified economic and social developments in the region over the previous tumultuous decade, which help us understand what has happened in the city and how it has come back, even becoming a stronger and more vital place in many ways. A few selected key points are summarized here:

- From 2008 to 2010 (during a national recession due to the financial crisis), metropolitan New Orleans lost only 1 % of jobs compared to 5% nationwide. By 2014, metro New Orleans had recouped these losses and reached 5 percent above its 2008 level, while the nation was only 1 percent above its 2008 level.

- The metro New Orleans entrepreneurship rate—471 startups per 100,000 adults from 2011-13—is 64% larger than the national average.

- Venture capital funding, critical to entrepreneurship, innovation and development of economic clusters, has doubled in metro New Orleans from $16 per capita in 2010 to $32 per capita in 2014. This is a great improvement, but it still pales in comparison to the fastest growing entrepreneurial centers such as Austin, Texas, where the equivalent figure has consistently exceeded $100 per capita since 2006.

- In metro New Orleans in 2013, 27 percent of adults had at least a four year post-secondary degree, compared to 30 percent nationwide, a lag which impedes long term economic growth.

- The share of the city's 2014 population that is African American (while lower than in 2000 when it was 66.7 percent) continues to represent the majority of city residents at 58.8 percent. The share of Hispanics in the city increased from 3.1 percent in 2000 to 5.5 percent in 2014; the share of Asians increased from 2.3 percent to 3.0 percent; and the share of whites increased from 26.6 percent to 31.2 percent.

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 population estimates, there are now 97,385 fewer African Americans living in New Orleans (Orleans Parish) compared to 2000, but there are also 9,006 fewer whites. Meanwhile, the number of Hispanics grew by 6,474.

- The median income for white households in metro New Orleans is on par with white households nationwide, but the median income for black households in the region was 54% lower than for metro area whites and 20% below that of black households nationally. Average annual wages across metro New Orleans were approximately 96% of the nationwide figure.

- Following Katrina and the resulting collapse of the public school system in the city, the majority of the public schools were transferred to publicly funded teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with a local or national authority, independent of the previously ineffective and dysfunctional city school board. In 2014, 88% of New Orleans public school students were enrolled in a school that met state standards, as opposed to 30% prior to Katrina. In 2006, the high school four year graduation rate in the city was a pathetic 57% but by 2014 had climbed to 73%.

- Perhaps the most serious problem facing the city is the disappearance of coastal wetlands and associated rising water levels. Between 1932 and 2010, the New Orleans region lost 948 square miles of coastal wetlands—in large part because the network of levees impedes sediment from washing down the river and replenishing the delta—or a loss of nearly 30% of the wetlands that protect the city from hurricane storm surges. Louisiana is the only state that has a master plan for stemming the loss of coastal wetlands, with plans to invest $50 billion in wetland restoration with new and emerging technologies. If this situation is not managed appropriately, most likely the city will be an island separated from the mainland by the beginning of the next century, in the mode of Venice. However, Louisiana is set to receive $6.8 billion in reparations due to the 2010 BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill. This includes $5 billion to be spent repairing the disaster's toll on natural resources, money that will largely be destined for coastal restoration and repairing wetlands and damaged wildlife habitats (The Advocate, July 1, 2015).

Urbanist Thought

The field of contemporary urbanist thinking owes much to the ideas of Jane Jacobs expressed in her 1961 book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities". Jacobs argued against what she viewed as the scourge of modernist urban planning and its utilitarian attempts to impose order and efficiency, inherent in the city planning of that era as exemplified by massive public housing projects in American cities or European industrial suburbs. She vented her most severe criticism on the "rationalist" planners (Le Corbusier and Robert Moses, among others) of the 1950s and 1960s. Jacobs argued that modernist urban planning rejects the city, because it rejects human beings living in a community characterized by layered complexity and seeming chaos.

Jacobs also noted four "generators of diversity" which create an effective urban milieu: mixed primary uses, short blocks for pedestrian convenience, buildings of various ages and states of repair, and density. Furthermore, she proposed four pillars of effective city neighborhoods: lively and interesting streets, the fabric of the streets as continuous a network as possible throughout a particular identifiable district, the use of parks, squares, and public buildings integrating rather than segregating different uses, and the creation of district (sub-city) identity. Jacobs says "A successful city neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighborhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more hapless before them."

