

HOME & DESIGN

JULY 2006



Lofty ideal: space galore + hiding places

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Loft living

taken to a higher level

FORMER PHILADELPHIA FACTORY GETS UPDATE AND STORAGE SPACE



BY BRIDGET McQUATE

PHOTOS BY ROBERT HAKALSKI/
VISUAL MACHINERY STUDIO

Brick walls, wood floors, exposed ductwork and massive wooden columns define an expanse of open space.

Local Design Showcase

JON WAGNER, ARCHITECT

Two roll-up garage doors provide access to storage space for photographic equipment. The green wall was raised to conceal unattractive utilities and reveal more desirable ones.



Buttons, embedded in the wooden floors, are all that remains of this old brick factory's former life.

In its present incarnation, the building near 13th and Callowhill Streets is home to human resources professional Sonya Shiflet and her husband Robert Hakalski, a commercial and art photographer. They bought their double-wide loft condo shortly after the structure's rebirth.

Rehabbed by real estate developers/artists Miles & Generalis Inc., each loft in the building came equipped with yards upon yards of brick walls, wood floors, a basic kitchen, a bathroom, exposed ductwork and massive wooden columns holding up a boundless expanse of openness — the kind of space that makes you want to do cartwheels across the floor, just because you can.

Shiflet and Hakalski loved the contemporary/industrial aesthetic of their loft and made many improvements to existing architectural features. They painted the ceiling, finished floors, sanded columns and enhanced exposed pipes — polishing the

copper of some and covering others with a faux metal finish. But they eventually started longing for “luxuries” that the rest of us take for granted: closets and any enclosed storage space whatsoever. Their dirty laundry had nowhere to hide, nor did the household items or Hakalski's photographic equipment. They called architect Jon Wagner, whose work they had seen and admired.

“They decided to take loft living to a higher level,” Wagner says “They wanted help to go beyond the existing stock partitions and fixtures to individualize the space and tailor it to specific functions.”

Indoor parking for gear

Hakalski is a professional photographer of high-end commercial products, who transforms ordinary objects into gleaming works of art. He wanted to use the loft as a working studio all day, but convert it back into living space at night. The architect's plan called for a new wall built out several feet from the original wall. Inserted into the new wall are two massive, garage-style doors with aluminum-slat, roll-top fronts that reinforce the loft's factory theme. Hakalski can now just slide his lighting, cameras and massive rolls of background material into

The spacious office area includes a desk designed by metal artist Bill Curran, a friend and neighbor of the loft's owners.



the new storage space and pull the garage doors down to keep it all out of sight.

High-tech kitchen cap adds storage

A space-age, white cap on top of the kitchen partition now conceals extra storage and gives a more modern architectural shape to the whole space. Placing the storage on top of the kitchen takes advantage of the enviably high, 12-foot ceiling.

Translucent acrylic panels along the cap's perimeter slide over to provide access to the storage "the panels have embedded fabric that lets newly installed lighting shine through from the inside with a soft green halo effect," Wagner says.

A closet becomes a great-looking wall

Before the architects' intervention, the bedroom closet consisted of rods hung against one wall with curtains covering the hanging clothes. Wagner's strategy was to fashion a more functional closet space that was attractive, yet subtle.

The new closets on the inside are large fiber-board boxes placed against the wall.

On the outside, oversized wooden doors are fronted with maple veneer and then stained to create one gorgeous wood-

en wall. Wagner says, "We cooked up a recipe for the door stain consisting of wood stain plus ink to add color variation and drama." The doors were finished with aluminum fixtures to emphasize the boundaries of each door.

The new "closet wall" also conceals an entertainment center with a fold-out television and stereo equipment.

Little fixes in the mix

Wagner worked with the couple to fix several smaller problems. He suggested heightening one wall to conceal a furnace but still reveal finished pipes. Certain air vents and lighting fixtures were relocated to more logical places, and shelves were added for extra storage in the bathroom.

