

# Home & Garden

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## QUITE A SIGHT

The dancing is beautiful, and narration adds to the effect in 'Masterworks.' Page 7D

### HOME OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY'S PROFILE OF A WELL-DESIGNED LIVING SPACE

TAKE A LOOK AT A PHOTO GALLERY AT [WWW.NEWSOBSERVER.COM/HOMEANDGARDEN](http://WWW.NEWSOBSERVER.COM/HOMEANDGARDEN).



One of the main challenges for Rhonda Angerio was creating a modern space that preserved the historical and industrial character of the Cotton Mill.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES WEST

Home of the Month is a collaborative effort with the N.C. State University College of Design through its Home Environments Design Initiative. Featured homes, selected by an expert panel, highlight the benefits of good home designs and represent the diversity of homes and home renovations designed by North Carolina architects. The articles, written by faculty, graduate students and alumni of the School of Architecture, bring to light the exemplary attributes of each home. Our goal is to offer inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to your living space.

## Wide open spaces

### Renovation casts Cotton Mill condo in a new light

By PATRICIA MORGADO  
CORRESPONDENT

Brian Stratton realized he could not keep piling things all over his place due to lack of storage space, nor continue sleeping and working in the same room. But he decided against moving to one of the many condominiums in downtown Raleigh. Instead, Stratton chose to reimagine the 1,320-square-foot Cotton Mill unit he had owned since 2000.

The former 1890s industrial building in downtown Raleigh was converted into condominiums in 1996. Stratton was following his belief that "it is the responsibility of people who live in historic property to help them maintain their relevance."

SEE COTTON MILL, PAGE 4D



Brian Stratton's condominium also proved a design challenge with its east-facing windows as the only light source.

### THE PROJECT

#### COTTON MILL RENOVATION

**Architect:** Rhonda Angerio, AIA (Angerio Design PLLC) 612 W. Lane St., Raleigh 27603 919-743-0778 rhonda@angerio-design.com

**Project location:** 614 Capital Blvd., Raleigh 27608

**Square Footage:** 1,405

**Budget:** N/A

**Key attributes:** renovation of a historical structure with a contemporary design; maximization of light; careful attention to details

**Contributors:** Craven Bridger of Redwine Renovation (Contractor), P.O. Box 6367, Raleigh 27628; Trimline Woodworks, cabinetry fabrication and installation, 309 Chapanoke Road, Raleigh 26603; Mandala Design, concrete countertops, 133-D Thompson St., Asheville 28803; Sedaris Hardwood Floors, 1812 Manuel St., Raleigh 27606

**Photographer:** Jim West of JWest Productions, 109 Gregory Drive, Cary 2715

## Skinks and salamanders welcome

### Attention to detail helps make a garden critter-friendly

Lizards love my garden. Skinks, with their iridescent blue tails, bask openly on the rocks surrounding the pond. And both the green and brown varieties of anoles hang out on my shady porch and sunny back deck all year, consuming all manner of insects and entertaining us with their showy mating rituals.

#### THE GRAPEVINE



Carol Stein

me around her Cary garden, which includes a salamander habitat, I didn't have a clue how to attract

them.

Her salamander haven is in a sheltered corner of her backyard. A semicircle of neatly-hewn logs contains a thick layer of leaf litter to provide cover and warmth. A few feet away, she sank a small kiddie pool into the ground and lined it with landscape cloth to provide a foothold for the salamanders to climb in and out.

Megalos said, "Salamanders breed in mid-February, usually after we've had some warm rains." The pond must contain only clean rainwater, caught directly in the pond or in clean containers. Not even roof runoff caught in rain barrels is suitable, as it might contain pollutants from the roofing material. And there can be no fish in the pond, because fish really love salamander eggs.

That explains why no salamanders are breeding in my pond: I keep it stocked with fish to control the mosquito population. But now I know that salamanders are mosquito predators, too. So much so that Megalos catches additional rainwater to breed mosquito larvae to feed to her baby salamanders, which, she says, "look like dark gray Chinese dragons, with long bodies and tails, two arms, two legs and a mudpuppy head with feathery gills splayed out on each side of their neck." Adults have returned to spawn in her salamander habitat 16 out of the past 17 years.

