

LOCAL & STATE

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SELF-DRIVING CARS

Vehicles that drive and park themselves may sound futuristic, but some car manufacturers already have models on the road. **Page 3B**



PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

See who's changing jobs, moving locations or being honored. **Page 3B**



Charlotte Cryer shows one of the new Clementine Hunter ceramic pieces available at Caroline & Company, one of three local stores to carry the line. The others are The Kitchenary and Pieces of Eight. **BILL DECKER, THE ADVERTISER**

Landrieu back in spotlight

Actions watched during shutdown

By Deborah Barfield Berry
Gannett Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Sen. Mary Landrieu joined other Senate Democrats at a meeting with President Barack Obama on Thursday to talk about the battle over raising the country's debt ceiling and ending the government shutdown.

For weeks, the Louisiana Democrat has reaffirmed her support for the 2010 health care law that initially emerged as the major sticking point in getting a stopgap spending bill through Congress to keep the government running.

Landrieu also has pushed legislation to delay increases in flood insurance premiums that could affect thousands of homeowners.

Landrieu's supporters and opponents are closely scrutinizing those actions — and ever other move she makes — for their potential impact on her 2014 re-election prospects as one of the country's most vulnerable Senate Democrats.

"The shutdown has focused everybody's attention on the importance of good leadership and compromise and trying to work things through in Washington," Landrieu said after Thursday's meeting at the White House. "What effect it has on my race or other races, you know, has yet to be seen."

The standoff in Washington could play a role in Landrieu's re-election race, which is considered a tossup. House Republican Bill Cassidy is the leading challenger in the closely watched race. Both have raised millions for the campaign. Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Rob Manes, a Republican, also is running.

Whenever Landrieu and Cassidy take a position, "they're creating TV ads for the other candidate," said Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia.

Sabato predicts a very competitive race.

"Louisiana is a deeply red state," he said. "That gives a Republican a good chance. On the



Sen. Mary Landrieu

Clementine Hunter for the masses

Ceramics line features Louisiana artist's paintings

You may not know much about art. But you probably know about Louisiana's Clementine Hunter.

Maybe you've admired her paintings, considered by experts to be among the most evocative primitive art America has produced. Maybe you own a piece or two, purchased from the Natchitoches-area artist herself, who died in 1988 at age 101.

Among her admirers and collectors is comedian Joan Rivers. She told the New York Times recently that she's been collecting Clementine Hunter paintings since she bought one from the artist in Natchitoches in the mid-1980s. The price: "\$35 and a meat pie."

Respect for Hunter's work has grown in the intervening three decades, so the \$35 price tag is long gone. Don't worry too much about



Bill Decker
Acadiana People

the meat pie, either. Count on writing a four-figure check for a Hunter work, if you're lucky.

Now New Orleans art gallery owner Doug Gitter hopes to bring Clementine Hunter appreciation back within the family budget again.

Gitter has introduced a line of ceramic pieces reproducing some of Hunter's best-known works. The

SEE MORE

See a video about the Clementine Hunter ceramics at theadvertiser.com.

plates, platters and bowls cost in the neighborhood of \$150 each. They're on sale in Lafayette at Pieces of Eight and The Kitchenary in the Oil Center and Caroline & Co. on Arnaud Boulevard.

"We posted a picture on Facebook the day we got it, and we had a flood of customers who came in that day to see it and buy it, and phone calls saying, 'Please hold one for me,'" said Charlotte Cryer of Caroline & Company.

The reaction was much the same

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Designer Kurt Culbertson, right, chats with university Dean H. Gordon Brooks II and Councilman Don Bertrand. **LESLIE WESTBROOK, THE ADVERTISER**



Designers kick off Horse Farm plans

By Ken Stickney
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Lafayette Central Park Inc. has launched its first phase of creating a public park on the Horse Farm property off Johnston Street, accepting a \$2.6 million donation from the Lafayette Public Trust Financing Authority on Saturday and publicizing a series of meetings to seek public input on the project.

David T. Calhoun, executive director of LCP, said stakeholders met Friday with representatives of DesignWorkshop of Austin, Texas, which will design the park, to be located on 14 acres of open land in the heart of Lafayette. On Saturday, Calhoun and E.B. Brooks, LCP's director of planning and design, distributed information about a series of public meetings in which residents can provide ideas and es-

tablish what they want in the park.

