

# triCityNews

MONMOUTH'S NEWS & ARTS WEEKLY



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# ANDY WARHOL HAD HIS "FACTORY"

## FROM DECREPIT SILK MILL TO INDUSTRIAL-CHIC OFFICE COMPLEX IN LONG BRANCH!

BY MOLLY MULSHINE

*(Mulshine is the editor of the triCity-affiliated asburyparksun.com website)*

LONG BRANCH – The two triCities that get the most play in this newspaper are Asbury Park and Red Bank. There's tons of action in both places, with plenty of broad-minded and progressive people.

And the third triCity of Long Branch?

Let's just say a little less so. We're being nice.

But that doesn't mean this newspaper can't work its magic there. Sure enough, one can discover the creative and alternative in greater Long Branch. When we do, the triCityNews boosts it up with all our force.

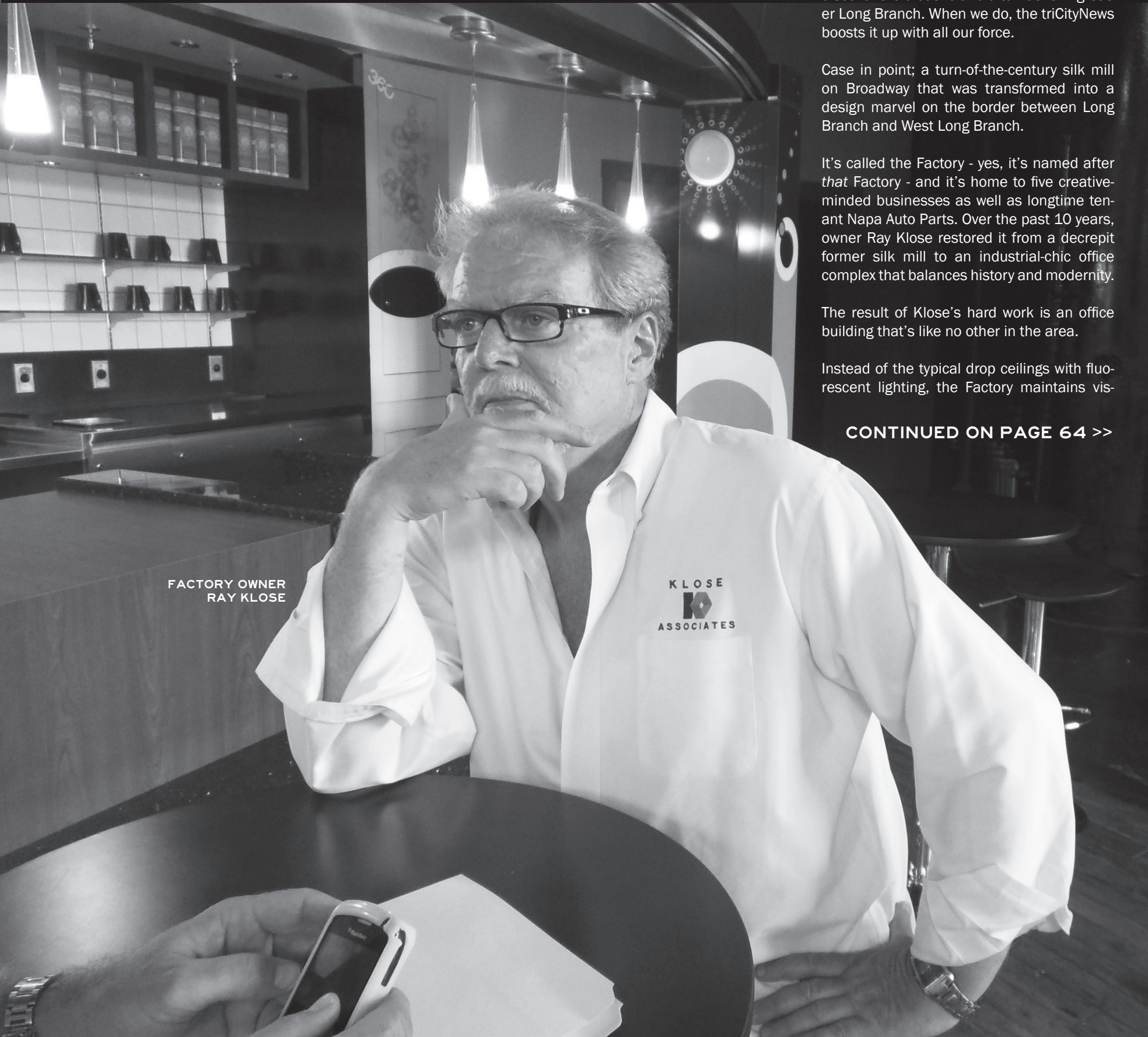
Case in point; a turn-of-the-century silk mill on Broadway that was transformed into a design marvel on the border between Long Branch and West Long Branch.