The entire garden is dedicated to interactions. A woodland garden is populated with native plants rescued during the construction of Cary Parkway, and she has a cooperative children's garden.

In the older, established neighborhood of gently rolling hills and trees that took root after cows stopped roaming the former pasture land nestled between Kildaire Farm and Old Apex roads, her front yard is unique. Where once an obligatory patch of grass, tall trees and shrubs grew, Megalos and her husband, Mark, have transformed the slope into a sunny, three-tiered edible garden.

He is a forester, skilled at picking which trees are keepers and which ones to let go. But it took several years of negotiations between the forester and the gardener to finally provide enough sun to grow herbs, vegetables and fruit.

The slope of the property was

SEE GRAPEVINE, PAGE 5D

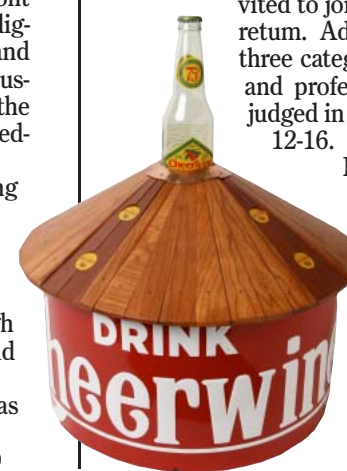
## N&O birdhouse contest just around the corner

Time is quickly running down. The N&O's 2009 Birdhouse Competition is a little more than two weeks away. This year's competition is March 19-22 — so you'd better get to building.

Adults and children 4 and older are invited to join the fun at JC Raulston Arboretum. Adult entries will be judged in three categories: serious, flights of fancy and professional. Youth entries will be judged in these age groups: 4-7, 8-11 and 12-16.

North Carolina Heritage awards will go to the entries that best represent the rich fabric that makes up our state.

Visit [www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum/birdhouses](http://www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum/birdhouses) to get contest rules. In the meantime, get building and make a bird happy.



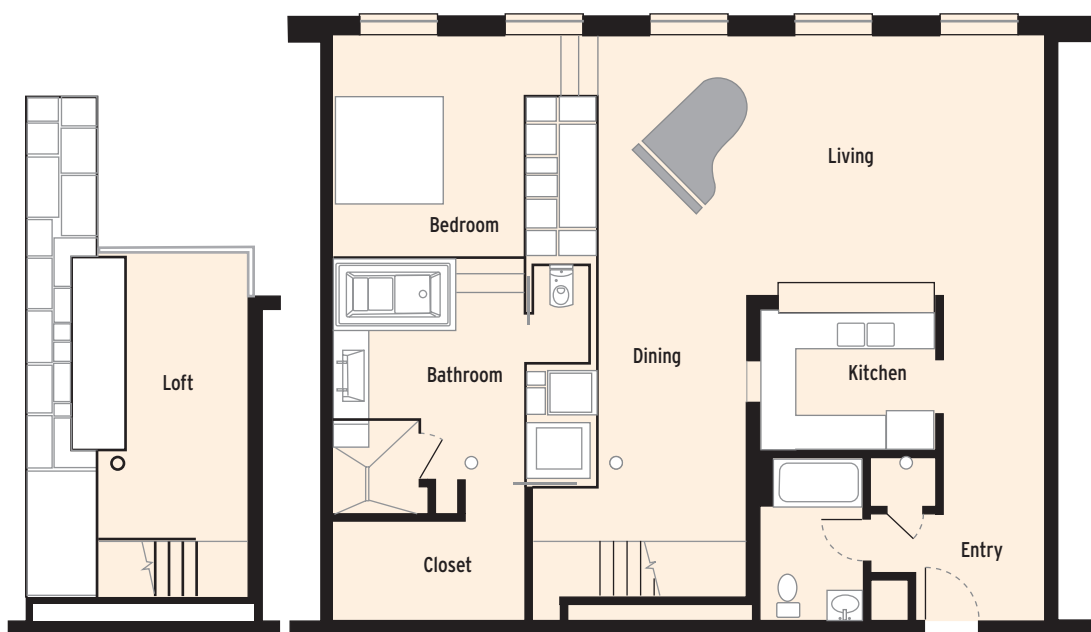


With the dresser inside the black door on the right, there was no need for anything beyond a bed, bathtub, vanity and shower, elements that would help blur the boundary between the areas. The minimalist look is calm and soothing.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES WEST



Part of the building's original structure, including the original brick wall and beams, had been concealed since 1996. The most recent renovation unveiled them.