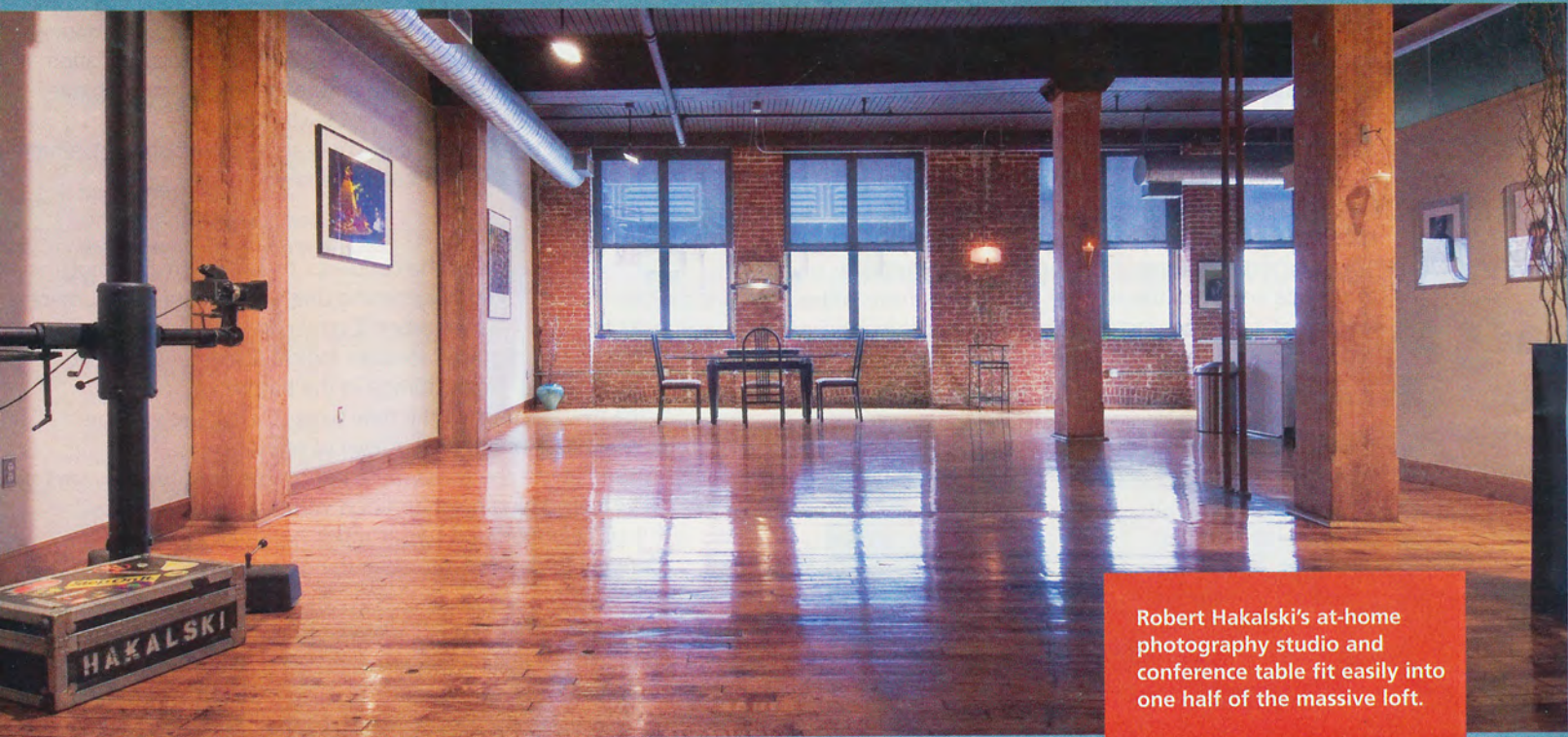
The overall effect of the new work is a loft with a more polished look and a higher level of efficiency.

Asked about the area where the couple lives, Hakalski says "It's an emerging neighborhood with lots of possibilities." If their neighborhood has as much potential as their loft, it's ready to develop into something wonderful.

Bridget McQuate is a Philadelphia freelance writer and former editor of *The Philadelphia Architect*.



A new wall-length closet was designed to be functional on the inside while adding a subtle warmth on the outside.



Robert Hakalski's at-home photography studio and conference table fit easily into one half of the massive loft.



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Photo courtesy of Marquart Photography.

Jon Wagner



Massive columns and a steel planter by metal artist Bill Curran form a wall-free hallway leading from the doorway into the living space.

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