



Pros, mobile repairs, ring tones and music installation, mobile phone part exchange

THE WRITINGS

ON THE WALL

Northeastern Cambodia's
ANALOGUE AD-LAND



Malin hair straightening, face makeup and hair styling, haircuts, hair straightening and curling, hair highlights, face massage, skin whitening, nail painting



Dental treatments

text PETER LYLE
photography SAM ROBERTS/GHOSTSIGNS

Until the '80s, when the arrival of new plastic sign-cutting machines changed the look of Britain's storefronts, hand-painted signs were the norm in cities. In previous decades, shop owners in the country's bustling centres often had the names and emblems of their services and products proudly painted on the sides of their buildings, so they could be seen from the road. Many of these examples of lettering and majestic commercial murals survive, often high above eye-level today, but most of us run around too preoccupied to notice.

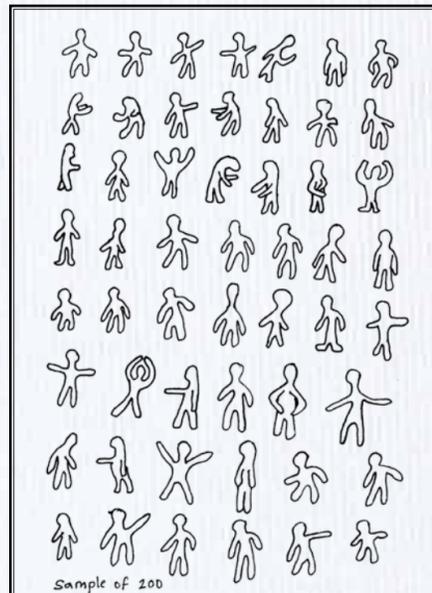
That is why Sam Roberts' website *Ghostsigns* has been such a source of fascination since he set it up in 2007. Initially showcasing the UK's secret old signs, advertising everything from dairy products to petrol, the site has since moved on to feature old hand-painted signs from around the world. Roberts' photographic hobby turned into the foundation of a formal archive of this faded, half-forgotten craft, launched with the Advertising Trust.

His latest labour of love is on another scale altogether: a new coffee-table book about the contemporary hand-painted signs of Kratié, Cambodia, to where Roberts and his wife relocated

two years ago. "It's a sleepy provincial capital," he says, "on the banks of the Mekong river. A big shift from one of the world's biggest cities." It took some adjustment in many ways, but he says he eventually got into the rhythm of life there, and 3G connectivity keeps him better linked in to the sign-obsessed fraternity than when he lived in England.

Primarily moving to support his wife, a VSO volunteer and primary school teacher working with five local schools to develop new teaching methods, Roberts found another wonderland of contemporary, hand-painted signs, local art and commerce in all its beautiful, wacky, brightly coloured glory. Guns, drums, pigs and automobiles are among the wonders saluted in vernacular art throughout Roberts' forthcoming book *Hand Painted Signs of Kratie*. Alongside a deeper exploration of the methods and culture of the craftsmen and calligraphers in this north eastern Cambodian city, is an insight to local street culture untainted by global commercial values.

Hand Painted Signs of Kratie will be published in November 2012.
kratie.ghostsigns.co.uk



Sample of 200

METHOD

The method of the investigation is simple. I will take a sample of 200 users, each user will undergo a series of tests and observation and those displaying serious symptoms will undergo intensive psychotherapy. To qualify as an SNS sufferer a user must spend more than six hours per day networking in addition to having undergone significant personality transformation as a result of their network usage.

Sofia Niazi, *Social Networking* (2011)
© the artist, London. sofianiazi.co.uk



Rota mechanic, all kinds of motorbikes and cars painted