pool at the lower terrace fulfills the need for water. And as for fire, the remnant masonry foundation of an old well became a pivot point for organizing the house. Now the centerpiece of the rear terrace, it is a fire pit formed from concrete and stone.

Even the house's hardest edges took cues from the organic environment. To make the concrete site wall's vertical expansion joints disappear, the architects used 2x6s to create rhythmic depressions that bounce in and out. "How do you celebrate the constructability of concrete?" asks Nick. "You don't want a wall that seems monolithic but one that is growing out of the desert. When you look at the desert, it never has a straight, seamed line. We created this beautiful texture that plays with light and the romance of the desert, and the construction method was achieved without being too fussy."

Says Victor, "Our hope was that there would be a resonance between the stairs and that vertical fluting, not isolated from one another but part of the same material expression."

Ever attuned to its physical surroundings, the interior is a virtual blank canvas with white walls and polished concrete floors. Most of the glass is on the north and east, while the opaque south side plays defense against the persistent sun.

The alchemy between site and structure is in evidence every day. "It was a real joy to correspond with the clients after the house was built and to hear..."
long peninsula came up for sale in 2013. The buildings he designed in the town's commercial center between 1985 and 2010 were well-received, including a market, barber shop, hardware store, several condos along the river, and the building that houses both banks. His role in revitalizing the town helped earn him entry into the AIA College of Fellows in 2010.

This spit of land had a 1949 cottage at the tip and was part of a trolley line that carried passengers over a trestle bridge to an amusement park at Roton Point. Bruce proposed a two-and-a-half-story house on stilts, 17 feet wide, that would sit toward the far end of peninsula, which itself is just fifty feet at its widest point. The backlash was swift and unexpected—driven, Bruce says, by people who did not want to see a house where none had been before, but primarily by a neighbor couple who had adopted the property as part of their backyard. “As far as they were concerned, it was their yard,” he says. “They were very successful in convincing other people that it constituted a major environmental crisis. That was far from the truth, but it was...
maintains cherished views of the estuary from the road. In fact, his substitution of low-growing tidal grasses for an existing tall hedge further opened up the vista.

Seventy-five feet long, the house is organized into five 15-foot-long zones with a 9-by-7.5-foot window centered on each section. The expansive windows should be able to ride out any storms, thanks to roll-up storm shutters hidden behind the cross-bracing that allow the house to be closed up like a box. The oversized ipe X’s between the bays play a minor role in bracing for the house and echo the old trolley trestle over the channel (the pilings are all that remain).

“The diagonal braces are sources of wonder because they make everyone think about what they do—people do ask,” he says. “Architecturally, they change the scale of the exterior. I studied a number of different options. Every time I drew the X’s, they felt good.” Intrigued by the apparatuses of old industrial buildings, he also designed the metal connectors that read as decorative accents.
Natural Resilience
Bruce had a lot of fun with the landscape, too, inspired by a picture of Dutch landscape architect Piet Oudolf’s Nantucket garden and design for New York City’s High Line. With their salt and drought tolerance and deep root systems, native grasses such as Northwind switchback, big bluestem, and feather reed grass stabilize the creek bank and filter out pollutants such as lawn fertilizers. And each plant variety supports different birds and animals with its seeds, nuts, fruits, and shelter—which makes for lively entertainment.

“One of the great attributes of living on a tidal estuary is that the bird life is very rich,” Bruce says. “There are always ducks and osprey, seagulls and egrets, and a great blue heron is out there. They’re almost part of the family because you start to recognize specific birds and get to watch them going through their daily rituals of fishing.”

Perhaps most important, now that the house is built, the comments have been only positive. “I think a lot of people are very pleased that the house didn’t protrude any further into the tidal estuary than it needed to,” he says. “I think the house is well-loved in the community.”
—Cheryl Weber

Beinfield Residence
Rowayton, Conn.
ARCHITECT: Bruce Beinfield, FAIA, Beinfield Architecture, Rowayton, Conn.
BUILDER: Art Ruffles & Ray Donohue, RDC Construction, Stamford, Conn.
INTERIOR DESIGNER: Carol Beinfield
LANDSCAPE DESIGNER: Bruce Beinfield
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Jacobson Structures, Deep River, Conn.
PROJECT SIZE: 3,500 square feet
SITE SIZE: .54 acre
PHOTOGRAPHY: Robert Benson

KEY PRODUCTS
CABINETRY: Ultra Craft
RANGE: Wolf
DISHWASHER: Asko
REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero
KITCHEN FAUCETS: Vola and Watermarks
TOILETS: DXV
FRONT DOOR HARDWARE: Tom Kundig collection
DOOR HARDWARE: Emtek
WOOD STOVE: Wittus
WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: LaCantina Doors
copper was used liberally on counters and backsplashes. “Every time you put a glass down on the copper it changes, so the finish is constantly evolving and almost has its own moods,” he says.

The second story contains three bedrooms, two baths, and an inviting library over garage, while the attic is a cozy studio for his wife, who is a watercolorist, collage artist, and avid collector.

“I thought I’d go out of my way to do as sensitive a design as possible.”
—Bruce Beinfield

“Attics are always places you want to explore; they contain the mystery of former lives,” the architect says. “That’s where everyone puts stuff they don’t want to throw away but have no place for in their homes and it collects there, year after year. We wanted this space to be endowed with that kind of emotional content.” The flooring is Hungarian wagon board—a highly weathered oak, and on the walls is “brown board,” wood from the interior of old barns. “New England attics are often unfinished spaces, and the old recycled wood evokes those feelings,” he says.

From the outside, the house looks like it could have predated the residential community around it. True to its agrarian form, the exterior is clad in wood from an old Pennsylvania barn, and the front façade retains some of the red paint that’s more than 100 years old. The property’s remnant trolley track was cleverly repurposed, too, as a path from the house to the old cottage, now used as a studio and guest room. The back patio and walkway along the side of the house are made from slabs of salvaged granite curbing from Olde New England Granite.