

Glenn loves his dogs. ↘

RIGHT NOW

"There's a corpse on your dollar bill."
—GLENN HERBERT DAVIS

Art in Motion

Avant-garde Tulsa artist Glenn Herbert Davis puts the American work ethic on display. By Megan Rossman

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OUT OF THE BOX
Glenn Herbert Davis, shown here in his west Tulsa home studio, is making a name for himself in Oklahoma's art scene with unorthodox works that refuse to be contained within any one genre.

THIS ISN'T REALITY

Art in Motion

LANCE MILLER



Glenn Herbert Davis during a New Genre Festival performance with his *Track and Trolley* installation

CLAD IN NAVY Dickies, Glenn Herbert Davis walks through his west Tulsa studio, flanked by a trio of Australian cattle dogs. Current projects and remnants of past ones dominate the industrial-looking space of the former post office he's lived and worked in the past six years.

Freestanding Home Depot-sized shelves accommodate wood in all its incarnations. A box of simple wooden crosses is on the concrete floor a few feet from a wood and mesh coffin. In one corner are ceiling tiles from a prior exhibit, each embossed with Davis' face. He plans to cover the ceiling of a future office with them.

"My own face," he says. "How obnoxious will that be?"

While Davis points out the possible hubris that could be interpreted from adorning a room with his own likeness, the tiles exemplify one of the most important elements that sets his art in motion—him.

Davis, a Minneapolis native, moved to Oklahoma in 2003 to be a professor at the School of Art at the University of Tulsa. There, he teaches courses in interdisciplinary practice and is the director of the college's Alexandre Hogue Gallery.

His work isn't easily defined. Art often falls into readily identifiable categories, but one of the most characteristic things about Davis' creations is that, like their maker, they tend to speak in abstractions. His art often combines installation, photography, and performance to convey a concept.

"How I describe my work in general is as a discussion," he says. "The work involves the relationship between the individual body and the systems it's subjected to."

At last year's New Genre Festival in Tulsa, Davis contributed his *Track and Trolley* piece. Suspended from the ceiling of Liv-

ing ArtSpace, wooden platforms and chairs evoked the image of a scaffold. Using hammers, blow torches, and other tools, Davis moved through the piece, hammering and drilling holes, demonstrating the labor that goes into every manufactured formation.

Steve Liggett, artistic director of Living Arts of Tulsa, which puts on the New Genre Festival, considers Davis one of the Tulsa art scene's most important players.

"Part of *Track and Trolley* was a series of pipes," he says. "He had a blow torch that he heated the pipes with, and they gave off this amazing tone, like the noon-time whistles that were the call for workmen to take their lunch break. He had rigged this thing up so that it could actually be played."

Another New Genre piece from 2007 was *Running 32 Foot Circular Saw-Cut*. Davis constructed six tables as part of the performance and then ran across them, cutting them in half with an electric saw and leaving them to fall apart behind him.


Michaela Merryday, a professor of modern and contemporary art at the University of Tulsa, sees what she calls a "quintessentially American attitude" in Davis' work.

"There's a make-do attitude. You see the Protestant work ethic in it. These are manufactured fictions or environments that highlight the way they were created."

Davis currently is working on multiple projects, including a fall photography exhibit in Sweden, a vocal performance entitled *Croon*, and an outdoor installation

piece, *Bee Space*, that will serve as a breeding environment for solitary bees.

Davis doesn't really consider his installations a finished product.

"I don't work with any ambition for finality," he says. "Exhibits are a statement of that work at the moment, but the work itself could be said to continue always." 

"I don't work with any ambition for finality."

—GLENN HERBERT DAVIS

Get There: For more information on Glenn Herbert Davis, visit glennherbertdavis.net.