

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
**artspace, Shreveport, LA**

SUGGESTED HEAD: Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow Opens at **artspace**, 710 Texas Street, Shreveport, LA, June 27 – August 30.

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*Hurry, Hurry, Hurry...Step Right Up...Come One – Come All!*

Come to **artspace** to experience the **Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow**, an Exhibition of authentic, vintage Circus Sideshow Banners and contemporary, mechanical Sideshow Sculptures. The Exhibition opens to the public on Saturday, June 28 and continues through Saturday, August 30. The exhibition is presented by the Shreveport Regional Arts Council and is shown on the main space floor of **artspace**, 710 Texas Street. Admission to the Exhibition is free. Admission to the Anderson Family Fun-a-Torium where professional artists will teach families to create “Sideshow Art” every Saturday from 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm, is \$5 per person. Admission to the week-long Summer Sideshow Camp, July 14-18, for children ages 7 to 14, is \$90.

**Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow** is a multi-faceted Exhibition that recalls the promotion of the strange and mysterious secrets within the Sideshow tent at the traveling circus. Until the late 1980’s the sideshow banner was considered a gaudy and garish, vibrantly colored canvas that was not taken seriously or appreciated as a true work of art. Even the original artists thought of sideshow banners as billboards – advertising signs for curiosities such as Monkey Boy, The Bearded Lady, Spidora, and Merman. Today, Sideshow banners are highly prized collectibles and those “sign painters” have been catapulted historically into a form of celebrity. The large canvases boldly dared you to shed your fears, step up, and see *Rubber Boy...ALIVE!*

The **Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow** Exhibition also features large mechanical sculptures created by Aspen, Colorado artist, **Pamela Joseph**. Her installation of moving sculptures provides a contemporary twist to a dying art form. Joseph’s giant sculpture, *The Lady Sword Swallower* will provide a riveting experience for viewers who seek the “curious”. Joseph will provide a tour and talk about her work

on the opening day, Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. at **artspace**. Other animatronics artworks by Pamela Joseph include *The Extinct Animals*, *The Absurdities Banner*, *The Oddities*, *The Dancing Three-Legged Alligator Lady*, and a “Scrim Room” that makes you feel that you are peeking behind the curtained tent wall. The Artist’s Talk and Tour are free. In discussing her work Pamela Joseph explains, “*The Sideshow of the Absurd* is a fantasy scenario which references the visual culture of the traveling carnival while exploring contemporary notions of femaleness and female power. The intent is to simultaneously disseminate information and nostalgia for a lost indigenous American art form, and to simulate ideas, provoke thought and act as a catalyst for understanding the present.”

This traveling exhibit, “*The Sideshow of the Absurd*” opened in 2001 at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO. The exhibit has traveled to seven venues including the MAC in Dallas, Northern Indiana Arts Association, Munster, IN, the Johnson Gallery in Albuquerque, NM, and most recently at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

One of the last known, and producing, Sideshow Banner Artists, Glen Davies, will exhibit his work and provide a one-week Artist’s Residency, July 14 – 18 at **artspace**. Davies is from Chicago and has been producing Circus Banners for years. He will create an ARTSPACE ALIVE banner featuring the “SPIDORA” curiosity during his residency. Davies will spend his mornings teaching the ArtSMART students from Brown Middle School in Springhill to create a classroom Sideshow Banner. In the afternoons he will work on his “SPIDORA” Banner at the **artspace** studio and will meet with groups by appointment. On Thursday, July 17, Davies will provide an Artist’s Talk and Tour at 6:00 pm, as part of the free monthly, TNT EXPRESS night at **artspace**. Davies has been designing and painting Sideshow banners since he ran away to join the circus in the summer of 1973. “My job was to paint a sideshow attraction for the midway entitled ‘Giant Jungle Rats.’ I had told my sideshow employer that I was studying painting at the Art Institute of Chicago and he was willing to give me a chance to prove myself. Traveling with the circus inspired me and hardened my resolve to become a “show painter,”—one hired to perform the decorative painting needs of circuses and carnivals.” With his Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Illinois and a Ford Foundations Creative and Performing Arts Fellowship, Davies has been painting murals for commercial buildings and hospitals for more than 35 years. His works are in galleries and private collections such as the McDonald’s Corporation in Oakbrook, Illinois, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, and the Krannert Museum and Kinkead Pavilion in Champaign Illinois. Some of the large-scale Sideshow Banners that Davies will display include *Escape Artist*, *Missing Link*, *Block Head*, *He-She*, *World’s Strangest Family*, and the *Human Pin Cushion*.