It seems safe to say that the ideas of Jane Jacobs have weathered the leveling winds of time better than that of the rationalist planners with their grand and futuristic visions. Indeed many of these so-called visionary works of an earlier era have been undone in recent decades (for example, the Taylor Homes public housing project in Chicago or Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis) due to their unworkability and general ugliness, and in many other locales majority opinion wishes some of these grand projects could be done away with (witness the West Side Highway in Manhattan, or the elevated Interstate Highway 10 in New Orleans which has been terribly destructive to the pre-existing commercial districts which it bisected).

In other words, these modernist and utilitarian ideas so avant-garde a half century ago have not aged so well. As the English philosopher of esthetics, Roger Scruton (2009), said "if you consider only utility, the things you build will soon become useless." In other words, utility without an esthetic appeal, the essence of much modern, rationalist architecture, over time loses

its utility because of its lack of beauty, its ugliness. People do not wish to be around it and hence it is abandoned as an unsightly and dysfunctional white elephant.

Urbanism in post-Katrina New Orleans

After Katrina, the New Orleans region began to reverse a demographic decline that had long seen young, educated people and families depart for other locales to seek out a better life. The concentration of 25 to 35 year olds has increased far more quickly in the region than it has in the nation as a whole, and since 2007, the New Orleans region has experienced the fastest growth in educated population in the nation (Kotkin 2013).

The Tulane University urban geographer and student of New Orleans Richard Campanella (2013) notes that there were two distinct waves of post Katrina migration to the city, commenting "Everything changed after August-September 2005, when the Hurricane Katrina deluge, amid all the tragedy, unexpectedly positioned New Orleans as a cause célèbre for a generation of idealistic millennials." First, a few thousand urbanists, environmentalists, and social workers relocated to New Orleans seeking meaningful altruistic opportunities to serve and restore a beloved and unique American city.

Many among this element landed positions in planning and recovery efforts, but Campanella observes quite a number had moved on to other locales by 2009 as the initial recovery stage and related funding wound down. "Then a second wave began, enticed by the relatively robust regional economy compared to the rest of the nation which was suffering the severe 2008 recession. These newcomers were greater in number estimated at around 15,000-20,000 and continuing, more specially skilled, and serious about planting domestic and economic roots." This group included new-media entrepreneurs; teachers in the newly launched charter school network, or those in the creative niches of the growing film industry and other cultural activities, including many artists, musicians, writers, construction restoration specialists who appreciated the bohemian esthetic of this Southern river city. Campanella (2013) comments, "It is primarily these second-wave transplants who have accelerated gentrification patterns." Furthermore, this migration is encouraged by the low cost of living in New Orleans providing an attractive alternative to other expensive creative type cities on the East and West coasts.

A certain esthetic

It is evident that a certain esthetic in the culture of New Orleans has aided and even made possible its renaissance after the 2005 hurricane. Many people both locals and those from outside have looked upon the city and determined it is a place worth saving, with some even resettling there and breathing a new life into the place. At this point, we might consider exactly what characterizes this esthetic we are talking about.

- Music: The city is universally regarded as the birthplace of jazz, as well as the related phenomenon of the brass band which performs in parades and funeral marches throughout the city. There is the local tradition of the "second line" in brass band parades in New Orleans (the "main line" or "first line" is the main section of the parade, or the members of the actual club with the parading permit as well as the brass band, while those who follow the band just to enjoy the music are called the "second line"). Much of this music has its roots in Congo Square, an open plaza beside the French Quarter where black slaves congregated to play music and dance on Sunday afternoons from the 18th century. There is even enough local music here to provide for a public radio station (WWOZ FM) that devotes nearly full time to music originating in New Orleans and surrounding areas. And this musical history attracts many aspiring musicians.

- Literature: New Orleans is associated with many writers, the most famous of which is undoubtedly Tennessee Williams, who captured the soul of the city and remains a brilliant figure of the Southern Gothic literary genre, which explores unresolved tragedy in the lives of its protagonists. The most famous character created by this author is Blanche DuBois, the longsuffering and tragic principal of *Streetcar Named Desire*, who was driven in desperation to sigh to the doctor in charge of escorting her to a psychiatric hospital: "Whoever you are, I have often depended on the kindness of strangers." (Williams 1947) More recent writers associated with the city include Anne Rice and John Kennedy Toole, among hundreds of others. The literature associated with New Orleans often tends to be replete with a subtropical

languor of heat, humidity and lush foliage, accompanied by a substantial dose of bizarre larger than life characters experiencing unfortunate calamities and the inevitability of unresolved complexities in life set amidst a highly dramatic background. It is definitely not in the least a literary canon characterized by a bright and sunny view concluded with "…and they lived happily ever after." Far from it; who can forget Stanley Kowalski calling for "Stella!" as he anxiously looked up to the balcony of his decaying New Orleans tenement? And the literary history of New Orleans indeed attracts many aspiring writers.