**COTTON MILL**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

For the design, Stratton contacted architect Rhonda Angerio, who, as a former Cotton Mill resident, knew Stratton and the building well. Angerio Design faced two main challenges: one, the need to accommodate a living area with a grand piano, dining area, office, kitchen, sleeping area, two bathrooms, laundry and as much storage as possible in a finite space; and two, make a modern space that preserved the building's historical and industrial character.

The design process took about eight months, a period in which Angerio, Stratton and later the builder, Craven Bridger, from Redwine Renovation, worked closely together, carefully deciding absolutely everything — from the layout to the materials to the smallest of details. They began by eliminating the

maze of small rooms (except for the second bathroom and kitchen), and unveiling the building's original brick wall, two columns and structural decking that had been concealed since 1996. This left a cubic space wrapped in smooth, weathered surfaces that would be complemented by pristine contemporary elements.

To maintain the fluidity of the space and maximize the natural light, Angerio proposed an open floor plan and three rectilinear volumes to define the areas for each activity. Each of these volumes has distinct proportions and finishes, allowing them to be read as independent pieces carefully arranged to make a geometric composition inside the historical container.

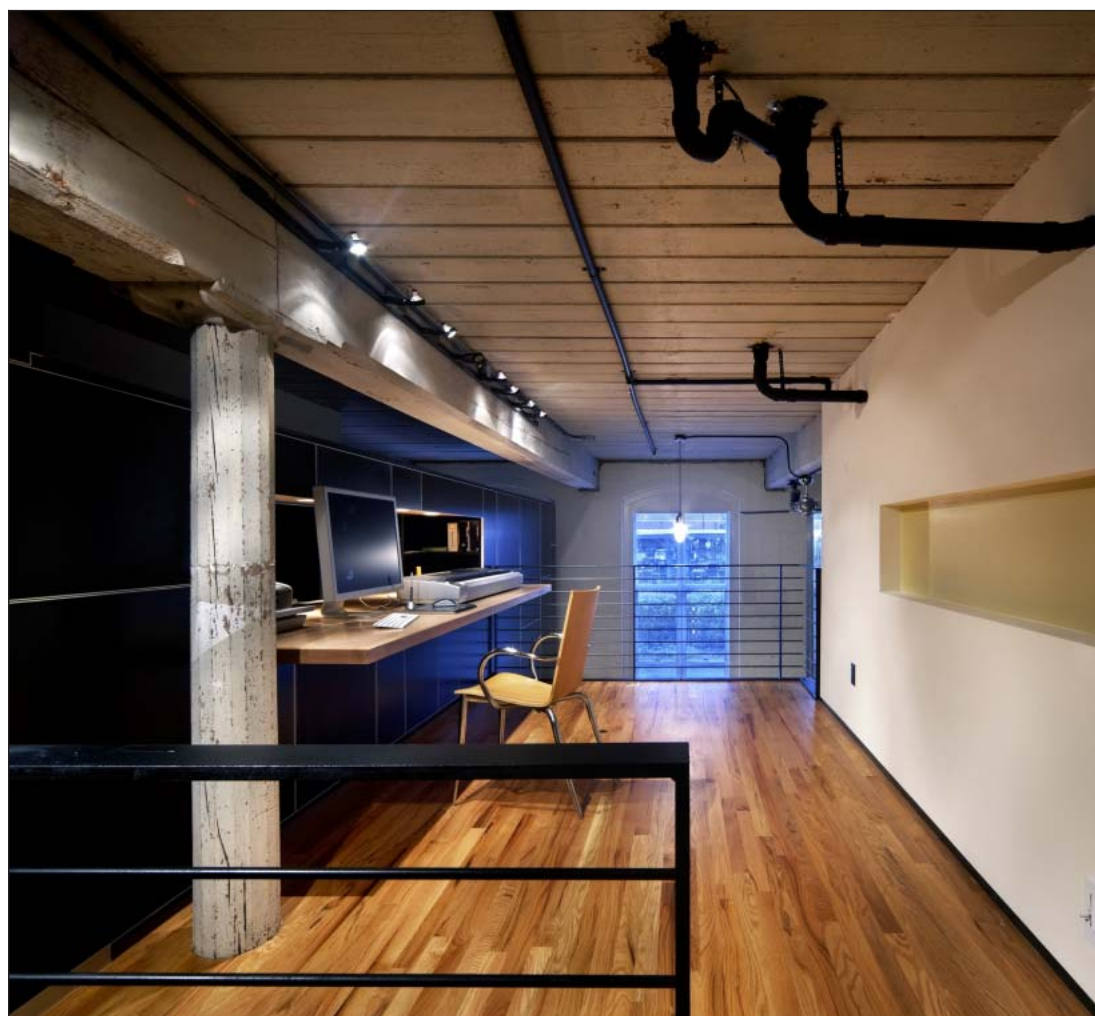
A white box containing the second bathroom and kitchen separates the entryway from the dining area. The openings to the kitchen lighten the form, reducing its potential prominence while integrating this space with the living and dining area.