The Exhibition also includes a collection of large-scale vintage banners owned by George Douglas, most of which are for sale. The works in this collection were created by Fred G. Johnson, considered to be one of the finest Sideshow banner painters. His 65 year career of banner painting created many works of art and his banners are prized around the world. Johnson’s ingenious techniques for painting a banner inspired generations of

young painters, including artist Glen Davies, whose works will be shown as well. The banners that will be exhibited include *Cavalcade World of Wonders, The Last Mile, Premature Burial A Beautiful Girl 128 Years Ago, Lady in a Fish Bowl Alive, Eeka Snake Handler, and Half Boy*. **artspace** is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. **artspace** will be closed on July 3 and 4 in observance of the Fourth of July, but will reopen on Saturday, July 5<sup>th</sup>.

#### SPECIAL FEATURE:

The Shreveport Regional Arts Council will produce a **Sideshow Extravaganza** to kick off the opening of the **Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow** Exhibition. The Sideshow event will be held at **artspace**, Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. The party will include professional sword-swallowing, fire-eating, nail-biting...the Human Straw, Brian Brushwood from Austin, Texas. The Ring-Master for the festivities is D.J. Robin a true “Carnival Barker” and D.J. Extraordinaire. *Step Right Up...* and Dance the night away to a disco beat that packs some heat. Get a taste of the “*Carney Carney-vors*” (two headed Pigs in a Blanket, Elephant Boy Cookies, Bearded Lady Fingers, and Sword Swallowing Sliced Candied Apples) prepared by John Cariere, Cotton Boll and enjoy mysterious frozen concoctions from the Cash Bar. This party is not for the faint of heart; instead it will provide a strange and bizarre way to welcome the art of the Sideshow.

To join this Circus log onto [shreveportbossierfunguide.com](http://shreveportbossierfunguide.com) or call the Shreveport Regional Arts Council at 318-673-6500 / 318-673-6535.

#### SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

##### **Curious, Mysterious and Strange: Secrets of the Sideshow** Exhibition Events:

- ❖ **Sideshow Extravaganza**: Friday, June 27, 7:00 pm, **artspace**, Entertainment, Dancing, “Carney Carney-vors”, Cash Bar. Tickets: \$15 each; purchase on-line at [shreveportbossierfunguide.com](http://shreveportbossierfunguide.com) or call 318-673-6500/318-673-6535
- ❖ **Opening Day**: Saturday, June 28, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
  - 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm: Sideshow Fun in the Anderson Fun-A-Torium with Professional Artists: \$5 each
  - 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm: Artist’s Talk and Tour with sculptor, Pamela Joseph, Aspen Colorado: Free
- ❖ **Summer Sideshow Camp** for kids ages 7 – 14; July 14 – 18, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon in the Anderson Fun-A-Torium; \$90 for first child, \$75 for second and third child from same family
- ❖ **Glen Davies Artist’s Residency** – July 14 – 18. Special Workshops and Demonstrations for groups by appointment, call 318-673-6500/673-6535
- ❖ **TNT Express** – Thursday, June 17; Monthly, Third Thursday Trolley Night Tour - 4:30 pm – 8:00 pm
  - Artist’s Tour and Talk by Glen Davies; 6:00 pm
- ❖ **Saturday Sideshow Art** – Every Saturday through August 30; 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm, Professional Artists teach techniques in creating Circus Banner Art - \$5 each

For more information contact the Shreveport Regional Arts Council, 318-673-6500.