• Food: The food of this city is heavily influenced by proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and the heritage of African, French and other Mediterranean cooks. Examples include: the signature dish *jambalaya*, a dish of rice and meat (often a combination of andouille sausage, chicken, and shrimp) cooked with vegetables and Creole spices; *gumbo*, a stew of meat and/or shellfish, with celery, bell peppers, onions, and a stock usually made with okra; *étouffée* –shellfish such as crawfish, shrimp or crabs cooked using a technique called smothering, with a roux sauce, Cajun spices, and other ingredients, and served with rice; the *muffaletta sandwich* on round Italian bread with sesame seeds, olive tapenade on the bread and filled with various meats and cheeses such as ham, capicola, salami, mortadella, mozzarella, and provolone; a *po-boy sandwich* of fried seafood such as shrimp, oysters, or catfish or the more traditional roast beef with brown gravy; and the simple tradition of eating *red beans and rice* for supper on Monday evening. The options are too numerous to mention and far beyond the scope of this commentary, but let it suffice to say that the heritage of New Orleans food indeed attracts many aspiring culinary artists.

• Architecture: The unique architecture of New Orleans is also rooted in African, French, Spanish and English construction. It ranges from the classic *Creole cottage* to the *shotgun* house to the grand mansions of St. Charles Avenue and the Garden District. The Creole cottage is characterized by a steeply-pitched roof, with a symmetrical four-opening façade wall and a wood or stucco exterior; the *shotgun house* is long and narrow with front and rear door, and is usually a one-story, narrow rectangular structure raised on brick piers. Most have a narrow porch covered by a roof apron that is supported by columns and brackets, which are often ornamented with lacy Victorian motifs such as corbels. Sometimes a shotgun house will have a partial second floor thus called a *camelback or humpback shotgun*. The origin of the word shotgun house derives possibly from the fact that it was said you could shoot a shotgun in through the front door and the shell would pass through the house and go out the back door; other architectural historians have said the term actually comes from the West African word *shogon*, meaning "God's house." Research indicates that this architectural style came to New Orleans from West Africa via Haiti (Data Center 2016). The residential neighborhoods of the city are set in an atmosphere of large and mature trees which often form canopies over the street, basic to what we have mentioned before: a milieu of dense and verdant subtropical foliage. The styles of New Orleans architecture merit much more than a paragraph or two in this writing, and an infinite number of books have been written on the subject, but we can say here that the architectural esthetic of this city is one of its principal enchantments, and has attracted many an aspiring architect, builder, artisan involved in restoration and reconstruction as well as a host of others in many trades. This includes those who came after Katrina motivated by the impulse to save this remarkable urban setting.

• A Classic Latin Sensibility: The source of all of the above points is a foundation of what we might call a "Latin sensibility" with the classic appreciation characteristic of Latin cultures, giving New Orleans a singular feel. There is a heritage of an easygoing cosmopolitan tolerance in the city, where races have mixed more freely and frequently then in many Anglo-Saxon cultures. There is also a sort of French "grandeur" in much of the architecture and personality of the city which the sensitive

tourist will perceive rapidly. One must consider the emblematic annual Mardi Gras, a pre-Lenten carnival characteristic of Catholic cultures throughout the world. The names of its streets are unlike any other North American city and reflect a certain classic European touch: sections with streets named after the Greek muses (Terpsichore, Melpomene, Thalia, Clio, Euterpe, Calliope, Erato, Polymnia and Urania); there are Piety, Desire and Felicity Streets, as well as avenues named after Napoleon's victories on the battlefield: Jena, Austerlitz, Marengo, Constantinople and Berlin. There is Prytania, named for the Prytaneum, the hearth that each ancient Greek village dedicated to the goddess of the hearth, Hestia—all of these among innumerable other memorable and colorful designations. And one remembers Blanche DuBois' recitation of the names of the local streetcars necessary to reach her destination, evoking life, death and the afterlife: "They told me to take a street-car named Desire, and then transfer to one called Cemeteries and ride six blocks and get off at — Elysian Fields" (Williams 1947). This classic or Latin sensibility has created the esthetic that inspires love of this city on the part of many who have come as tourists or students, and some of whom have stayed to plant their professional or economic lives in this place, seeking beauty beyond mere utilitarian function.

