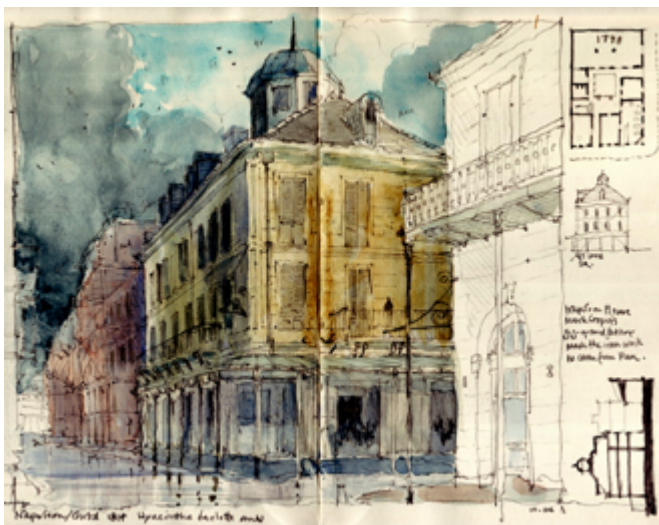


## Observing New Orleans

February 17, 2012 10:30 AM Arthur Nead  
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Tulane architect Errol Barron's latest book of drawings, *New Orleans Observed: Drawings and Observations of America's Most Foreign City*, guides his readers on an aesthetic ramble from neighborhood to neighborhood, highlighting the variety, antiquity and often sheer oddity of the city's structures.



This sketch by Errol Barron depicts the Girod Mansion, now called the Napoleon House, built in 1814 (Hyacinthe Laclotte, architect).

His drawings, in pencil heightened by applications of watercolor, depict houses both grand and modest, historic buildings, and even utilitarian structures such as pumping stations and parking garages.

"I did a book of drawings of European subjects about five years ago," says [Barron](#). "Someone said then that I should do a book on New Orleans, and I have wanted to do that for a long time." The opportunity came when Barron went on sabbatical in 2009. "Every day when I would normally come to the university, I got in my car or on

my bicycle, and headed out," he says.

He carried a pocket-sized French-made sketchbook, a small box of watercolors and brushes, and worked his way upriver from the eastern end of the city.

"There were some things I wanted to draw," says Barron, "but other things caught me by surprise and I would stop and enjoy myself for an hour or two, and then move on to the next place." The book reflects both Barron's fascination with the city's unique blend of architectural styles, and his conviction that drawing is a primary means of creation for architecture and the fine arts.

"Because of the heavy use of computers, many students have gotten away from hand drawing, which is a tremendous problem because it's through hand drawing that one can think speculatively and flexibly and try different things," Barron says.

"That's how ideas are really generated. I tell students 'if you don't learn how to draw, you will be drawing stuff on the computer for people who can do it.'"

The book is available at the [Tulane University Bookstore](#).