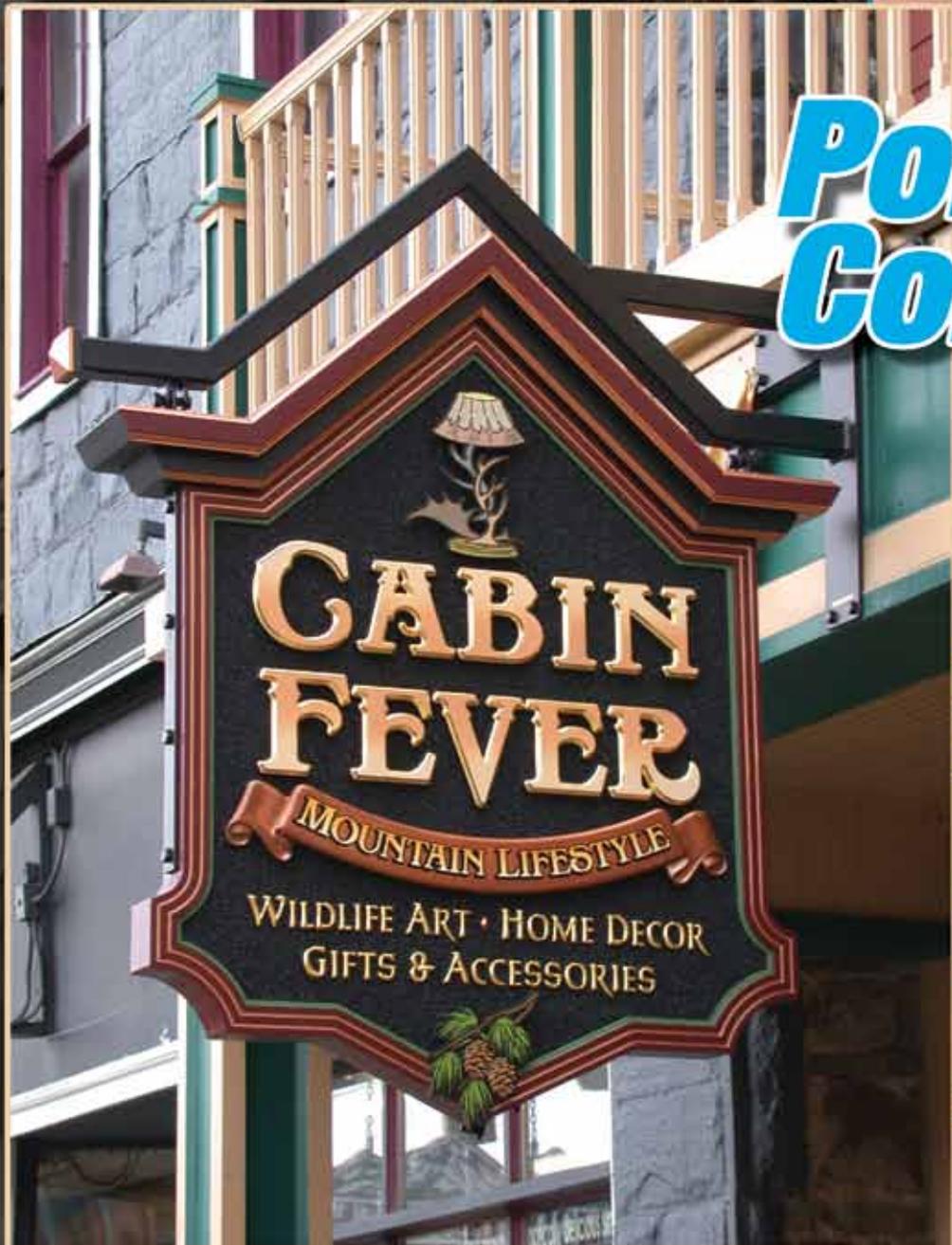


SIGN & Digital Graphics

For the Business of Visual Communications



Portfolio Contest

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- Sustainable Neon
- Solar-Powered Signage
- Printing on Cut Vinyl
- Wide-Format Printer Update





Cream of the Crop

COMPILED BY
AMANDA MCGRORY
AND MATT DIXON



Matt Charboneau, of Matt Charboneau Signs, in Drake, Colo.; Regan Dickinson, freelance writer and former editor of *Sign Business* magazine; and Linda Cranston, art director of *Sign & Digital Graphics* magazine, scour over the hundreds of entries for the 2009 Portfolio Contest.

