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## on the cover

Built-in bookcases frame tall French doors in the plush study of a new Texas home. See page 28.

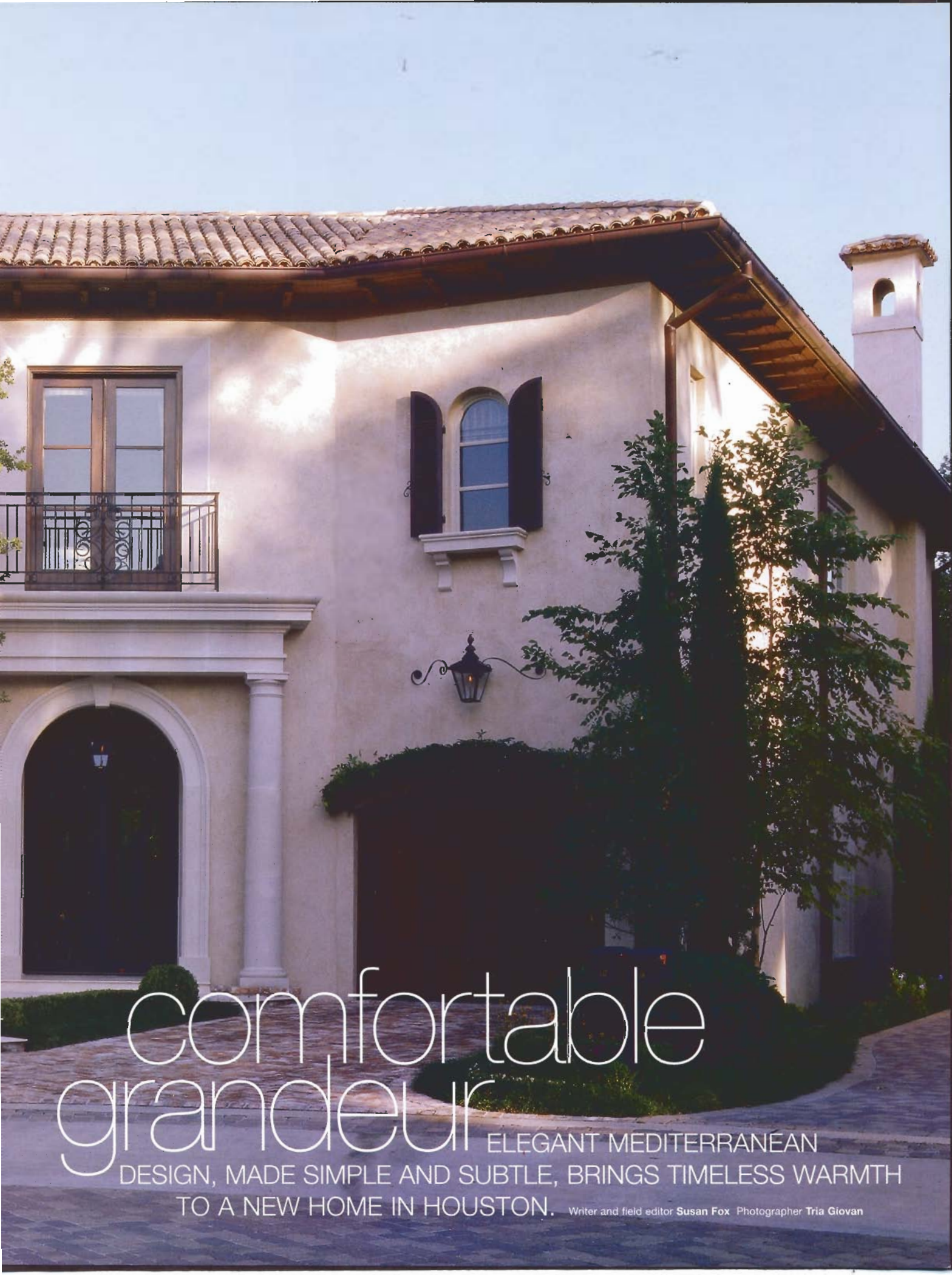
Photographer **Tria Giovan**

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# comfortable grandeur

ELEGANT MEDITERRANEAN  
DESIGN, MADE SIMPLE AND SUBTLE, BRINGS TIMELESS WARMTH  
TO A NEW HOME IN HOUSTON.

Writer and field editor **Susan Fox** Photographer **Tria Giovan**





LEFT Most of the homeowners' furnishings are French and Italian pieces, but a 17th-century Spanish refectory table was chosen for the foyer. The top is a solid piece of wood with carvings on all four sides. The gilded mirror is a 19th-century French piece, and the sconces are hand-carved reproductions. OPPOSITE Five sets of 9½-foot-tall French doors bring light into the living room. Topped with 3-foot transoms, they open to the patio, pool, and a bayou view.

Images of soft white beaches, sparkling blue waters, and bright streams of sun first lured Janna Woods to Jamaica 25 years ago. At the time, she was a Midwestern college student enjoying a well-deserved spring break. When she arrived on the island, however, she didn't take long to make a decision that would ultimately influence her lifestyle. A phone call to her parents, so her story goes, indicated she wasn't going home. Instead, Janna island-hopped to the Bahamas before eventually migrating to south Florida, where she finished school—and fell in love with the area's older Mediterranean-style estates.

