When you picture photographic essays on Louisiana, one of the first images that pops into your mind is that of a Cajun man or woman standing outside their little shack. Not so with the photographs of Mike LeBlanc, a Louisiana photographer who prefers an isolated view of the countryside and, most importantly, their Roadside View to stress that fact — no houses, no people, no clutter.

LeBlanc, who works out of both Lake Charles and Lafayette, is a scenic photographer. He’s one of the very few found in Louisiana, but he’s making his name in this area with his expressive, moody views of the countryside.

“I put my heart and soul in each work. I don’t shoot randomly, but approach each as an artist approaches a painting,” said LeBlanc. This heart and soul shines through in a new collection, “A Roadside View of Louisiana.” LeBlanc intends to travel to each parish in the state recording nature as it is today.

He’s already made progress with several works including “Creations Harmony,” “Lorrain Bayou,” “West Fork 1,” and “The Red House.” There are many more works currently in print, but these stand out for their color clarity, mood, lighting and, most importantly, their ability to evoke emotion from their viewers.

“Creations Harmony” was shot in Holly Beach. It shows the water at low tide, dark clouds hanging overhead, and black rocks and timber which appear to be oil soaked. It casts an almost eerie gloom over its viewer. “It’s so isolated, yet so majestic.”

“Lorrain Bayou” sparkles with bright green and yellow leaves which hang from the trees found in the bayou. Everything seems awash in color and light. It’s the kind of picture which might make you want to go out and find that identical scene just so you could sit back and enjoy.

And that’s the beauty of LeBlanc’s work. He says all his pictures are taken from the side of some road. He doesn’t go out in the marsh on a boat, or climb trees, or do anything that another person might not necessarily do. He named his collection “A Roadside View” to stress that fact.

The difference between your view and LeBlanc’s, however, has made him a national winner in professional art competitions. LeBlanc has been practicing photography since 1978, perfecting techniques and working with darkroom skills. He says he sometimes enlarges a print as many as 20 times before he gets the desired result.

This dedication has resulted in three prints being recently accepted into an upcoming national convention of the Professional Photographers of America. Photographers may submit four pieces for consideration. Three of LeBlanc’s four were accepted. Out of 6500 entries this year, between 1500 and 2000 are accepted for juried competition by a panel of five master judges. (To be a master judge, you must have at least 12 prints accepted into a national competition.)

LeBlanc is working toward this master’s certification. In the meantime, his work is on display through August at the State Archives in Baton Rouge and locally at the Lafayette Art Museum.

In fact, “West Fork 1” won the annual Lafayette Art Association’s photography contest this year. “Lorrain Bayou” and “Heart of the Marsh” also placed in the top five (out of 91 entries). LeBlanc has recently turned “Heart of the Marsh” into a fine art print, so his work is affordable to the general public.

Normally, an award-winning limited edition LeBlanc print would sell for around $1500. He plans to publish a book in the future which will include all of his “Roadside View” prints. It might be cheaper to wait for the book.

It won’t be better, however. The longer you look at a LeBlanc print, the more you discover — the sign of a truly great piece of art.