

HOMES WHERE
ARTISTS
 LIVE & WORK

by NANCY HILLER photography by KENDALL REEVES



Art may indeed be its own reward, but still it's nice to have a comfortable nest to call home and a place to work in peace.

The combined dwellings and work-places of most artists are distinctive but rarely lavish; few who are devoted to their art ever achieve that kind of material success. More likely, an artist's home will be modest and utilitarian but, in ways large and small, reflect the dweller's creative sensibility.

Fortunately, an artist's eye can see how to work wonders with modest resources — never more so than when that eye goes hand in hand with skill, energy, and patience. Here we visit four artists — ceramicist Jamas Brooke and painter Tamar Kander, sculptor Bert Gilbert, and pastel artist Lynne Gilliatt. They all have their own approach to pursuing art and creating a home.

(left) Lynne Gilliatt's mid-century ranch in Elm Heights sits low amid trees and undergrowth. (above) The Brown County home of artists Tamar Kander and Jamas Brooke is perched on a steep hillside with gorgeous views of the lake below.

(opposite page) A profusion of flowers greets visitors to the Greene County home of Bert Gilbert and Amy Dyken. The couple added this entry room, which was built largely from salvaged materials.

Family, Home & Art — In That Order

BERT GILBERT, SCULPTOR

After graduating with degrees in fine arts and business from Indiana University in 1983, Bert Gilbert moved to Cincinnati with a plan to study industrial design in graduate school. To support himself while gaining Ohio residency, he worked in remodeling — and fell in love with it.

“A lot of the work I was doing in college had to do with creating environments,” Bert says. “They were sculptural tableaux of interior spaces.” Remodeling as an occupation was a natural fit.

When his partner, Amy Dyken, was offered a managerial job in an optometry office in Bloomington, Bert came back to join her. They were married in 1987.

Instead of spending money on a honeymoon, the couple decided to invest in a house. While reading the paper over breakfast at The Uptown Café one morning, they

spotted an ad for a farmhouse 16 miles from downtown. At \$25,000, for a Civil War-era house on five acres, the place was affordable, largely because of its advanced dereliction. They went for it.

While Amy parlayed her education in business and optometry into a successful career in several Bloomington optometry and ophthalmology practices, Bert went to work for Romy Remodeling, honing his skills in carpentry, tile work, painting, and plumbing. After work and on weekends, they remodeled their own home.

The house needed everything, starting with the front door, which wouldn’t open because the floor structure inside had swollen dramatically. The kitchen sink — the sole source of indoor running water — was the culprit; it had been draining into the crawlspace below.



(above) Bert’s studio is on acreage behind the house and is set up to create wood, metal, clay, oil painting, and digital artwork. The woodstove makes for a cozy spot to share a cup of tea in winter. The building also houses the office of Gilbert Construction.

(below) Mixing old and new, the living room is furnished with an original 19th-century built-in cupboard, reflected in the mirror. In the center of the photograph, behind the couch, is Bert’s sculptural work titled *American Beauty*.



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1. Amy and Bert. The painting is by Amy’s brother, Andy.

2. Bert made the piece over the tub using scrap glass he picked out of the trash.

3. One of the additions made to the house is a library and loom room — the weaving loom is not visible here — with a spacious window seat. The floor is cabin-grade cherry, characterized by streaks of creamy sapwood. Artwork hangs on every wall, with pieces by Kip May, Daniel Clark Schafer, Bob Gilbert, Steve Zehr, Jeremy Bazur, and Amy. Bert made the piece in the white, lighted niche above the window, titled *Bound*, as a 25th wedding anniversary gift for Amy.

4. Bert designed the kitchen based on existing cabinetry in the house. The cabinets are by Hewins Cabinets. A soapstone farmhouse sink and a pot rack, which Bert made from steel rod and salvaged copper electrical grounding wire, complete the picture.

There were no storm windows, nor any insulation in the roof and walls. The only source of heat was a woodstove situated between the living room and kitchen. Chimney swifts had taken up residence in the chimney, so one of the first jobs Bert and Amy tackled was to line it with triple wall stove pipe — a costly item they obtained in exchange for removing it from a friend’s house in Cincinnati.

In 1991, the couple leapt enthusiastically into parenthood when their son, Keilor, was born. Three years later, Bert started his own business,

Gilbert Construction. Though his interest in sculpture had never abated, with a child, a business, and a 19th-century house, there was little time to work on it.

Then, in 2003, Bert took part in the first aluminum pour at the Sculpture Trails Outdoor Museum in Solsberry, Indiana, and subsequently took classes there during the next few years. After Keilor left to study mathematics at Yale University in 2010, Bert began to seriously immerse himself in his artwork at every opportunity. By 2014, he had produced more than enough pieces for a one-man show at the Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center’s Rosemary P. Miller Gallery.