The architectural beauty of those homes stuck with Janna through the years, even when business required she

move to Houston, where she lives with husband Jack Hamilton. About four years ago, the couple began construction on a Mediterranean-style house there, carefully selecting and incorporating the features they most loved about Mediterranean design, particularly the Italian Renaissance style. Among them were arched doorways and loggias, wrought-iron railings, red-tile roofs, and broad, bracketed eaves.

Janna and architect Brent Nyquist traveled to Palm Beach, Florida, several times to seek further inspiration from the architectural elements that define the homes there. "Cut stone, for instance, is a big part of the architecture in Florida," Nyquist says. So he designed the living room's














Fortuny fabric pillows, a Persian area rug, and antique Chinese pottery combine with a limestone fireplace and painted paneling for soft, timeless elegance in the living room. Circular windows were placed high to avoid a view into the neighbor's yard.









large, stately fireplace surround using the material. The stone's beauty makes art above the mantel unnecessary.

Stone also played an important role in the choice of flooring. "Many of the older, finer homes in Florida use a coral stone on the floors," says Nyquist, who joined Janna in a fruitless search for the now-protected shell. Instead they opted to use a rough-textured Italian travertine with a classic Mediterranean look throughout most of the main level.

"Essentially, Janna wanted a house that didn't stand out as brand new and appeared timeless," says Nyquist, noting the couple's 11,000 square feet of land—a pie-shape lot with limited building space—prevented slavish adherence to any one style. The 7,166-square-foot house, along with the loggia and terraces, consumes about 8,200 square feet.

Nyquist recalls how they came up with the front exterior design to suit the home's footprint. "We went through 20 possible layouts," he says. "The split garages weren't the first choice." But, because of the way the home would sit on the property, the team kept returning to that design. To prevent the garages from becoming drab,

dominant features, Nyquist specified custom-made, arched mahogany doors and wisteria-draped overhangs.

The front-facing design, it turns out, offered advantages. "Splitting the garages ... allowed us to open up the back and take advantage of the best views," Nyquist says. It also placed the home's entry at the center of the facade.

Entering the front door, guests immediately see a bayou behind a broad stretch of French doors. The living room and the library branch off to the right, and the more casual family room and kitchen are on the left. "The shape of the lot definitely makes this a more interesting house," Nyquist says.

The stairs were another challenging feature that ended gloriously. "Janna wanted as much ceiling height as possible,

OPPOSITE A 19th-century hand-carved French trumeau balances the space of the dining room, which is dominated by a magnificent 84-inch round Italian walnut table. The French-style chairs and beaded crystal chandelier with pendeloques were also imported from Italy. ABOVE The kitchen's custom cabinetry includes a paneled range hood that mimics the design used in doorways throughout the home.









upstairs as well as down," Nyquist says. The ceilings rise to 14 feet in the living room and to 12 feet in other parts of the main level. Every room on the upper level also feels grand, thanks to the 11-foot ceilings as well as expansive windows and doors. "As the ceilings rise, you face the challenge of how much you can stretch the stairs," says Nyquist, also noting the tight foyer space. "But we achieved a graceful look in the stairs," he says with satisfaction.

Although it took Janna and Jack 15 months to build their home, Janna embarked on the interior design well beforehand, visiting design consultant Don Connelly at least two years before construction began. She and Connelly talked about stains for the cabinetry, decorative paint for the walls, and the home's overall feel. "She likes

little color, so I knew I wanted to approach her with buff tones with subtle gradations," Connelly says. In some rooms, he pulled pale blues and corals from area rugs she already owned. To create a soft elegance, they chose silks, linens, and velvets for upholstery and draperies. "It's very comfortable in magnificent proportions," Connelly says.

Connelly is partial to the family room, with its breakfast table and built-in window seats, because of the intimacy it conveys. Nyquist says the living room embraces

**OPPOSITE** The family room's intimate window seat presses up to the bayou view. Brushed-nickel sconces provide soft light for reading.

**ABOVE** When the homeowners dine on their own, they relax at this French-style table and enjoy a view of the back courtyard.









## CREATE A CUSTOM LOOK

Showcasing a collection is one of the best ways to exhibit personal style. Here, architect Brent Nyquist designed shelves for owner Janna Woods' Asian ceramics and baskets. The crisp lines suit the nature of the items, and the taupe-paint finish serves as a subtle backdrop.

The upstairs study includes narrow stacks of shelves built into the paneling. The room's design evolved during the construction stage, the architect says: "That's not an odd thing; it happens as you become familiar with the house." He ended up creating floor-to-ceiling windows along one wall to make the most of beautiful outdoor views.





the qualities he most appreciates in a room. "Having light enter from three sides of a room is a luxury," he says. "It's the most successful corner of the house."