It's called the Factory - yes, it's named after *that* Factory - and it's home to five creative-minded businesses as well as longtime tenant Napa Auto Parts. Over the past 10 years, owner Ray Klose restored it from a decrepit former silk mill to an industrial-chic office complex that balances history and modernity.

The result of Klose's hard work is an office building that's like no other in the area.

Instead of the typical drop ceilings with fluorescent lighting, the Factory maintains vis-

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FACTORY OWNER  
RAY KLOSE

KLOSE  
**K**  
ASSOCIATES



## &gt;&gt; "THE FACTORY" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

ibility of the ceiling's historic sunlights and piping. The walls in every office only extend overhead by a foot or two, so wherever an employee is sitting, he or she can enjoy the industrial architecture visible above. It creates an open atmosphere that's conducive to the creative industries Klose welcomes as tenants.

Klose and his realtor sought businesses whose employees would appreciate the Factory's architecture, turning down a few more stolid enterprises before they welcomed their current tenants. The man obviously had a creative vision — and that's what we want to encourage with people around here.

Part of the complex was built around 1900, Klose said. It was expanded in the 1910s and again in the 1940s, when the silk mill started creating parachutes for World War II. It was expanded once more in the 1960s to complete the sprawling, 53,000-square-foot Factory.

Klose was operating his business out of an industrial park in the early 2000s when he decided to buy a building of his own. He came across the old silk mill when he was driving home from seeing another potential office purchase. Despite the building's less-than-desirable condition at the time, he spotted its potential instantly.

"I drove past this ratty cyclone fence with barbed wire on top," he said. "It said, 'G&G Realtors, for sale or purchase,' and I just made a phone call."

Before Klose purchased and rehabbed it, the Factory was "just in bad shape," he said. "But I was looking around and all I saw was preservation —

painting, scraping, cleaning, sweeping, staining, sanding, shellacking."

Klose oversaw the rehabilitation himself. His business, Klose Associates, designs and fabricates experiential exhibits, mostly for trade show displays, so he's no slouch when it comes to interior design. Klose Associates builds not only the office spaces but also most of the furniture found throughout the Factory.

Klose and his crew worked from 7 a.m. to midnight daily, from the closing day in March 2001 until they moved in on July 4 that year.

Now, the Factory is inhabited by Klose Associates' impressive showroom and workshop-cum-warehouse; marketing and ad firm Lanmark 360; wedding and event planner to the stars (and some discerning locals) Sound Connections; military communications specialists Agile Communications; sales and marketing firm Chartwells and, of course, Napa Auto Parts.

Businesses' employees and clients alike react with awe when they first walk into the Factory. In fact, one Lanmark 360 employee cried when she first saw the firm's new headquarters, Klose said.

Lanmark 360 also has its own movable café in-house. Klose Associates designed the coffee-shops-on-wheels a few years ago for corporate headquarters and airports, and they saved one. It runs with a battery and a single water hook-up.

Lanmark 360 also keeps a few custom-designed bicycles in-house for employees to ride downtown for lunch.

Klose plans to re-design the rear portion of the Factory and Napa Auto Parts, as well. It will have the same look as the rest of the complex. "It'll be the coolest Napa Auto Parts in the country," Klose said. He also restored and installed spiral staircases throughout the complex. The offices are all one-story high, but some have lofts where executives work.

Klose considers the Factory to be an anchor of Long Branch's downtown Broadway corridor, with Pier Village as its counterpoint at the other end. He's optimistic about the town making a comeback in the same way Asbury Park has.

"One building at a time was done by one building owner at a time," Klose said of Asbury. "It began a domino effect and the momentum picked up, and look at Asbury now. People were laughing when someone would buy a small space or building in Asbury. Now everyone wishes they bought two."

The urban feel of Long Branch's downtown was a draw for Klose, and the local businesses enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the Factory. The dozens of people who work there patronize Broadway businesses every day, Klose said.

When tenants need slight re-designs, Klose is happy to build them new furnishings. For example, Agile requested a closet door recently.

"They said, 'It can be a regular door,'" Klose recalled. "I said, 'I assure you it won't be.'"

Instead, Klose Associates crafted a unique and intricate door in the spirit of the industrial surroundings. "We take the liberty to maintain character and creativity."



ONE OF KLOSE ASSOCIATES EXPERIMENTAL EXHIBITS





BIG WINDOWS AND HIGH CEILINGS DEFINE THE FACTORY



THESE HUGE GLASS DOORS LEAD TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE FACTORY'S LANMARK 360



LANMARK 360'S ON-SITE CAFE



THE RAW SPACE DURING FINAL STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION