

## THE CEDARS

Noted artist Albert Scherbarth rolls out of his custom bed, shuffles to his massive kitchen, then goes to work. All in a span of about 90 seconds.

Scherbarth lives and plies his trade in a 4,500-square-foot, 150-foot-long building in The Cedars, a once-affluent residential area south of I-30 and the Farmer's Market, named two centuries ago for its spectacular forest of red cedar trees. Today, the artist refers to his neighborhood "New Lebanon" (crime and noise remain ongoing concerns), and has spent much of the last decade converting an old industrial, wooden structure (a former Half Price Books warehouse) into his dream home.

The Nebraskan born artist moved to the city in the 1970s to earn his MFA from the University of Dallas. Today, he lives in about a third of the space—alongside two dogs, a couple of cats and pair of chickens named Matagorda and Aubrey. ("They devour bags of garbage, so it's impossible to have a compost pile here," Scherbarth says, adding that his hens also bestow the gift of fresh eggs upon him each day.) As an artist who works in paint, glass, metal, and with some ruthless chemical compounds and massive equipment, he opted to subdivide his space with a series of doors and walls. The residential section, with its 12-foot ceilings rising to an 18-foot peak, resonates with some of his custom creations, recycled treasures and other innovations.

"There are a lot of likeminded folks down here, and a lot of cool things happening," says Scherbarth. Ongoing problems with prostitution

and other crime aside, the artist says the chance to own that much space both lured him and keeps him in the area.

That space, too, consumes much of his ongoing efforts. Take the kitchen, for instance, with its 5-foot-square steel island; Scherbarth eats there, reads there and conducts much of his thriving business there. He bartered years ago for the six-burner industrial stove. The cast concrete countertop is done in a charcoal gray and fitted with a stainless steel sink; a nearby coffee area also has a cast concrete counter. The artist salvaged knotty pine wainscoting from a friend's home, then stacked the tongue-and-groove planks end to end. The result: paneling that rises 12 feet and brings warmth to the entire space.

The workshop has evolved over the years. When Scherbarth moved in six years ago, he was allocating most of his professional time to oil painting. Accordingly, he created a network of floating walls, the likes of which you'd see in a NYC art gallery; every few months he would host a show in this studio space to sell his wares (mostly renderings of big, beautiful flowers). Today, he focuses his energies on cast glass and building furniture. (Among his most recent projects: fashioning a suspended glass ceiling that resembled a butterfly for a client's powder room.) The workshop now houses everything from a kiln to lamp-making gear.

It's a dirty job, true, but whenever Scherbarth craves a shower, he only has to go a few steps, and he's home.

**What does artist Albert Scherbarth love about The Cedars, the area he has called home for a decade? He adores his studio/residence, a rambling former Half Price Books warehouse.**