Jack, the cook in the family, prefers the kitchen. He wanted the big island and the refrigerator drawers for produce to make cooking easy and enjoyable. For the most part, however, he says he left decisions in Janna's hands. Building the home, after all, was the latest escapade in her long-standing affair with Mediterranean design. **BH**

#### RESOURCES ON PAGE 122

For more home planning ideas: [www.bhg.com/siphomeplans](http://www.bhg.com/siphomeplans)

**ABOVE** The back of the home creates a courtyard that provides the patio, loggia, and terrace privacy from neighboring houses.

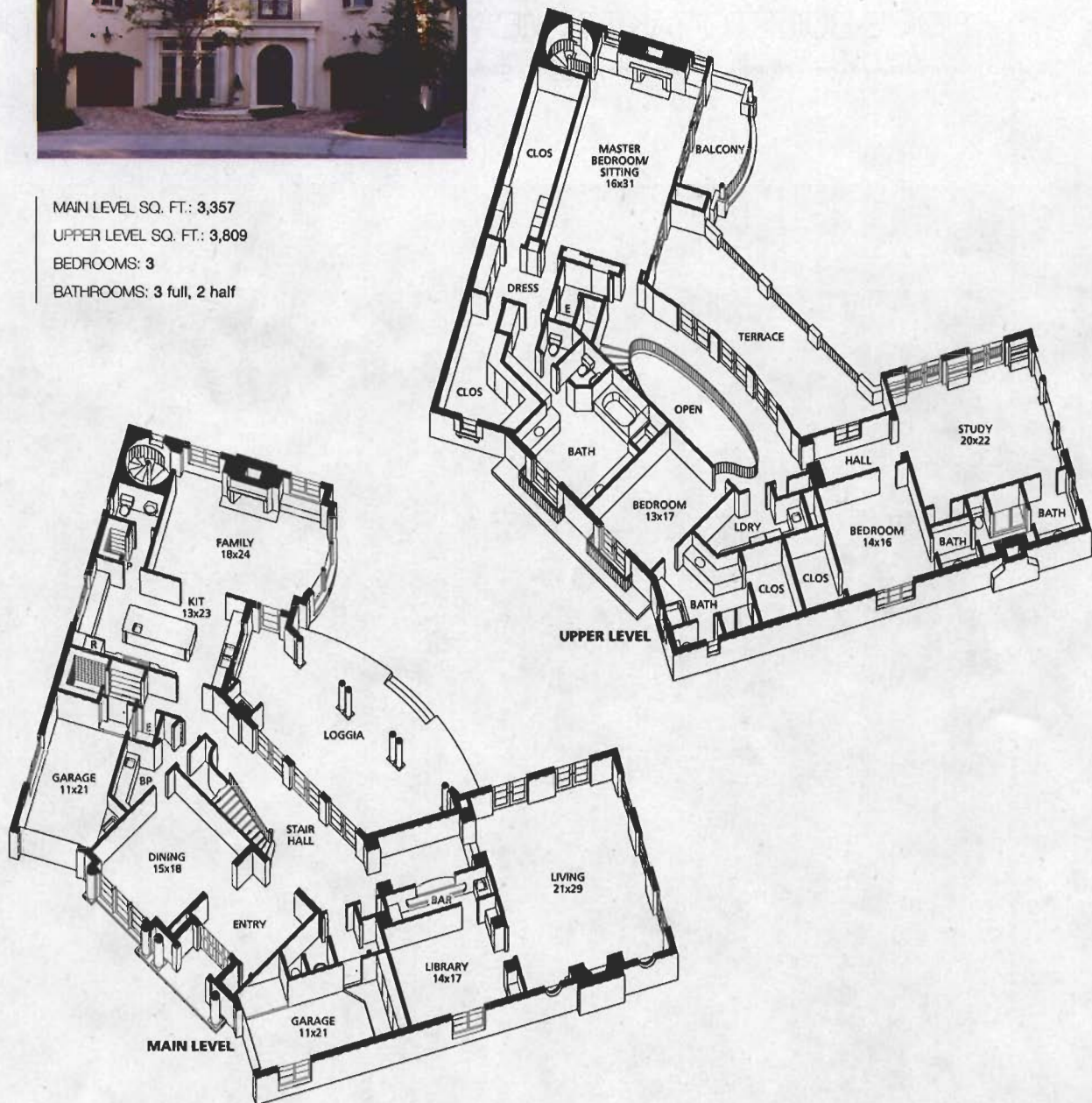
**LEFT** A long hallway on the upper level opens to a back terrace. The balcony beyond is accessible from the master bedroom.



THE MEDITERRANEAN ELEGANCE of early 20th-century south Florida, treated in a subtle way, inspired the design of this new home in Houston. A pie-shape lot dictated the branching floor plan, which splits formal and casual spaces downstairs, the master suite and guest quarters upstairs.



MAIN LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,357  
UPPER LEVEL SQ. FT.: 3,809  
BEDROOMS: 3  
BATHROOMS: 3 full, 2 half



Architect **Brent Nyquist**, Atticus Architecture, Inc. Design consultant **Don Connelly** Builder **Stillwater Builders**