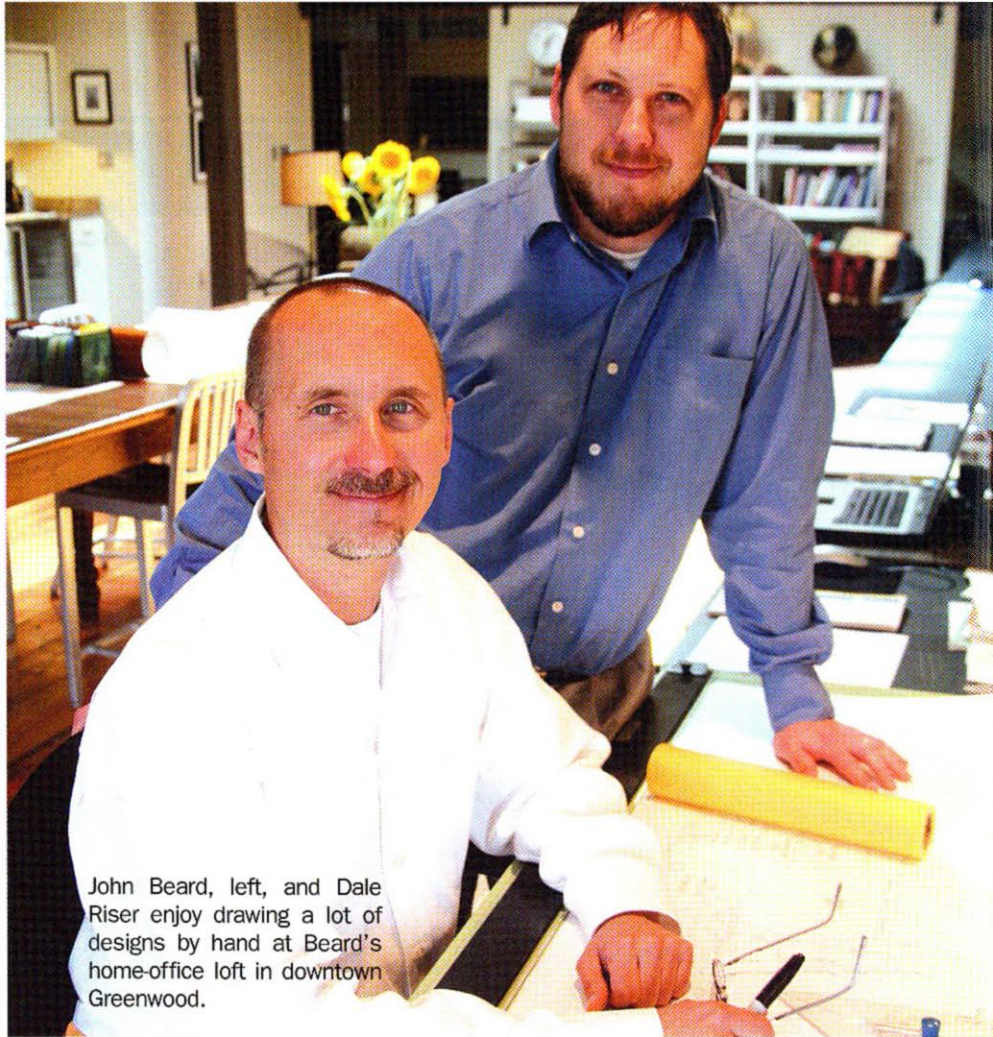


Lofty designs

BY AMY McCULLOUGH

John Beard eats, sleeps and breathes design in his live/work loft on Howard Street.

Beard's 3,500 square feet are used efficiently and artfully. There is a heavy emphasis on symmetry and use of the contrived and the raw — shiny silver screws and exposed plaster. Examples include artwork framed with Plexiglas riveted to the walls, short metal ladders holding up a long tabletop for an extended work desk, and a strip of wall space used for bulletin boards to hang project drafts.



John Beard, left, and Dale Riser enjoy drawing a lot of designs by hand at Beard's home-office loft in downtown Greenwood.

The vibe is a bit earthy, yet extremely modern, and altogether soothing.

Beard and Dale Riser share the office space of Beard's downtown Greenwood loft — along with Hank the dog, whom Riser calls "the silent partner."

"It's wonderful to live where you work," Beard said.

Beard's work in Greenwood was "starting to explode" by the end of 2006, he said. When he and Riser found that they shared the same love for good design work, they teamed in the spring of 2007.

Whether it's furniture, graphics or landscape, Riser said, "we admire good design, period." Beard said having clients, such as Viking Range Corp., which are committed to quality work makes their jobs easier.

Although Beard's first love was residential projects, he and Riser also do new construction, renovation and interiors. They are open to collaborating with other firms, he said, and sometimes they use contract labor.

They enjoy projects in which they can be hands-on and involved in all the details, Beard said.

Riser previously worked at Lake/Flato Architects in San Antonio and the Johnson-McAdams architectural firm in Greenwood. Beard spent time in New York working for the curator of architecture and design at the Museum of

Modern Art. He also worked at Mockbee Coker Architects in Memphis. The work of Samuel Mockbee, who passed away in 2001, was a major influence on both of them.

Mockbee saw buildings as being rooted in place, said Beard and Riser. Local materials and climate should be taken into account. Flat land and heat are the major considerations for the Delta, they said.

The science and art of a building's design should be balanced, Riser said.

For example, a cabin Beard built at Spring Hill in Webster County features an overhang — an extended slope of the roof where it intersects one side of the house — to control sunlight. He posi-

tioned the front of the house to the south so sunlight could enter during the winter months, when the sun is lowest in the sky. The high summer sun is blocked by the large overhang. He used translucent fiberglass on the north-facing porch to allow the indirect north light to enter the porch. Beard also paid attention to air circulation and ventilation to combat the heat.

Beard and Riser hope work continues to come their way, and they look forward to expanding their client base in the Delta.

"One thing that Dale and I agree on is that we were both drawn to the culture and landscape of the Delta. ... It's like we were meant to be here," Beard said. **U**