Angerio devised an 8-inch-thick horizontal platform to add a loft to the otherwise invisible 14 feet, 8 inches of height, increasing the square footage from 1,320 to 1,405 and making room for an independent work-

space. Introducing new columns to support the loft would have brought competition to the existing ones, so it was necessary to structure the loft along the north and south sides. This solution allows the loft to cantilever to the living area and opposite side. The transparent handrail helps reveal the thinness of the platform, which is perceived as an unobtrusive horizontal element.

A dark wood rectangular prism (4 x 12½ x 28 feet), namely the "bar" for Angerio and Stratton, is the key element in this intervention and the most prominent volume. It defines the public and private spaces while hiding its true utilitarian functions behind operable panels: storage, music library, amplifier, wine cave, office materials, dresser, toilet and laundry. The variety of sizes and shapes of the items to be stored inside the "bar" allowed for an asymmetrical composition of dark wood shapes defined by aluminum lines with absolute precision: an art piece in itself and as Angerio said, "a counterpart for the Cotton Mill's historic character."

These three volumes (the white box, the loft and the "bar") define the three public activities: living, dining and working. To take advantage of the natural



An 8-inch platform created a loft in the otherwise indivisible 14-foot, 8-inch space, increasing the square footage and making room for an independent workspace.

light, the living area was organized adjacent to the east wall and the loft arranged perpendicular to one of the windows. In doing so, Angerio was able to bring natural light into the dining area (below) and working space (above) and open views from these spaces to the exterior.

The grand piano, a central piece in this organization, is placed in the crossing of the living and dining area where the shape of the space and the wood ceiling of the loft help with the resonance.

Adding to the openness of the design, the areas for sleeping — elevated on a platform — and bathing were conceived as a single space. With the dresser and the toilet contained inside the "bar," there was no need for any-

thing beyond a bed, a bathtub, a vanity and a shower, elements that would help blur the boundary between the two areas.

Matching the height of the "bedroom" platform with that of the bathtub, which in turn is aligned with the steps, was essential in this effort. Also important was extending the light-concrete countertop from the bathroom into the shower space, making the frameless shower glass even less perceptible while offering a beautiful solution to an ordinary need: shower storage. The minimalistic qualities of this space make it calm and soothing.

It's almost amazing the extent to which every single element of the design is intentional," Stratton said. And the selection of colors was no exception. To bring

"awareness of the whole from any point within the space," Angerio said, the historical elements preserve their original colors, now weathered, and a new limited color palette is used repeatedly throughout the unit.

Working together has paid off for homeowner and architect. Stratton says the design has significantly changed his life by introducing serenity and beauty into the historical container he wanted to tribute. And for Angerio, "it's been one of the most joyful projects. ... I felt like I was designing it for myself."

Patricia Morgado is an associate professor of architecture at N.C. State University's College of Design.

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