NO MATTER HOW MANY YEARS we present our annual Portfolio Contest, we are always amazed at the talent and abilities of the craftsmen involved in the signage and graphics industry. This year, our judges had to sort through hundreds of examples of the best that sign makers have to offer in order to come up with a select few contest winners. The next few pages will show you just how difficult the job was for our judges. And we're sure, as you look through, you will find your own favorites.

There's something inherently unfair about trying to convey the profound number of hours needed to complete a sign in just a photograph. The judges can only imagine the design, fabrication and sales challenges that went along with each sign. And as we often joked during the judging, there's a good chance for many of these signs that the end product would have been that much better if the client had just kept his or her mouth shut.

Speaking of judges, we warmly thank our team of experts who took on this difficult task this year. We asked Matt Charboneau, of Matt Charboneau Signs, in Drake, Colo.; Regan Dickinson, freelance writer and former editor of *Sign Business* magazine; Mike "Mike Z" Szczoczarsz, of Countryside Signs, in Seekonk, Mass.; and Linda Cranston, art director of *Sign & Digital Graphics* magazine, to handle this job.

One of the major obstacles our judges ran into was judging signs across multiple styles, such as dimensional, vinyl wraps and illuminated.

One trend we noticed, however, is that our judges were very apt to pick dimensional signs over other forms of sign design and construction. Because of this, next year's contest will reflect the growing diversity of the sign industry by breaking up the contest into style categories so that signs may be judged on a more "apples-to-apples" basis. In the meantime, we will save all of our vehicle wrap and graphic submissions for our Annual Auto Art Contest coming in June.

And although our few pages this month can only show so many of the top signs to enter our contest, keep your eye out for our online slideshow at www.sdgmag.com as we present more of the top sign entries for 2009.

Finally, we would like to thank each and every company that took the time to submit their work for our contest. These signs reflect the incredible creativity, ingenuity and talent of the sign and graphics industry, and we look forward to doing this again next year.



House of Signs

Fabricator/Designer: Roger Cox
Frisco, Colo.

1st

WHEN YOU HEAR THE NAME Breckenridge, you immediately think of the snow-covered Colorado ski town, world-famous slopes and breathtaking views. But any sign professional who visits the area will notice right away that it's not just the natural beauty that's worth admiring.

Roger Cox, owner of House of Signs in the nearby town of Frisco, has been making sure that Breckenridge, and its surrounding towns, maintain a rustic mountain feel for 20 years by supplying quality signage.

This year's winner of the *Sign & Digital Graphics* annual Portfolio Contest is the double-sided blade sign Cox did for Cabin Fever, a sundries store selling everything a person living in the mountains would need for making a cabin a home. And where does a sign maker get his inspiration for a cabin-themed store located in the heart of the majestic Rocky Mountains?

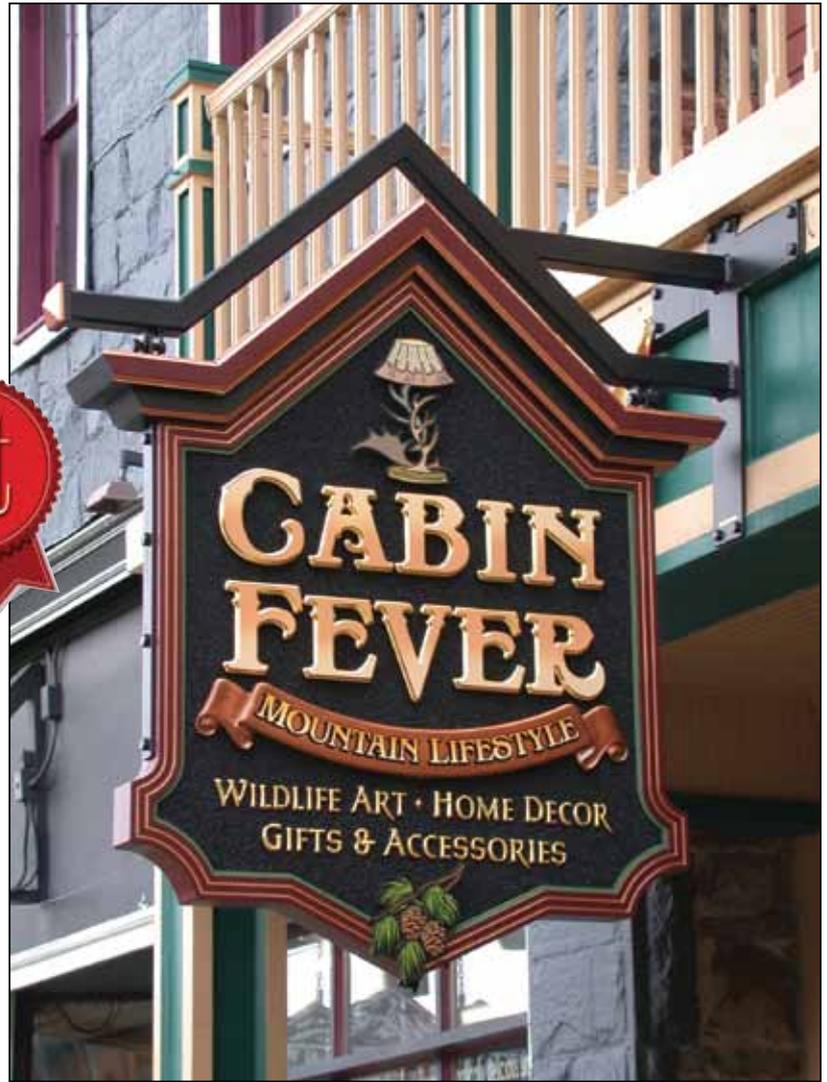
"I actually designed that on a road trip to the desert, doodling on miscellaneous paper scraps I found in the glove box," says Cox.

