

STATE OF THE ART

FINDING HIS WAY HOME

Homes are where his heart is. Duo Dickinson spends most days designing houses from his studio in Madison, Conn., and, to him, it's a wonderful life. He's never been the kind of architect who labors on residential projects just to keep busy until glamorous commissions for skyscrapers and libraries come along. "I'm a house architect," he says proudly.

► Architect Duo Dickinson knows his place, and his place is right at home. He cooked up this remarkable kitchen, part of an extraordinary island house. Come see the rest; page 32.

Dickinson, whose distinctive work has appeared in many consumer and trade magazines, strives for originality, a crisp creative edge, each time he starts a new home or renovates an old one. "You've got to be innovative," he insists, "or why hire an architect? Why not just find a plan and build it? If you don't try to rethink old solutions and make them work better, you're simply a glorified Xerox machine."

Unlike some architects, however, he's not one to ignore obvious realities. "I try my damndest to make buildings that weather well and don't leak," Dickinson says. "Designers who ignore durability and affordability and long-term maintenance are the ones who basically say, 'I'd much rather get this building published than have the roof drain well.'"

"Those are corrupt projects," he adds, warming to a subject that concerns him greatly. "I try to make *mine* efficient to build, while keeping a handle on the numbers from the very beginning so we don't end up with pretty pictures but unhappy clients."

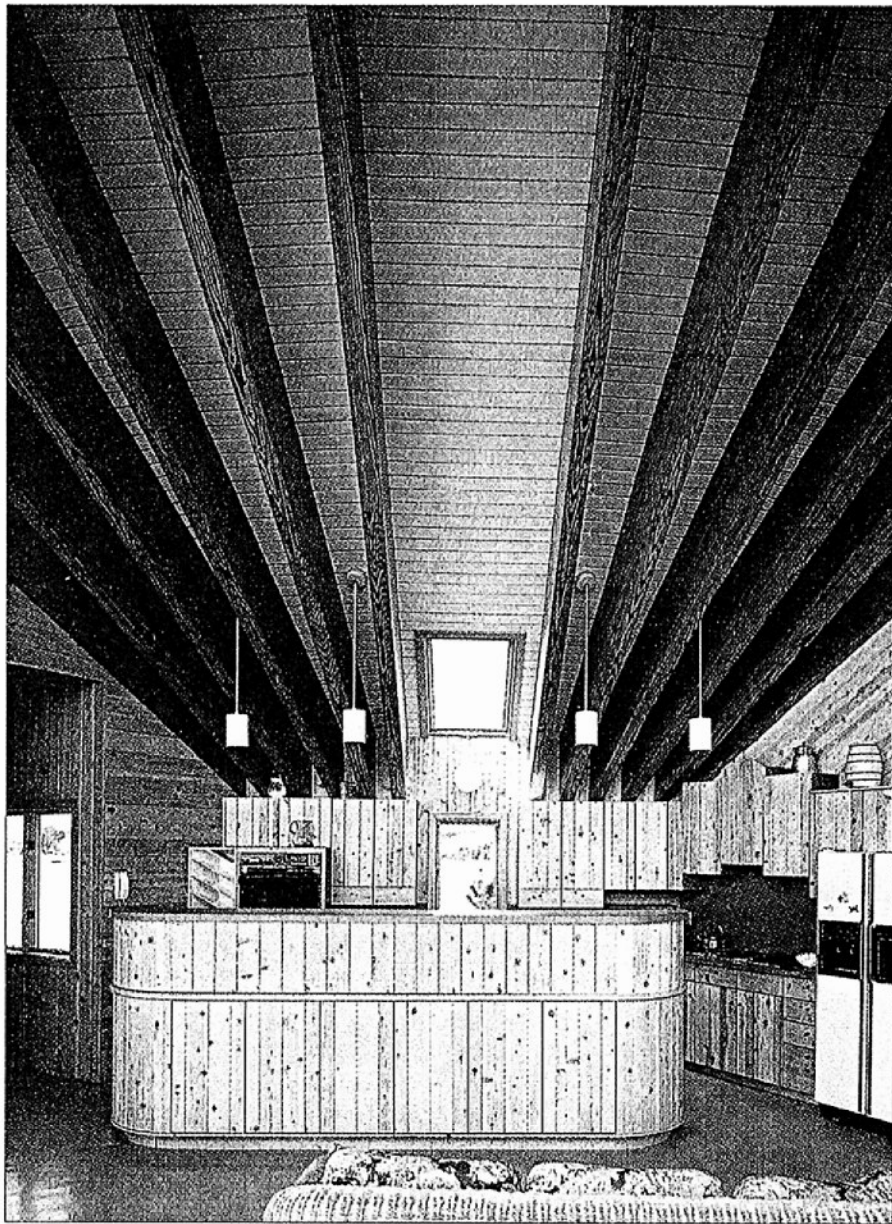
Though plenty of architects pledge allegiance to clients and their wishes—and then ignore them when the work begins—Dickinson says they're the most important part of his designer's craft. The family of five for whom

he created this extraordinary, idiosyncratic summer house (see page 32) was as much a part of the enterprise as builder and subcontractors. "I'm a house architect because I like dealing with people," Dickinson says, "and in this case, I couldn't imagine dealing with finer people. I think in most projects, the quality and character of the people are reflected some-

how in the built house."

In the end, Dickinson maintains, that's what his work is really all about—the simple joys of going home, of showing a family the way home. Says he, "I don't view what I'm doing now as a stepping-stone to something else. I want to do this for the rest of my life."

—Paul Kitzke



MICK HALES