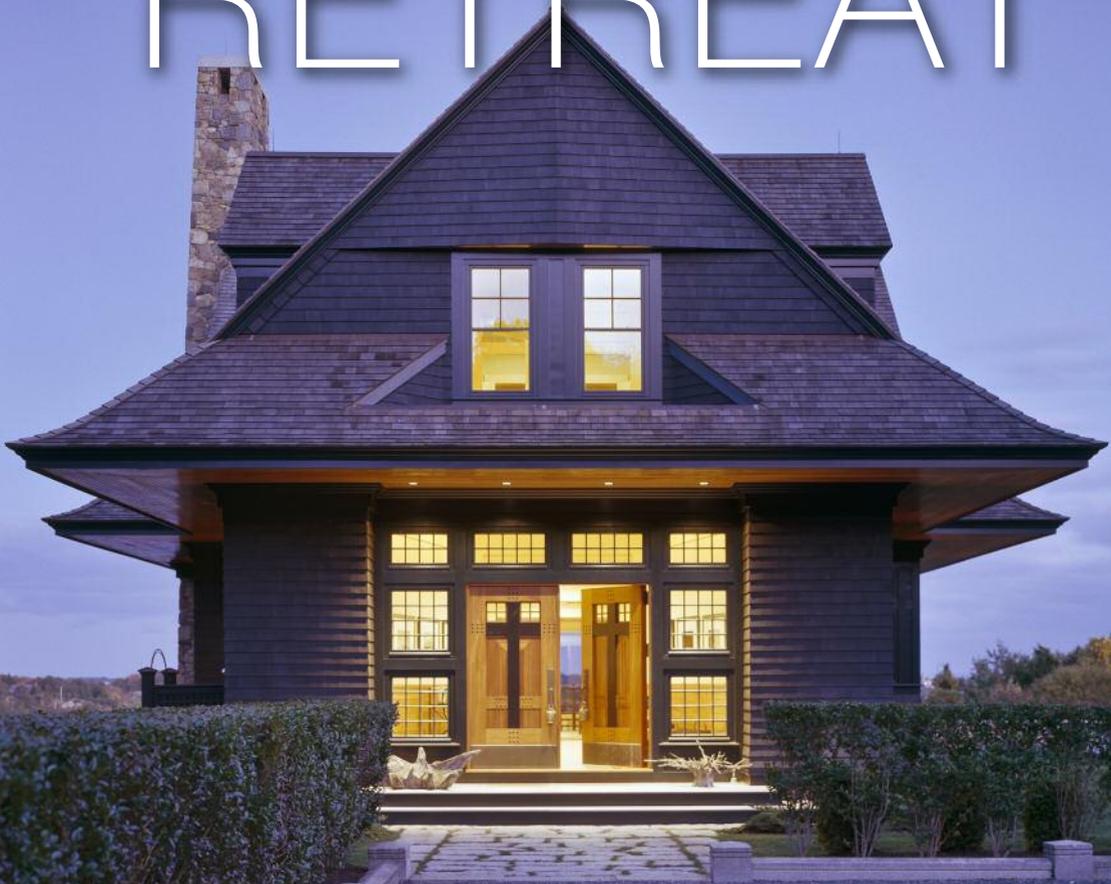


Righteous RETREAT



An architect's Rhode Island escape honors its seaside setting.

By Janet Mendelsohn
Photography by Brian Vanden Brink

BERNARD WHARTON GREW UP on the water, so he knows waterfront homes should be considered from offshore, not from the driveway. And so when the architect decided to build an escape of his own on Narragansett Bay, he didn't build it parallel to the shore like every other house in his cove. Instead, he built it perpendicular to the water. "You don't see the house until you reach the end of the driveway. Even then, the façade deflects your view beyond," says Wharton. "I didn't want to overburden the site. It's all about the water."

Located on seven acres in historic Jamestown, Rhode Island, the two-story, 3,800-square-foot home has a commanding presence. Its elevation, about 90 feet off the water, maximizes a panorama of the bay. The waterscape is framed by windows in all three bedrooms, including one with a spectacular view of the Newport Bridge. With two additional sleeping niches, the house sleeps ten.

Wharton and his wife, Jennifer Walsh, a photographer, spend nearly every weekend here, sailing as often as weather permits.

The house's massive double front door is arresting. Two, four-inch-thick, 4 ft. by 8 ft. wooden doors are dominated by black crosses that extend across their full width and height. Surrounded by glass on three sides, the doors swing wide when opened. "When people first see the doors, they think we are deeply religious but we're not," says Wharton. "I just like the shape of crosses. The imagery harkens back to traditional values, setting you up to see what's inside. Enter



and you are released. To me it is a celebration of design and being thoughtful about the purpose of a front door."

Across the threshold, visitors pass through a series of layers: a great room, and then a gallery where a large plate-glass window at the far end draws you through to the water. The great room is cozy for family living yet large enough for entertaining many guests. A second first-floor gallery has slanted walls designed specifically to exhibit

The massive black crosses on the door of Bernard Wharton's vacation home in Jamestown, Rhode Island, express his love of shapes more than piety. The architect designed the entire house to capitalize on its views of the ocean—and vice versa.

