

Inside.  
Outside.  
**Home.**

# Aboode cville

JANUARY 2015

South Street  
Brewery's  
new view

A Belmont  
kitchen expands  
its reach

Breaking the  
“fifth wall”  
puzzle

On 93 acres,  
a modern oasis  
uses its angles

# Scaling up



# Old world new views



On a venerable farm, a house for today

BY ERIKA HOWSARE PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIRGINIA HAMRICK





The house needed to dialogue with the courtyard formed by the property's old buildings and with a pond downhill from the driveway. The water provided the home's focal point and name: Pond View.

It's appealing to imagine building anew on open land—making one's mark on untouched acreage. But one couple in Rappahannock County took on a more unusual challenge. Lynn and Pam Pittinger bought a 93-acre farm and set about adding a modern house to an existing cluster of barns and sheds, architect Jim Burton imagined a thoroughly contemporary dwelling.

The house needed to dialogue not only with the evocative courtyard formed by these old buildings, but with a pond downhill from the driveway. The water would provide the obvious focal point for the house's inhabitants, as well as its name: Pond View.

"It's the most unique experience I'd ever had in a building site," said Burton, who compared the courtyard to a European village. "There's a scale to the space that's really special." As for the pond, he opted to let the new house "cap" the open end of the courtyard. "As you come up to the entry, there are hints of the pond, but you don't see it directly," he said. "When you're in the house it reveals itself in a very dramatic way."

The Pittingers had never lived in a modernist structure, but were attracted to loft-style spaces with their wide expanses and steel beams, and wanted an open plan that would give prime billing to bucolic views of their property. Burton arrived at a scheme that separated public and

private zones into two very different volumes—the former in a tall, metal-clad section that juts out from the hill and seems to float over the pond's edge, and the bedroom wing in a shorter box whose cedar and stone exterior relates to the nearby barns. At the angled joint between these sections sits the entry.

## Careful framing

While the couple came to Burton asking for a spacious great room, they ended up with a more dramatic living area than they'd expected. "There was some discussion about how nice the views were from up a little higher," said Burton. "We suggested the roof deck, and a loft to get to the roof deck." The Pittingers saw that having a loft above their kitchen/living/dining space would mean another way to enjoy the views. "You have this bonus space you can go to and still be part of what's happening downstairs," said Lynn.

Oversized windows drink in the view, but not indiscriminately. "You're looking at water through the windows in the living space and it feels like the house is on the water, the way the sightlines work out," said Burton. "We didn't take the windows all the way to the floor"—which would have revealed more of the near shoreline.

The great room carefully delineates its different functions while allowing materials to speak

to each other from one zone to the next. For example, black granite countertops and cherry cabinets along the north wall of the kitchen run seamlessly into the dining room, where they become a built-in buffet. "It really ties the two rooms together," said Pam.

The cabinet doors (and many other built-ins throughout the house) were made by Lynn, an accomplished woodworker, largely of wood milled from the property. Pam's large paintings also lend considerable life to every room of the interior. "That was part of the charge, to create a gallery-type living space," said Burton.

Along the boundary between the grand height of the great room and the intimacy of the dining room, the scale of the house seems to strike a careful balance. In a similar way, human-scaled spaces indoors reckon with the vastness of the landscape outside.

A tight materials palette unifies the house. The black granite shows up in the bathrooms as well; vanities and mudroom cupboards echo the design of the kitchen cabinets; walls are white to allow the Pittingers' colorful possessions to visually step forward. Wood on ceilings and floors balances the coolness of steel and concrete. In the great room, sheets of cedar plywood on the ceiling almost read like giant wooden tiles.

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## Making it work

Beyond a real affinity for beauty, indoors and out, the house places a premium on functionality. For example, said Burton, “I feel strongly that it’s great when an owner can use their own front door. It’s usually a nicer experience than entering a laundry room through a garage.” From their flagstone-paved breezeway, the Pittingers arrive at a stoop and, from that single spot, can choose to enter their mudroom or the more formal entry.

Construction and design both promote energy-efficiency. The house’s public wing is built of structural insulated panels (SIPs), while the rest of the home is frame-built and highly insulated. Due to large southeast-facing windows, the home enjoys passive-solar heating, and with the entry being reminiscent of a Southern dogtrot, it can be passively cooled as well—just open the two facing doors and a cooling breeze comes through. “We did some energy modeling, and it showed that if we turned the house just a hair more it was increasing the energy-efficiency dramatically,” said Burton. Louvres over south-facing windows protect from summer sun.

Though this was the Pittingers’ first time building a home, they feel they got it right. “It’s a really nice space to spend a lot of time in,” said Lynn. “This is a really comfortable place to spend the morning, afternoon, and evening.”

## Makers’ mark

Architect Jim Burton prizes craftsmanship and is committed to employing local tradespeople. So when his clients Lynn and Pam Pittinger asked him to include their own creative works in the house he designed for them, he was more than receptive.

Lynn built kitchen cabinet doors, bedroom furniture and other built-in and freestanding pieces for Pond View. Much of his raw material came from the property—for example, a fallen walnut tree became bathroom vanities. Simple, clean designs repeat throughout the house, allowing Lynn’s workmanship to shine and unifying the home.

Pam’s paintings, meanwhile, receive pride of place in nearly every room—one even has a special spot in a hallway opposite a window, so that it can be seen as guests approach the entry. Her work is lively, mostly abstract, raw and refined at the same time. You can see more of her paintings at [pampittinger.carbonmade.com](http://pampittinger.carbonmade.com).—E.H.



## THE BREAKDOWN

3453 square feet

**Structural system:** Steel and SIPs

**Exterior material:** Standing seam metal and vertical T&G cedar siding

**Interior finishes:** Drywall

**Roof materials:** Standing seam metal roof, green roof

**Window system:** Pella clad windows and aluminum storefront

**Mechanical systems:** Geothermal heat pump

**General contractor:** Webb & Sons Construction Inc.



Wood on ceilings and floors and in cabinetry (built by Lynn, an accomplished woodworker) balances the coolness of steel and concrete. In the master bathroom, the vanity echoes the design of the kitchen cabinets.