



**Who&Ware**

LOCAL HANDCRAFTED WORKS  
AND THE ARTISTS WHO CREATED THEM

## MAESTRO OF METAL



MATT MILLER

Ben Galata created a sculpture installation of three outcroppings of fiddleheads in the Mary Yarbrough Court at N.C. State.

By **DIANE DANIEL**  
Correspondent

**B**en Galata lucked out when he was an undeclared freshman at N.C. State University. His dorm mate, an architectural student in what's now the College of Design, had brought home an intriguing project. "It was some sort of model he was building," Galata, 40, recalled. "It appealed to me because I always loved building things. In high school, metal, shop and wood classes were like gym to me – all fun – but I never imagined they could translate to college."

Eventually he was accepted into the industrial design program, which further fueled his desire to make things. "Most of design work is churning out ideas and renderings," he said. "I quickly discovered that I enjoyed the building more than the drawing. I was trying to find a way to stay in the fabrication shop as much as possible – it was like a candy store for me – so I leaned toward furniture design."

During a two-week course in woodworking at Penland School of Crafts in western North Carolina during the summer before his senior year, Galata sat in on a blacksmithing demonstration.

"The minute I saw the fire and people banging on anvils I thought, 'oh my God, this is it,'" he said.

"There's a primal draw to the process, there's the mastery of fire. The pieces I'd done in wood were very con-

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JULI LEONARD – jleonard@newsobserver.com

**Details**

**Who:** Ben Galata  
**Ware:** Custom metal furnishings, sculpture and architectural elements.  
**Location:** Raleigh  
**Info:** 919-829-0903 or galatadesigns.com  
**Prices:** Birdbaths, \$200 to \$275; small to medium sculptures, \$400 to \$600; coffee tables, \$1,200 and up; dining tables, \$1,800 and up; garden gates, \$2,000 and up; entry railings, \$2,200 and up.  
**Where to buy:** Birdbaths and commission work through Galata directly. Sculptural work at Lee Hansley Gallery, Raleigh, leehansleygallery.com; furniture and sculptural work at Light Art + Design, Chapel Hill, lightartdesign.com.

Ben Galata, who makes custom metal furnishings, sculpture and architectural elements, in his Raleigh studio.

## Beauty on the side

Transform the space  
next to your house

By **MARTY ROSS**  
Universal Uclick

Side yards are usually peripheral matters, and rather neglected, but they deserve a closer look. With a little bit of imagination, that strip of grass or gravel on the side of the house can become a charming and respectable part of your garden.

Side yards naturally do not receive the attention gardeners are willing to devote to their front yard, the public face of their garden, or to the back, their private oasis and escape. In the narrow space between one house and the next, we stash recycling bins, coil up hoses, stack bags of mulch and park our bicycles. It's a passageway, and often a grim one.

In neighborhoods where houses are close together, a side yard is often narrow and shaded by adjacent structures. It may not be possible to plant sun-loving flowers in such a space, but there are lots of ways to make a side yard of any size a more pleasant place.

**Potting station**

Sometimes side yards are just that: They're simply a space separate from the rest of the garden, leading nowhere in particular, rather like a balcony. A small space, hidden away, can be a wonderfully relaxing spot. It could also easily be put to use as a potting station. A potting table (from a garden shop, or even an old hutch from a thrift store) gives you a place to organize your tools and supplies without stealing space in the garage or from the rest of the garden. A trash can with a lid will hold potting soil, and flowerpots stack neatly under the potting bench. A gardener in California turned his side yard into a potting alcove by getting rid of a plastic shed and installing a table and panels with slats of bamboo to hold hand tools. He recycled ordinary six-sided concrete pavers from

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COURTESY OF MARTY ROSS

Daylilies, hydrangeas and a flagstone path turn a side yard into a little country garden.

**GATEWAYS**

To start with, you might install a pretty gate. A handsome garden gate always looks inviting, and it will inspire you to take steps to make the space inside the gate more interesting, too. A gate wide enough for a wheelbarrow is called for. Outside the gate, fill a big flowerpot with bright flowers. Impatiens will bloom all summer long in a shady spot, but you could decide to fill the pot with texture instead of color – try a big hosta or a few exuberant ferns. A small shrub – a boxwood, a hydrangea or a spirea – also looks great in a pot and will not need pampering.

**STEPPING-STONES**

Side yards tend to lead someplace else, and stepping-stones enhance the notion of an attractive destination. They make the space look tidy, and are very functional in wet weather. Large stepping-stones are the most practical; you should lay them quite close together, but you can avoid the look of a paved runway – which also rushes you through the space – with irregularly shaped flagstones. Combinations of bricks and flagstones are also very handsome.

**10 Questions**

DECORATING SECRETS FROM THE N&O DESIGN TEAM

## She saw her lamp in a movie

**Lisa Stewart**



**Lisa Stewart Design,**  
Raleigh  
919-275-2212 or  
LisaStewartDesign.com

**10 words that describe your design philosophy:** Edit,

edit, edit! When I walk into peoples' homes, I want it to tell a story about their lives, where they came from and where they dream of going.

**Best design transition from winter to spring:** Decorative pillows and throws are a great way to update with the seasons. Keep it simple. This way you can quickly make changes each season. Make sure you have enough easily accessible storage before you buy.

**Favorite way to dress a mantel:** To balance the attention commanded by a fireplace, place one large hanging piece of artwork above it. Hanging unusual things like textiles, rugs and a collection of like items above fireplaces can be very interesting, too. Use a couple tall candlesticks or vases on each side of the mantel to draw your eye up to the artwork. Avoid filling the mantel itself with many small things.

**Favorite design blog:** houzz.com is a wonderful place for ideas and resources.

**Fun design twist for a little boy's bedroom:** What's more fun for a little boy than capturing all his stuffed animals in a cargo net and hanging it from the ceiling? My son, now 30, still talks about his "rain forest" room. We also used a beautiful "grown-up" tropical fabric for bedding. As he grew, the neutral walls and curtains allowed him to easily change the bedding along with his interests. As for the captured and hanging animals, eventually they were freed and found new homes when he donated them

to an orphanage. **Money's no limit but you can only buy one thing for your home. What is it and why?** It is hard to put a dollar figure on inspiration, creativity and the feeling of something that is handmade with fine workmanship. That is why I splurge on artisan pieces, original artwork and fine hand-knotted one-of-a-kind carpets when I can. I never worry about overdoing it because they're pricey. But they are worth it because they inspire me daily. **Best decor bargain you've ever scored:** The lamp in my living room I picked up free. It was a leftover, discarded from an auction for antique dealers. Does that make me a bottom feeder? I guess so. But later I saw the same lamp in the movie "Charlie Wilson's War" with Julia Roberts. Look for it in her bedroom. Score! **Your hardware store must-have:** I do not use any tools, so my "must have" is a handy man! I'm simply not equipped to handle tools, large or small safely. Rather than endangering myself or risking ruining what I'm working on I have learned just to ask for help when I need it. **Biggest design no-no:** Do not hang onto things you don't like and associate with bad memories. Do not save broken things and items you won't use. Do not save things for future use when in reality there is no future. Emotional and sentimental ties can clutter your home and bog you down. When you change the way you think and feel about these items in your home, it might just change your life too. **My best tip for do-it-yourself designers:** Know when to save and when to splurge. I love saving money by shopping all the local discount retailers. But every room has got to have something in it that sets it apart and adds personality. Spending more on that special piece will be well worth it.



COURTESY OF LISA STEWART

Lisa Stewart scored this lamp at an auction. With rewiring and a new lampshade, it's now in Stewart's living room.