In the 28 years since they bought their house, Bert and Amy have added a two-story solar greenhouse, a library and loom room, a mudroom, three porches, two bathrooms, and have redone the kitchen and completely restored their home’s interior. As surrounding property came up for sale, they bought acreage to buffer their home and built outbuildings, including a studio. Today their home, with its period character and surrounding gardens, is a work of art in its own right.

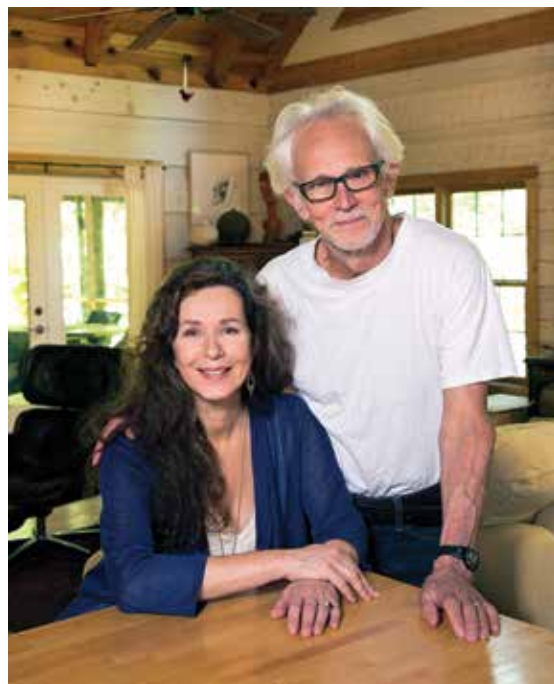
A Home Connected to Nature

TAMAR KANDER, PAINTER &
JAMAS BROOKE, CERAMICIST



(above) The main floor is open plan, encompassing living, dining, and kitchen areas. Hickory floorboards pair with the softwood ceiling and trim to provide an ideal foil for the white-painted log walls, which are home to works of art by Tamar, Jamas, and others, including one of Brad Fugate's signature globe creations by the window. A painting by Tamar, titled *Tread Lightly*, hangs to the right of the woodstove; next to it is an untitled life study by Tamar in graphite, wax, and pencil.

(right) Tamar Kander and Jamas Brooke at their kitchen island.



Tamar Kander and Jamas Brooke bought their contemporary log house in western Brown County in 2005 — even though neither was in love with the place. “The interior was dark and it was a log cabin,” Jamas says bluntly. “I’m not a log home kind of gal,” adds Tamar. “I would have preferred something far older or more modern.”

What sold them on the house was its location on the steep eastern bank of a small, hidden-away lake, a peaceful spot that encourages reflection as well as a bracing daily swim.

After closing on the purchase, they had large windows installed in the gabled north wall of the living room to fill the space with natural light. They also painted the logs and chinking white to minimize the log cabin aesthetic and produce a neutral backdrop for works of art.

One of the house’s great strengths is its capacity to accommodate a variety of activities within a modest footprint. The main floor is open plan, with kitchen, dining, and living spaces; a guest bedroom with en suite bath; and a half bath just off the kitchen. A short flight of steps leads to a loft with a master bedroom and bath designed by Jamas. Glass doors lead outside to a spacious rear deck overlooking the lake, an idyllic place to read a book or share a meal with friends.

Below the main level is a walk-out basement where Tamar and Jamas — professional artists who have shown their work in Indianapolis; Chicago; Louisville, Kentucky; Atlanta, Georgia; and Santa Fe, New Mexico — have their studios.

Jamas — who has a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from Kansas State Teachers College (now Emporia State University) and has done graduate-level studies in painting — is a ceramicist who hand-builds pots, platters, and other pieces, rather than throwing objects on a potter’s wheel. Fascinated by primitive methods of building, firing, and glazing, he constructed an anagama kiln — a Japanese-style kiln that’s fired with wood — on the



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1. Jamas was the mastermind behind the transformation of the loft into a bedroom with en suite bath and a hot tub overlooking the woods outside. The couple’s friend George Murphy, a carpenter-contractor, did the remodel.

2. Tamar’s studio (left) is organized so that she can work on more than one painting at a time. She uses two floor-to-ceiling easels custom-made by her friend Michael Shoaf, allowing her to view one work in progress while starting another. The studio space leads to a balcony overlooking the lake; she likes to use that space to varnish paintings instead of breathing fumes indoors. Jamas’ studio (right) has a potter’s wheel and table for preparing clay, plenty of storage shelves, and an electric kiln. The anagama kiln — a Japanese-style kiln fired with wood — is outside.

3. Having the kitchen completely open to the living and dining spaces makes it easy to converse with guests while cooking. With its airy interior, woodstove for winter warmth, and large back deck overlooking the lake, the house is ideal for entertaining in all seasons.

couple’s property in 2011. He teaches workshops in Fairhope, Alabama, and teaches locally through Ivy Tech Community College–Bloomington.

