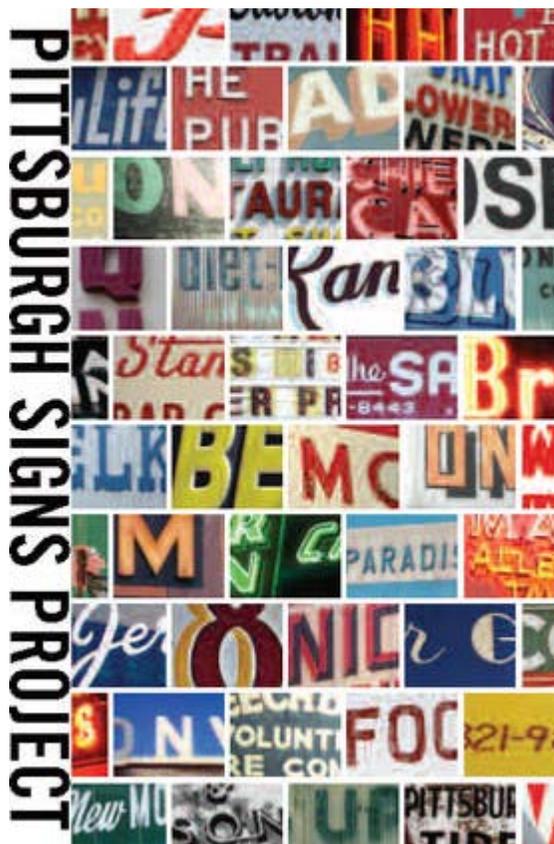


Pittsburgh Signs Project: appreciation of the glorious signage of Pittsburgh

By [Cory Doctorow](#) at 6:03 am Tuesday, Aug 2

Earlier this summer, a nice group of people approached me at my signing at the CMU bookstore in Pittsburgh, PA and handed me a copy of [Pittsburgh Signs Project](#), a photography book that features glorious photos of Pittsburgh's beautiful vintage signs. It turns out that two of the people giving me the



book were among its editors, and they'd come by especially because I'd played an unwitting role in the project's genesis. Back in 2003, I [blogged a set of photos of I'd snapped of Denver's signs](#) (I'd been there for a conference and after a couple days I was so overwhelmed by the signs I kept seeing in passing that I jumped in my rental car and spent the afternoon shooting), and this, in turn, had inspired the founding of the [Pittsburgh Signs Project](#), which invited the pittsburghese to send in their favorite images. Before long, they had a book's worth of astounding signs from many eras and of many genres, from every county in the area. I versions of it, let the ravages

The editors -- Jennifer Baron, Greg Langel, Elizabeth Perry and Mark Stroup -- then gathered up their favorites and arranged them thematically, with brief essays and short snips of text from the photographers. But the words aren't the important bit, the photos are, and they're really something. The layout of the book hints at the lineage of the signs; of rival liquor store owners who duelled with typography; of peeling hand-painted ancestors from the dawn of commercial advertising; of careful, handmade steel typography over a metal-shop's awning. Put together, they make a sort of poetry.

I've always said that the way to make something beautiful is to make a million near-identical versions of it, let the ravages of time remove nearly all those versions, and put the remainder under glass (this is why we love Craftsman houses, Victorian row houses, old comic books, etc). Here's a great example of the phenomena: merely by withstanding time these totally quotidian objects have become evocative relics.

[Pittsburgh Signs Project: 250 Signs of Western Pennsylvania \(order book\)](#)

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