Having stated the above, taking note of the revitalization of this city, we must be conscious of the effect of a homogenizing globalization across the world as expressed through gentrification. As New Orleans receives an increasing number of young professional types who breathe life into the city, one fears that authenticity is undermined. After they enter the city, creative migrants push up rents, displacing local stores and residents. As Campanella (2013) observes in his own rapidly gentrifying New Orleans neighborhood of Bywater, the black population declined by 64 percent between 2000 and 2010, while the white population increased by 22 percent.

But in the process of being revitalized, much of what made the neighborhood unique fades as the creative new residents replace the local culture with the increasingly predictable, universal, conspicuously hip culture of trendy restaurants, offering such cosmopolitan delights as "beet-filled ravioli with goat cheese ricotta mint stuffing" instead of traditional fried okra (Campanella 2013). The "unique" amenities you find now, even in New Orleans, are much what one would see in any other hipster enclave, be it Portland or Seattle, Brooklyn or Berlin. In other words, true local culture is driven out by a globalizing culture of homogenized sophistication. Obviously, the ideal is to retain a significant element of local culture while restoring the city with the help of creative and energetic youthful migrants. But this is a very delicate balance.

Finally, as a rather mundane example of this certain esthetic possessed by New Orleans, when speaking of utilitarian functions and beauty we might think about the simple corbel, a small projection extending out from a wall to support a structure above it. A corbel will often support the roof on a New Orleans house, a purely utilitarian function. But in this city, beyond functionality, many of the corbels are notably beautiful, with an appeal dating back to Victorian architecture in England. They are attractive items on houses, and contribute to an esthetic which is characteristic of the city. In turn, this esthetic increases the demand and price of the houses accentuated by the adorned corbel. In doing the background study for the writing of this piece, the author visited the workshop of a restoration business, restoring shotgun houses around the city. In this workshop corbels were carved, painted and stored prior to being placed on restored dwellings; this thriving firm could not seem to produce corbels fast enough to supply the need in the restoration of houses. Here something as simple and functional as a wooden arch support for a porch roof has become an object of beauty, an object of admiration and demand among those who seek to restore this city, and in the language of business and economics, *creating value added*.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the start of our discussion here; as Roger Scruton says in his brilliant piece "Why Beauty Matters," (2009) in pointing out his native city of Reading, England, where the utilitarian but in the end, ugly, 1960s buildings in the city center have been largely abandoned and slated for destruction. New Orleans has by and large avoided this cruel fate; its esthetic beauty draws tourists, students, investors, professionals and artisans of all types who are attracted by the feel of a city worth saving, thus avoiding its abandonment and destruction (or at least postponing it depending on future surrounding water levels). This city in its entirety seems to illustrate the exact reverse of Scruton's dictum: if we only consider utility, then the entity created will cease to become useful due to its ugliness. New Orleans is surviving, because of its beauty. At the same time it has a more vibrant and broad based local economy than before Katrina, including an above average rate of entrepreneurial startups--much
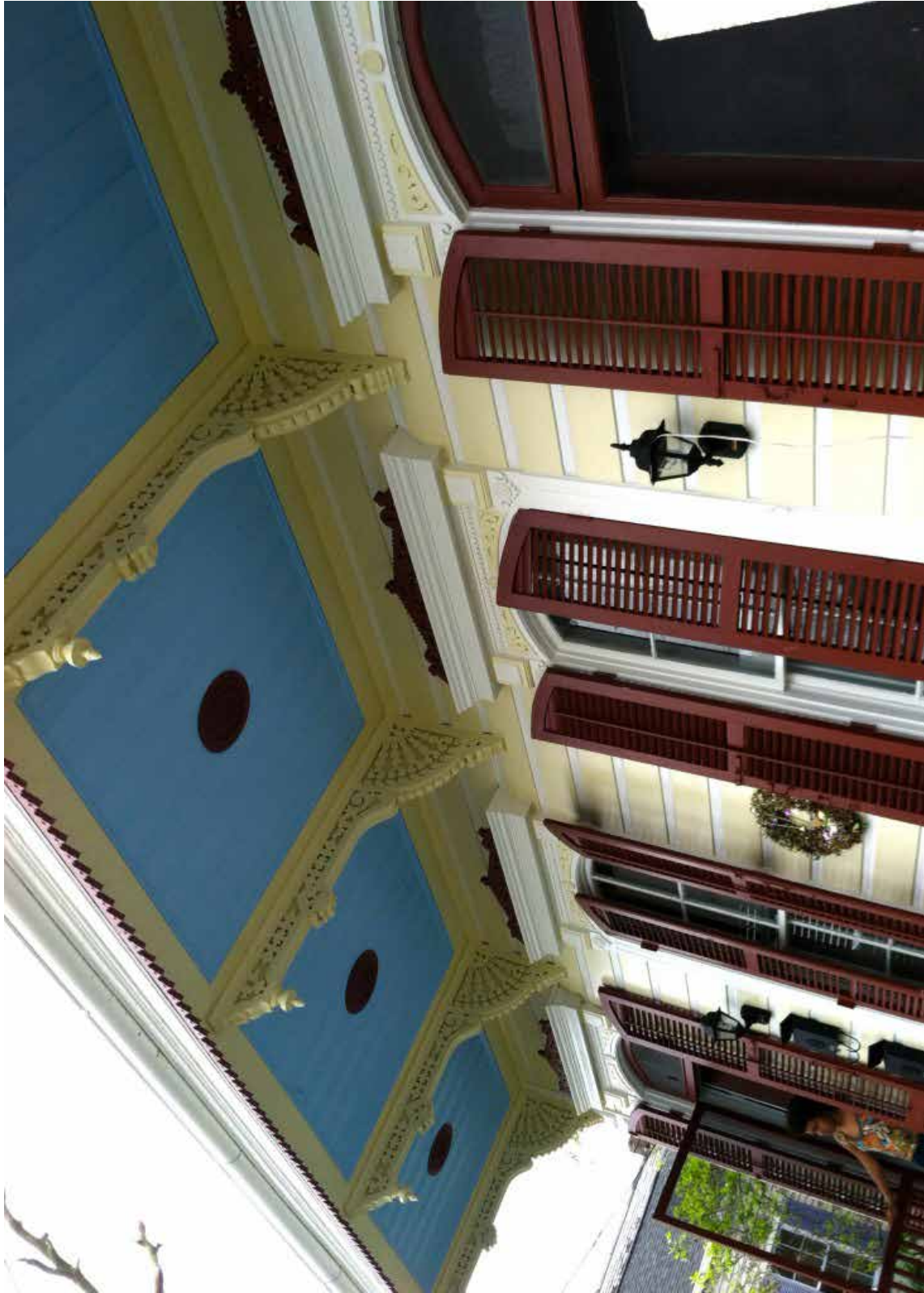
Figures 3 and 4: The adorned corbel and its beautifying effect on a New Orleans house. Photos of corbels (Google.com.mx 2016a) can be viewed at: https://www.google.com.ch?q=corbels+new+orleans&espv=2&biw=1366&bih=667&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjF58L-51rrOAhVU72MKHQkHDOMQsAQIKw; viewed August 11, 2016.

Figure 4: The eternally tragic figure of Blanche DuBois, the incarnation of delusions of grandeur accompanied by unresolved anguish, is emblematically associated with New Orleans, as interpreted by Vivien Leigh in A Streetcar Named Desire (1951, Director Elia Kazan). View (the-toast.net) at: http://the-toast.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/blanche3.jpg; viewed August 11, 2016.

Figure 5: The inimitable New Orleans native and world famous gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson (1911-1972); View (Tallguysgearguide.com) at: http://www.tallguysgearguide.com/my-blog/2012/03/ ; viewed August 11, 2016.

Figure 6: A Creole Cottage in New Orleans. View (Flickr.com 2016) at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/punktoad/8835694015; viewed August 11, 2016.

beyond mere tourism, which if accompanied by little else results in the syndrome of an overpriced, limited access "boutique city" for visitors.

Now if this brief piece reads like some sort of love letter to New Orleans, that is because it is precisely such, written by an unabashed lover of this Creole city. Admittedly, we must not overlook the tremendous problems it faces, challenges we have mentioned here which in the long run might even be fatal to the place, may it not be so. But beauty induces affect and the human desire to delight in the positive while acknowledging but not condemning the beloved's blemishes; it gives rise to the urge to save the object of that affection, to see it thrive and prosper for the enjoyment of the beholder and others well into the future. Indeed, may New Orleans thrive, like a charming and colorful Grande Dame who is aging well, a real city with a real economy, proud of and retaining its native culture—not limited to selling overpriced trinkets to tourists as a sort of "museum city" of a culture that once was--but rather possessing a vital, creative and unique urban esthetic treasured and enjoyed by those who love her, for many decades ahead.

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Figures 7 and 8: Two New Orleans Shotgun Houses. Photos of shotgun houses (Google.com.mx 2016) can be viewed at: https://www.google.com.mx/search?q=shotgun+house+new+orleans&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&-sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiV1v2OxbrOAhVHx2MKHXl1CAoQsAQIGw&biw=1366&bih=667; viewed August 11, 2016.

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