



to see that it could be a beautiful open space," she recalls. "But I trusted him, because he's always come through and wowed me."

Today the Whites are having the last laugh, as the scruffy ranch house they bought has transformed into two-story residence, teeming with natural light. Yet the structure wasn't gutted. Brian calls it the Hybrid House, and indeed it feels like a blend of old and new.

Approached from outside, the entire façade comes right up to the street—a surprising urbanity that counterbalances the wooded expanse in back. The exterior is enlivened by the second floor's cedar-plank cladding, which was stained a dark hue. It creates an inherent drama in the way the newer upper level seems to rise out of the original white house.

Breaking up the mass of second-floor cedar planks are two unusual windows. One is an oversized square made of thick channel glass, which attracts ample light yet maintains privacy with its prism-like view. The other window with clear glass is smaller but framed by an angular oxidized metal shade you'd never expect to see in a residence. "A friend of mine is a metal worker and I wanted to steer something his way," says the architect. "And because it was my own house, it was also a chance for some experimenting."

The most dramatic change, however, came inside. Originally the front door led directly to a staircase, with two bedrooms scrunched to the left, the kitchen and living area to the right, and the fireplace tucked behind the stairs. Searching for a way to liberate the sequestered downstairs, he sketched the house's interior numerous times. "At first I couldn't find a solution," he remembers. "But finally I just drew the fireplace, the exterior walls and nothing else. I tried to look anew at where the stairs should go." And presto—they move to the house's left front corner.

That breakthrough helped everything else fall into place. The two downstairs bedrooms were relocated upstairs, making room for the staircase and a new dining room. This also brought the fireplace out from its walled seclusion, and created a vast open space encompassing the front door, fireplace, living room and kitchen. It's perfect for entertaining, which the couple enjoys. A simple but refined sofa and a custom-made, delightfully rough salvaged-wood coffee table make an ideal front-row seat for watching a roaring fire or the expanse of evergreens just outside.

To fulfill his wife's desire for more cooking space, Brian White doubled the size of the kitchen, with dark wengé wood cupboards that contrast with the pale ocher walls. "I need a kitchen that feels like the heart of the home," says Deborah White. "The children always seem to be running run around while I cook for them. And I love that. Because now we can do everything in one area."

Upstairs, the channel-glass window allows resplendently soft natural illumination, complimented by one of Brian White's favorite paintings (the house is his

unofficial gallery, with originals sprinkled throughout). The master bedroom boasts a wide glass window overlooking the forest, with custom built-in shelves below. A series of sliding doors makes up the bedroom's south wall, hiding a large closet and a deck overlooking the forest.

"I love how he's made it so the outside space really just becomes a continuation of the inside," says Deborah White, who enjoys doing yoga and sipping tea on her deck. The couple's private bath features a shower festooned in ceramic tile and a skylight.

As Deborah White's job takes her out of town almost every week, and she says home is "truly my sanctuary, where I can unwind and decompress. Brian's made this home feel like a retreat for us." Of course considering what their house looked like the first time they visited, such thinking did require a leap of faith. "I just had to trust him," Deborah concludes. "And he was right again."