

A treehouse offers a different perspective on the world. The full scope of nature is easier to grasp, the birds are closer, the breeze feels personal. Up in the trees, life seems to unfurl more slowly.

And that's precisely what these Outer Cape homeowners were going for: a new way of inhabiting the landscape. "From the beginning, they wanted a treehouse," says project architect Matthew Schiffer, an associate at Hutker Architects, with offices on the Cape and Islands. As Schiffer describes it, the goal was for the home to be set above the canopy of oaks as if it landed there by way of the ocean, as if out of *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

The property's original ramshackle structure was built in the 1950s and perched precariously on the edge of a cliff some 140 feet above the ocean. But rebuilding on the same spot was out of the question; dune erosion would eventually destroy any house built there. So, instead, Schiffer called for it to be constructed 250 feet back from the edge of the cliff.

To maintain the views, they would raise the house 14 feet off the ground on steel trusses. At that height, Schiffer says, "you can still see the ocean and take in the glorious sunsets." As a bonus, the courtyard created under the house accommodates parking and a seating area where the homeowners can lounge in the shade.

Much like the modest, minimally adorned structures built by early Modernist architects on the Outer Cape a generation ago, the house was designed to have a light touch on the land. "We tried to harken back to mid-century architecture, when houses were designed to float above the landscape, with aspects that cantilevered out," says Schiffer. In keeping with Modernist ideals, square footage was also kept relatively modest; the roughly 2,000-square-foot structure is comfortable and airy with enough space to accommodate the family and an occasional guest.

The limited space at the ground level includes

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# SKY SCRAPER

A Modernist home on the Outer Cape sits just high enough for panoramic views. **By Jaci Conry**





storage, the mechanicals, and a powder room. The main level is divided into three parallel zones. The first, clad in naturally weathered horizontal cedar boards, has an entry, two bedrooms and a bathroom, as well as laundry, mudroom, and the master bathroom. The second zone, with high windows and a fir ceiling beneath a copper roof, includes the master bedroom and open kitchen, living room, and dining area. Beyond that is the third zone, a broad deck offering a 270-degree view of the Atlantic and connected to the house by three bridges. Schiffer says the design of the deck was inspired by a pontoon outrigger on a sailboat.

Thanks to a miraculous wall of glass, the open living area has a view almost as expansive as the one from the deck. The wall features French doors and windows that run from the floor to the ceiling, divided by exposed steel trusses that stretch from the roof to the ground. “We wanted to keep the skin of the house as light as possible,” explains Schiffer, “so we pulled the columns away from the window wall rather than up against the window frames to enhance the experience of feeling like you are outside.”

In similar fashion, the flues for the fireplaces at opposite ends of the house—one in the master bedroom and one in the living area—are set off from the exterior of the structure. “By doing this, you are able to see the sky beyond and really get a sense of where you are,” Schiffer says. “You feel like you are on the treetops, as if you are breathing in the ocean.” ■

*Jaci Conry is a Send comments to magazine@globe.com.*



The 2,000 square foot home includes an open kitchen, dining, and living area with floor to ceiling windows.

The master bedroom tkdkdkk Jaci pls fill in.

A vast deck offers a 270-degree view of the Atlantic.