

Sweet season: Photographer documents sugar cane industry

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Growing up in New Iberia, La., photographer David Armentor, digital imaging specialist at the Tulane University [School of Architecture](#), had an up-close view of the area's thriving sugar cane industry.



"Sugar Cane Trucks, Cajun Mill, 2012 Harvest Season" by David Armentor is among his photographs of the Louisiana sugar cane industry on display at Cole Pratt Gallery through Aug. 17. (Photo by David Armentor)

"Bayou Teche was on one side, and the cane fields were on the other side," he says. Although he relocated to New Orleans many years later, the images of the area's iconic planting and harvesting seasons were always imbedded in his mind ? farmers tending to the fields, sunrise at the cooling ponds, rows of trucks waiting to carry the cane to the mills.

In 2004, he had a yearning to document the industry, and thus began "[The Sugar Mill Sessions](#)," an ongoing photographic project that focuses on sugar production in Southwest Louisiana.

On display at Cole Pratt Gallery, 3800 Magazine St., through Aug. 17, the exhibition offers a comprehensive view of the industry and the culture that surrounds it, with each of three chapters exploring a different theme and represented in a particular

stylistic approach.

“I worked mostly at night during the harvesting season months of September through January, which gave way to a more expressive capture of the industry,” Armentor says. “This direction allowed me to give a unique perspective to an industry where 'sense of place' is often viewed as burdensome or vexatious.”

Armentor documented the industry by following an eighth-generation family of planters and spending time at three Iberia Parish mills. The chapters include a 19th-century capture of the planting season, a mid-century modern exploration of the harvest and a contemporary look at the local culture surrounding the sugar industry.

In a July 16 review, *Gambit* newspaper art critic D. Eric Bookhardt said the exhibit is reminder “that we live in a strange state where exquisite natural beauty coexists with industrial incursions. Armentor's images illustrate sugar's infernal, yet almost romantic legacy.”