

*This contemporary vacation house successfully insinuates itself into a bastion of traditional, older homes on the Connecticut coast. Its classic cedar shingles and its spanking-white painted trim acknowledge the owners' respect for the region's rich heritage, while the lighthouse-shaped chimney, curved wall, and cantilevered roof signal an openness to new traditions.*

# SUMMER LIVING





**B**ECAUSE THE SITE IS SO PUBLIC, THE HOUSE'S shape had to rise to the occasion with unalloyed ebullience," says Madison, Connecticut, architect Duo Dickinson about the vacation house he designed on the Connecticut shore for Kyle and John Robinson. The Midwestern couple was impressed by Dickinson's ability to manipulate space—"We wanted the house to be large enough for our needs, but not so large that it would be a maintenance problem," says Kyle Robinson—and Dickinson's own ebullience. "We knew he'd listen to us but also that he'd push the design further than we would go ourselves," Kyle adds.

John Robinson's family had a long tradition of summering in this seaside town, and he wanted to give his three children a similar experience. The Robinsons chose to respect vernacular building styles—gray shingles and multipaned windows—but they also wanted an airy space filled with natural light. The one-third-acre site had a spectacular view of Long Island Sound, but it also presented design challenges: It was ringed on three sides by roads, and an oblique view of a nuclear power plant intruded in one direction.

Dickinson tilted the house on the site, oriented toward the best vistas. "I wanted to create a real beacon to bring you home," says the architect. With its dramatically curved rear window wall belled out to sea and its cantilevered roof suggesting the prow of a ship, the 3,200-square-foot house's distinctive shape serves as a landmark from the water. Window placement enhances privacy and avoids the power plant. Adding to the comforts of home are cozy furnishings by Ethan Allen and kilim rugs by Nourison, selected by designer Michael Foster.

Left: The great room's sitting area is defined by a kilim from the Natural Mongol Collection by Nourison. Ethan Allen's love seat, armchair, and slipper chairs are placed diagonally to respond to the room's unusual shape. The six-foot-high windows sit higher than usual to maximize the view.

Right: The fieldstone fireplace is visible from all corners of the great room. In front of it, the Ethan Allen coffee table and ottoman are grouped for entertaining.

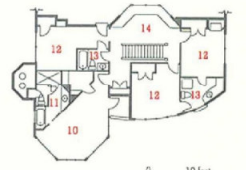
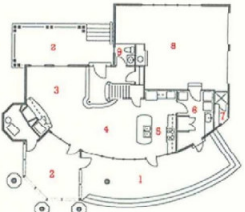






Left: The J-shaped great room naturally divides into sitting and dining areas, but still allows each to borrow visual space from the other. Serving as the fulcrum between sitting and cooking zones, the dining area includes a curved window wall that looks out to sea. The bounteous east/southeast light is modulated by "Trieste" pleated, top-down, bottom-up shades by Hunter Douglas. Nourison's natural-dyed wool kilim anchors the trestle table and chairs, all by Ethan Allen. The column to the left of the dining area marks the entry, which is raised a step

for drama, replicating the columns used on the screened porch to link the interior and exterior realms. The kitchen island is bracketed by stout black walnut "legs," recalling a vintage farm table. Above left: Hand-painted ceramics, also by Ethan Allen, repeat the clean, clear colors established in the sitting area. Above right: Architectural designer Nancy Ruzicka designed the cabinets to suggest a cottage kitchen. Niches subtly repeat the bow of the great room's wall. Counters and backsplashes of 1 1/2-inch Dakota Mahogany granite were honed—rather than polished—for a more natural look.



- 1. DECK
- 2. PORCH
- 3. LIVING AREA
- 4. DINING AREA
- 5. KITCHEN
- 6. MUDROOM
- 7. SHOWER ROOM
- 8. GARAGE
- 9. POWDER ROOM
- 10. MASTER BEDROOM
- 11. MASTER BATHROOM
- 12. BEDROOM
- 13. BATHROOM
- 14. OPEN HALLWAY



**T**HE ROOF, THE ARCING WALL, THE TOWER DO A LITTLE DANCE," SAYS Dickinson, speaking of the house's complex arrangement of curves and angles. "The angles make the house feel cozy," notes Foster. The geometry is expressed on the second floor with a bay window at the landing that mirrors the octagonal shape of the master bedroom bay, which in turn continues the lines of the screened porch below. The pie-slice-shaped master bedroom boasts wraparound water views. "We're morning people," says Kyle. "We love waking up with the light. When you live much of the year in the Midwest, it's wonderful to awaken to the sounds and smells of the ocean."

Because the house is used primarily in the summer, interior designer Foster worked with clear, summery colors established by Ethan Allen's upholstery fabrics, adding the sophisticated dash of Nourison's Mongol kilims to heighten the visual appeal. In the master bedroom, he softened the upholstery palette slightly, letting Dan River's "Christie" bedding collection set the tone. "I like the inviting colors and light, airy look," says Kyle. "You feel you can sit down anywhere." For all its carefully conceived architecture and relaxed furnishings, the real star of the house is the array of magnificent water views framed by the many large windows. □



Above: In the master bedroom, windows with true divided lites bestow sweeping views on three sides. Right: On the romantic four-poster bed, Dan River's summery "Christie" floral-print and coordinated plaid bedding extends the fresh, sunny mood. See *Shopping Resources*, page 178, for details.