Much of Cox's design challenge came from fitting all of the words on the sign. Cox needed to find a way to effectively present all of the text the customer had requested onto a small sign. "Cabin Fever," "Mountain Lifestyle" and "Wildlife Art • Home Decor • Gift & Accessories" were going to take up a lot of room.

"That's a lot of copy to have on a small, what I consider a pedestrian-oriented blade sign," explains Cox. "They had just finished building a brand new building with this unique shop in it. Sometimes, when you get all of the text from your client, you kind of shudder. You've got to try and integrate all this line of copy and make it effective. That was probably my biggest challenge. There was so much copy—and so many elements they wanted to include in the sign. It just so happened I had a creative spark sitting in the car, and my thumbnail sketch of this sign is pretty much identical to the finished product."

Among those other elements were a ribbon and representative graphic element.

"They loved the ribbons I create for a lot of my signs, so they really wanted to have an ornamental ribbon," says Cox. "They



also wanted some sort of iconic pictorial to emphasize the feel of their store. So I walked around their store for about 30 minutes to kind of get a feel for what products I could pull from to include in some sort of pictorial."

That product ended up being a lamp. A pinecone was added to project a natural feel to the sign.

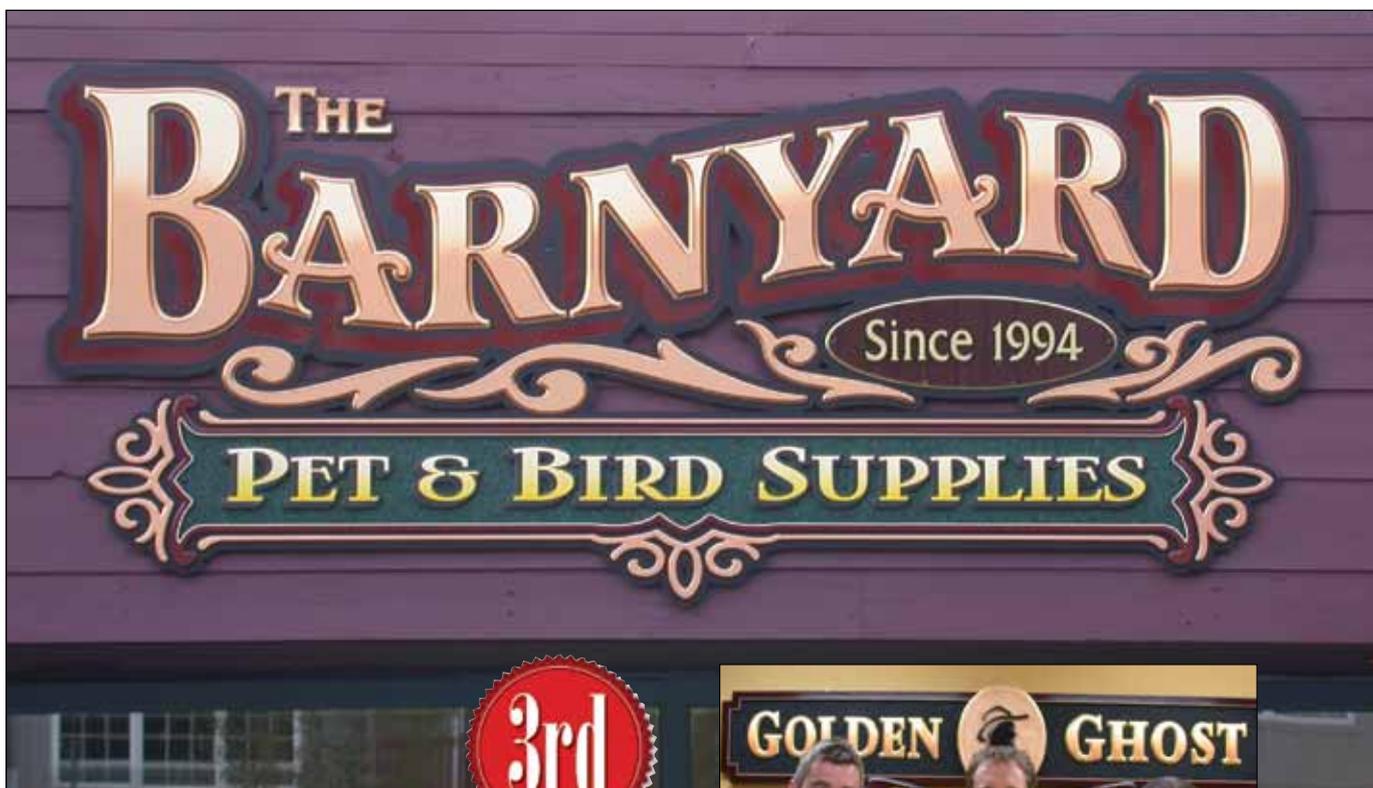
Cox's production assistant, Mark Bocksch, helped with the fabrication, but for the sign bracket, Cox called in longtime associate Steve Huyler to work his magic in Cox's full-service metal shop. The bracket and form-fitting sign peak are elements inspired by aspects of the building's roof.