Tamar is a painter whose textured abstracts are kept in a dizzying number of collections, public and private, across the United States, as well as in Canada, England, and South Africa. She earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and a master’s degree in fine arts and art therapy at Goldsmiths’ College in London, England. She later moved to New York City, where she studied printmaking. In 1987, she relocated to Bloomington.

Keenly aware of the arguable advantages offered by urban cultural centers, the couple is content in their rural location. “I don’t need that city hype to create my work,” says Tamar. “I enjoy the stimulation of visiting different cities but prefer to have my home base and working environment in a place where I can be productive in a peaceful space that is connected to nature.”



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An Artist's Home Inside & Out

LYNNE GILLIATT,
PASTEL ARTIST

Even on the outside, Lynne Gilliatt's house in Elm Heights looks like the home of an artist. The earthy green walls that blend into their stone and forest-like surroundings are punctuated by playful pops of red on the siding and trim. This pattern of luscious color against an artfully smudged background echoes Lynne's pastel artworks depicting people, still lifes, and landscapes.

Lynne bought the house in 2005 after noticing it for sale on a walk through the neighborhood. The previous owner, Indiana University microbiology professor Howard Gest, accepted her offer — the lowest he received — because he remembered Lynne's kindness in giving up her seat to him on a bus many years before.

There's something at once both gritty and deeply comfortable about the mid-century ranch, which sits on a sloping lot near the east end of Wylie Street. A rough pathway of Brown County sandstone leads to the front door and then continues inside, culminating in generously proportioned steps down to a wood-paneled living room. Large windows on the western wall bring the wooded setting inside, lending the home a cabin-like character that Lynne fell in love with on her first visit.

An informal dining area overlooks a secluded back patio. Around the corner from the dining area is an efficient galley kitchen with a breakfast nook and windows that look out on to the street. Three bedrooms, two baths, and a small room that Lynne uses as an office range around the exterior walls of the main floor.

Downstairs, a walk-out basement serves as a spacious painting studio where Lynne hosts fellow artists who gather to share meals and conversation while working on their own projects.

A native of Bloomington, Lynne was pursuing a degree in fine arts at Indiana University when she married, had a son, and moved away. Several years later, the marriage ended, and she returned to complete her degree in fine arts, double-majoring in English literature. She later earned a master's degree in applied linguistics.

A second marriage to a tropical botanist she met in the Peace Corps took her to Nicaragua in 1977. Home was a once-grand house in an abandoned gold-mining town, where she stayed alone for weeks at a time while her husband traveled for research. It was there that she began to practice her art in earnest — primarily to keep



herself occupied during terrifying nights when the sound of gunfire kept her awake. That marriage, too, ended in divorce.

During the 1980s and '90s, Lynne lived in Taos, New Mexico, supporting herself with jobs in jewelry stores and galleries. She drew prolifically and exhibited her work locally, as well as in Bloomington and Atlanta, Georgia. Although she adored Taos, she missed her sister, Pam, who refused to leave

1. Lynne's front entry opens on to this spacious, wood-paneled living room. Hanging on the wall at left is a painting by contemporary Russian artist Elena Borisovna Romanova. The living room, at once both spacious and cozy, is the heart of the house. The wooden floor, walls, and ceiling combine with the stone hearth to lend this space a cabin-like character — one of the features that captivated Lynne on her first visit.

2. Lynne's galley kitchen looks out on to Wylie Street and has a built-in breakfast nook (not visible here). The small painting on the far wall is by Scott Owens, who traded it for one of Lynne's pastels. On the wall by the classic waffle iron, which still works, hang small artifacts by Daria Smith, whose work Lynne collects.

3. The corner windows are one of Lynne's favorite features of the house. Her sister, Pam, found this old rocker abandoned on the side of a country road; Lynne had it reupholstered by Sharon Fugate, owner



Bloomington. So in 2001, Lynne came home.

When the sisters' maternal grandmother, Georgia, and great-aunt, Muriel Harris, died, they left their Jasper County farms to Lynne and Pam. "Two sisters to two sisters," notes Lynne. Income from the farms provides enough for Lynne to live on. "Without her, I would not be in this house," she acknowledges gratefully. "I never learned how to make money." ✨

of Relish. Lynne grew up with the round table in her parents' home. The walls and ceiling are painted dark green "to keep it dark and mysterious and cool in the summer, since it gets direct sun," she explains.

4. The dining area overlooks a wooded patio. The runner and placemats were woven by Phil Batchelder. On the west wall hangs Lynne's pastel *From Kitchen Window*, which she painted in Bucerias, Mexico, her winter escape for many years.

5. Lynne hosts regular gatherings of artist friends in her basement studio, which has east-facing windows. Behind her is a large work in progress, a collaboration by these friends.