



ROWAYTON, CONNECTICUT

THEMED ATTRACTION

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANE BEILES

Situated on a tidal estuary that feeds into Long Island Sound, this home in Rowayton, Connecticut, nods to the origins of the unique property: a trolley line that used to transport visitors across the water to an amusement park in the early 1900s. The history and complexity of the site appealed to architect Bruce Beinfield, who purchased the property shortly after it came on the market in 2013.

“The amusement park was a major regional attraction in the 1920s. Big bands like Tommy Dorsey played there,” says Beinfield. “There was a roller coaster and many of the park buildings were barnlike structures.” The architect’s idea was to design a home that evoked the spirit of the park and the character of the old trolley way.

In such close proximity to the water, the site had extensive restrictions. “The house had to be a model of sustainability. I take climate change and sea level rise threats very seriously,” says Beinfield. “The structure needed to be environmentally resistant to

floods and respect the natural plant and animal life that is part of the estuary.”

Designed to be storm and flood resistant, the house sits on twelve concrete piers that enable water to flow under it. Storm shutters protect the glass expanses on the back, water-facing side of the house. Steel support beams ensure the home stands up against high winds. The crisscrosses of lateral bracing on either side of the house reference wooden roller-coaster trestles.

Only sixteen feet across at its widest point, this narrow home features an open floor plan and soaring ceilings. Heavy wood beams in the interior evoke a lodge-like feel, which nods to the site’s amusement park history, says Beinfield. Concrete floors on the main level add distinction, especially when combined with the character of the kitchen, where black cabinets and walls offer a sharp contrast to the white cabinet trend which Beinfield has found to dominate homes in coastal locations. Copper was used for the counters and fixtures. “When you put a glass down on copper, it leaves a permanent mark,” he says. “I

Salvaged and industrial elements, including a concrete-block fireplace wall, set this home far apart from other coastal homes in Rowayton, Connecticut.



like the idea that every action has a memory and it's constantly changing. Every mark brings more life in the space."

Built-in shelves in the dining room are made of beams salvaged from the shuttered Remington Arms Munitions Factory in Bridgeport, Connecticut. "Bringing historic elements into the space provides more storytelling, more history to the home," says Beinfield, who strives to alter the way ordinary materials are viewed. "We used concrete blocks on a wall in the living room, and it actually has an elegant impact there. Suddenly you're thinking of concrete blocks differently, and your preconceptions about the material are challenged."

Among Beinfield's formulas for creating is establishing a strong sense of order balanced by chaos. He relies on his wife, Carol, an artist, to breathe life into the home through her work—which encompasses various mediums—and her assorted collections,

which range from antique dolls to pincushions to painter's palettes. Carol's studio, located on the home's third level, has walls and a steeply pitched ceiling clad with Hungarian wagon-board oak meant to evoke the feel of an old attic.

Beinfield enjoys observing sea life from his attic office overlooking the estuary. From there, he can also see the old shingle cottage that came with the property. In homage to the site's origins, Beinfield commissioned a rail construction company to create tracks connecting the cottage to the main house. The front, street-facing facade of the house is clad with salvaged barn siding. "When people are driving past the house, their first impression is a tall, skinny, quirky barn structure that looks like it might have been there forever," says Beinfield. "I love the idea of the house being a place to be discovered."

ABOVE: An old farm table is paired with mid-century chairs; the pendants above the island are made of concrete. **TOP OPPOSITE:** The exposed ceiling ductwork runs throughout the home's first floor; copper counters are paired with brass hardware. **BOTTOM OPPOSITE:** Pantry shelves are made of Douglas fir with copper piping used as fittings.





The attic studio displays Carol's inspirations, collections, and objects.



In the library, a ladder slides along the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves; Carol's collection of painter's palettes adorns the wall behind the sofa.



ABOVE: Reclaimed boards sheath the ceiling and wall behind the bed in the primary bedroom, which overlooks the tidal estuary. **OPPOSITE:** A guest bedroom features an array of antiques and flea market finds.





ABOVE: The home rests atop concrete piers to allow flood-level waters to flow beneath it. **OPPOSITE:** From the street, the house has the look of a lean, rustic barn.

