

SPRING 2011  
Vol. 4, Issue 4

# Home style MAGAZINE

cover  
story

Loft  
blends  
function  
with  
design

*The Telegraph Home Magazine*



# An artistic touch

Loft blends function with design



Story and Photos by Kathie Bassett

**N**atural light infuses Penny Schmidt's Downtown Alton loft at Mississippi Landing with a visual excitement. On a sunny day, the light reflecting off the Mississippi River sparkles and bounces, serving as a dynamic backdrop for her interior space.

Sunlight streams through the cupola above her seating area, and rose-colored light reflects off the neighboring red brick building through frosted glass, suffusing the space with a soft, translucent glow.

"I love being on the river," Penny said. "I started as a child living on the Mississippi River in Elsah, so it felt instinctive to come back here."

After graduating from Principia College, where her father, James Schmidt, was head of the art department, Penny moved to New York

## COVER STORY

City to work in the art world. She began as an intern at Findlay Galleries and eventually opened her own gallery, Schmidt Bingham.

After Sept. 11, 2001, Penny decided to return to the area, bringing with her not only pieces that she had collected over the years but also works by artists she represented.

She specifically chose her loft because of the magnificent view she has of the Clark Bridge, noting how beautiful the riverscape is at night.

With that decision made, Penny shifted her focus to the interior space.

"When putting together the loft, the starting point was the art," she said.

Particular prominence is given to two works by her father: a pastel, "Steps to the Beach," and "Bridges Over the Seine" that he painted as a student in Paris.



**Penny has created intimate spaces within her spacious loft through her placement of furnishings and her eclectic art collection. Sculptor Todd Carroll made the fireplace, door pulls and ottoman for Penny.**

*continued on next page*



FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Because of the open floor plan, Penny opted to accentuate the juxtaposition of the building's industrial origins with her penchant for clean, modern lines embodied by a mid-century modern aesthetic.

Textures are layered: The 1912 building's original bones of brick and hewn beams are exposed, and the wall's flat color planes serve as a foil for her eclectic paintings, which include both abstract and representational pieces.

One of the first projects Penny undertook was to commission sculptor Carroll Todd, a Memphis artist who she had represented, to fashion site-specific designs for her kitchen hood, fireplace and door pulls.

"I was particularly conscious that I wanted the kitchen to be something that I liked to look at," she explained. "The idea for the hood was to interpret a sense of the movement of the river and smoke."

Penny salvaged her sleek 1950s island from the old St. Patrick School's industrial kitchen and had the sturdy piece wrapped in a maple veneer to complement her cabinets.

Her father helped her choose the palette for her walls, drawing inspiration from the vintage Oriental carpet in her seating area.

By creating smaller spaces within the loft through her arrangement of furnishings, the space exudes warmth and comfort.

"I'm very happy here," she said. "I love being part of a smaller community and being near my father and brother. I see Alton as a place of great natural beauty and enormous potential."

The open floor plan highlights the buildings industrial past by showcasing wooden beams and steel supports. Penny's father, artist James Schmidt, helped her choose the color palette. Two of his paintings can be seen in the photo on the left.

**CREATE THE LIVING SPACE YOU HAVE ALWAYS DESIRED!**

**Whether it's a new deck, enclosing your patio, a sunroom or updating your home!**

**\$500 OFF!**

**BUTLER HOME IMPROVEMENT**

\*Not valid on previous jobs or bids. \$3,500 minimum. Mention ad at appt. Expires 5/1/11.

Let the Butler Take Care of Your Home!  
Locally owned

**FREE ESTIMATES! 618-539-9800**

*Decks • Windows • Sunrooms • Patio Enclosures  
Gables • Siding • Basements*



[www.ButlerHomeImprovement.com](http://www.ButlerHomeImprovement.com)