The project took about two months to complete. All of the cove edges were finished with 23-karat gold leaf, which is very time consuming—especially considering the process had to be done on both sides.

Our judges say it best when it comes to why Cox's sign topped our list for 2009:

"Excellent example of *the whole package*," says judge Mike Z. "This sign has it all—totally appropriate to the business, no question of what's inside. Classy ruggedness fits the outdoor theme. Great use of color, shape, balance and attention to detail. Well-designed and executed hanger and mounting method."

CONTINUED



The Barnyard

Fabricator/Designer: Roger Cox
Frisco, Colo.

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR, House of Signs is there. Or, at least, it was for The Barnyard, a pet supply store within rock-tossing distance of Roger Cox and his House of Signs workshop in Frisco, Colo.

“That’s probably my favorite project of the year,” says Cox. “It happens to be right across the street from my workshop, so I see it on a daily basis.”

The Barnyard’s owner had talked to Cox about installing one of his top-notch signs to replace the one she had, which wasn’t exactly getting the job done.

“Their old sign was about five times smaller than the current sign, and they just never got the visibility they needed,” says Cox.

Cox initially designed a freestanding sign for The Barnyard, but the customer backed off of the sign for budgetary reasons. This put a large delay between the initial discussions with the customer and the actual start of fabrication.

“You never like a project to sit on the backburner so long,” says Cox. “By the time we started fabricating it, probably nine months had gone by. But I think for some projects it’s for the best because it really made me think long and hard about, ‘OK, when the freestanding sign was shot down, what can I do that’s equally effective and going to work well (for the customer)?’”

After Cox got the go-ahead for the sign, the project started to take off. Cox not only supplied a new sign but also convinced the client to make improvements to the building’s facade in order to aid in the sign’s reception. Cox came up with the color scheme for the sign and persuaded the customer to repaint the facade to match the sign, which the landlord was receptive to



Before

doing, despite the building holding many other tenants, as well.

The fabrication of the sign was fairly involved, notes Cox.

“It involved milling all the letters with routed coved-edge detail, and all of those coved-routed edges were hand-painted with an aqua-leaf metallic paint,” says Cox. “Most of the letter faces were airbrushed with 1 Shot enamels. The pet and bird supplies panel was a really nice custom-mixed green smalts, which is crushed glass, that I achieved with about four different shades of green glass to get the right family of green that I needed for all of the cream and red tones on the sign.”

Although the project took a long time to come to fruition, Cox is extremely happy with the outcome. Not only was the client thrilled, but Cox enriched his own neck of the woods in the process.