Calhoun said he has never seen as much interest in a public project as has been shown in this proposed park. He said six public forums are planned on four dates, Oct. 23-26, in which residents can weigh in with what features and programs they think the park should offer. LCP has

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at The Kitchenary.

"We've only had them in stock about six weeks now," said manager Janelle Daigle, "and we've had a lot of people commenting about making this a Christmas gift for their friends and family. There's a lot of excitement that we're carrying it."

The release of the ceramics line isn't the only recent development in the appreciation of the Louisiana artist. Hunter works are among the Oprah Winfrey Collection in Chicago. Her paintings may be seen in the Smithsonian when the government isn't shut down, and more of her work hangs in the American Museum of Folk Art in New York.

A new book, "Clementine Hunter: Her Life and Art" by Northwestern State professor Tom Whitehead and Art Shriver, was published last fall. Robert Wilson, who has produced musical biographies of Freud, Stalin, Edison and Einstein, staged an opera based on Hunter's life last winter at Montclair State University in New Jersey. It's called "Zinnias - The Life of Clementine Hunter." Zinnias were Hunter's favorite flower, and they are subjects of a whole series of her paintings. Her art has been

drawn across the line that separates art to be appreciated from art to be studied. The appeal is multidisciplinary. You'll find scholarly attention to her work in the fields of women's studies and African-American studies as well as in art.

But her strongest appeal may be that her paintings are simple representation of a simpler time, a time full of living and fun despite all the poverty and the back-breaking work.

"She was probably the first American artist who captured what that life was like," Gitter said. "Think about it — these people who lived on southern plantations were predominantly poor. Not only did she live it, but she watched it vanish in her own lifetime, with the new machinery and tractors, which took away the hard everyday labor."

"Clementine always thought painting the paintings was harder than working the fields."

And Hunter's personal story is compelling. "A lot of people may not be familiar with her story but they're drawn to the story when they hear it," Cryer said. "It's a very interesting story of her life and where she grew up and her environment and her artwork."

The artist was born in 1886 to parents of Creole heritage on the Hidden Hills plantation near Cloutierville between



Clementine Hunter poses with a birthday cake at her home in Natchitoches, April 25, 1985. Thirty years ago, Hunter had to sneak in to see her own paintings on exhibit at Northwestern State University. She died in 1988. **AP**

Alexandria and Natchitoches.

At least one of her grandparents had been a slave. Some say Hidden Hills was the model for the plantation in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It's called Little Eva's plantation now.

The girl spoke only

Creole French until she was nearly 30. Around the turn of the century, her family moved to the sprawling Melrose plantation on the Cane River. She spent much of her early life working the cotton fields before coming to work in the main plantation home, cooking

and sewing.

She bore two children out of wedlock, and, after the children's father died in 1914, she married Emmanuel Hunter, with whom she had five more children.

As the years went by, Melrose became an artist colony, offering writers and painters room, board and a place to work as long as they were willing to work on the plantation, too. It was there — in the 1930s or 1940s, depending on the source — that Hunter found some tubes of paint and began to create pictures on broken bottles, boards and whatever else was handy.

Sources put the number of Hunter paintings at between 5,000 and 10,000. Some were sold in the early days for as little as 25 cents.

Her talent was encouraged by Francois Mignon, a New York visitor to Melrose who became an advocate of her work. And by the mid-1950s, Hunter was being recognized as "the black Grandma Moses," an homage to another famous and self-taught primitive painter. She also was featured in Look magazine. She continued to paint almost until her death on New Year's Day 1988.

Despite her newfound fame, Hunter remained accessible to admiring fans. One of them was Doug Gitter's father, Dr. Kurt Gitter. He collected American contemporary

art and introduced his son to the work of Clementine Hunter.

"You could meet with them in these predominantly small rural towns and hear their stories," Doug Gitter said. "And it was heartwarming because they lived outside the mainstream. They weren't from Dallas or Chicago or New York. Yet they found their lives very rewarding. ... They were just expressing what they felt in their heart."

When Doug Gitter became a gallery owner in New Orleans, he began the process of creating the Clementine Hunter ceramics line. He negotiated with her estate, which will receive a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the pieces.

His first attempt to launch the line involved repainting the Hunter work on the ceramic piece. But Gitter said the result looked too much like a decal. So he tried again, this time adding texture and relief to the works.

"The textured surface allows you to feel the passion in her work," Gitter said. "I say, hang them on your wall. Put them on a bookshelf. Or make them your favorite serving dish for a special occasion."

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