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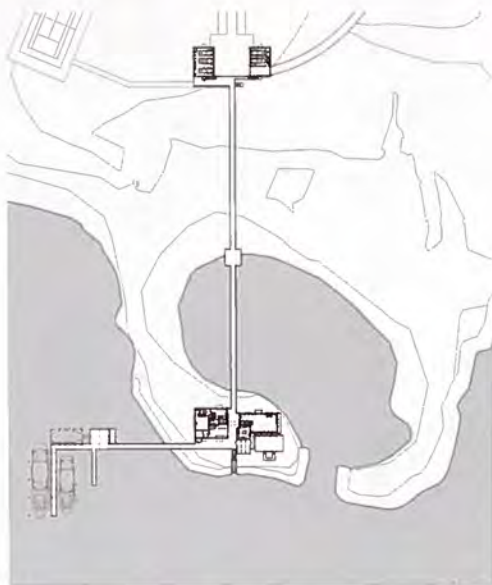
by meghan drueding

# *by land & by sea*

a coastal virginia weekend house rises from  
the ruins of an industrial past.

Expanses of hurricane-rated glass on the Chesapeake Bay side of the home allow dramatic water views for public spaces. Deep overhangs provide relief from the sun.





Twin garages make way for a bridge that connects to the main house, which sits upon the outline of a former oyster-shucking factory. Supported by 97 piles, the bridge crosses over terra firma, wetlands, and water.

■ f the land underneath the Oyster House were to someday vanish, the building wouldn't move an inch. Architect Dale Overmyer, AIA, and his client, Bill Dean, took no chances with the waterside site's sandy soil. They placed the house atop 105 wood pilings, each one driven about 35 feet down into the earth. "The house is not reliant on the soil at all," says project manager Jeremy Fletcher.

The home's exposed structure lends it a resemblance to a boat dock or an industrial maritime building. In fact, it occupies the footprint of an old oyster-processing plant on a narrow spit of land curling out into the Chesapeake Bay. "This was clearly the most extraordinary place on the site to experience the water," Overmyer says.

Modern-day local regulations stipulated that any additional buildings would have to sit at least 100 feet away from the coastline. Overmyer obliged with a pair of new garages that act as an entry gate for those arriving by car. Once visitors have parked, they walk or ride a golf cart

over a 375-foot-long access bridge to the main house, traversing upland areas, wetlands, and a shallow tidal pond. The bridge slices in between the main house's two portions, ending at the water's edge.

Which brings us to the other way to arrive at the house: by boat. Dean, an electrical engineer by trade, lives in Washington, D.C. Rather than drive three hours to the house from there, he often sails instead. The architects included a five-slip dock connected to the house by a boardwalk. And they didn't worry about identifying the home's front or rear elevation. "The house fronts on both the water and the land," Overmyer points out.

A shed-roofed pavilion enclosed in hurricane-rated glass holds the public spaces, where Dean frequently entertains. The home's other half contains the bedrooms and is topped by a pitched roof with a clerestory. Overmyer borrowed the building's utilitarian forms, as well as no-frills details such as exposed rafter tails and steel chimneys, from the local vernacular. "We just take the really good





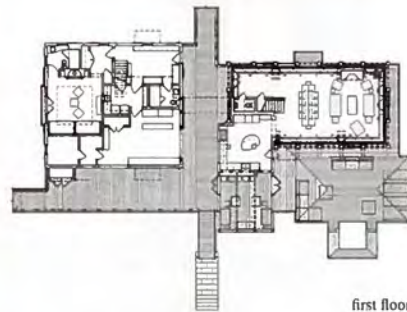
A steel-and-glass bridge ties together the house's two main portions, providing a vantage point for looking back at the mainland or out at the water. The double-height living room opens to the outdoor areas, creating a perfect venue for entertaining large groups.

**architect:** Dale Overmyer Architects, Washington, D.C.  
**general contractor:** Ilex Construction, Charlottesville, Va.  
**marine contractor:** Dameron Marine Construction, Fredericksburg, Va.  
**structural engineer:** Robert Silman Associates, Washington  
**landscape architect:** Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, Washington  
**interior designer:** Elizabeth Hague Interiors, Washington  
**lighting designer:** George Sexton Associates, Washington  
**project size:** 4,145 square feet  
**site:** 13 acres  
**construction cost:** Withheld  
**photography:** © Maxwell MacKenzie

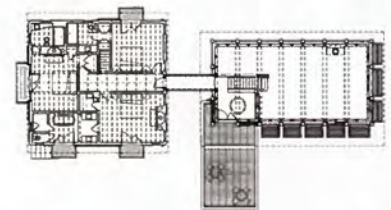




The house provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy its serene setting, including a covered outdoor dining room linked to the kitchen by a pass-through. The architects designed many of the home's built-ins, such as the bath vanities and tub surrounds.



first floor



second floor



stuff from the past and mix it with the contemporary,” he says.

The maritime tradition of long-lasting, durable materials comes into play here, too. Terne-coated steel roofs and cedar shingle siding will hold up over time and require little upkeep. The interiors feature typically outdoor items, including a concrete living room floor and white-painted wood walls in the master suite. “We wanted it to feel like an inside-out kind of building,” Overmyer recalls. Hurricane-rated glass, pressure-treated pine timbers, and steel bracing will ensure stability, even in the roughest of weather. And landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden & Associates specified hardy,

low-maintenance native vegetation for the 13-acre property.

But the project has its glamorous side, too. Mahogany railings add a level of polish to the waterside porch, while mitered-edge cabinetry lines the interiors. Blue-tinted LED uplights illuminate the exterior at night, in an unexpected but elegant touch. “The hope is that from more than 1,000 feet away, it would look like something from history,” Overmyer explains. “When you get closer, it becomes something more personal and luxurious. Suddenly the details start to fill in. The aesthetic is 90 percent crab-picking plant and 10 percent yacht.” *ra*