happy medium

WITH AN OPEN FLOOR PLAN AND A NOD TO FLORENTINE DESIGN, A HOUSE IN HOUSTON IS BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP TO REFLECT THE OWNERS' VARYING STYLES.

WRITTEN BY **LINDA HAYES** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CARL MAYFIELD**

INTERIOR DESIGN Darla Bankston May, Bankston May Associates, Inc.
ARCHITECTURE Kevin Harris, Kevin Harris Architect, LLC
HOME BUILDER R. Steven Klimczak, Jarrah Builders
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Steve Henry, Gregory/Henry Landscape Design and Installation
BEDROOMS 5 | **BATHROOMS** 7 | **SQUARE FEET** 7,278

For this Houston home, architect Kevin Harris created a dwelling with precise architectural proportions that reference Florentine design. Elements such as elliptical arches, columns clad in refined stone and stucco, and a reclaimed red clay tile roof help form visual cohesion.

Authenticity. Longevity. Functionality. Homeowners R. Steven and Renée Klimczak had these attributes, and then some, in mind for their house in Houston's exclusive Tanglewood neighborhood. What they needed was a plan. For that, they turned to architect Kevin Harris, whose work they had admired for years. "Renée and I had specific wants and desires: open living areas, minimal hallways and an entertainment-friendly setting," explains Steven, who was also responsible for the home's build. "Kevin started with scale and floor plan components, and then positioned the house according to the historical perspective we were looking for."

"It's about how the house works for the site," says Harris. "Style doesn't come into play in my mind until after the floor plan is done." In this case, the elegance of the house, with its many elliptical arches, groin vaults, columns clad in refined stone and stucco, and reclaimed red clay tile roof, has attributes of Florentine design, which happens to be the predominant architectural style of the Klimczaks' alma mater, Louisiana State University. "The reason one's eye is attracted to the house lies in the architectural proportions," says Harris. "The placement, alignment, sizing and sloping of all the elements create a visual singularity: something that has guided architecture in Florence."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 233

The formidable task of drawing the Florentine theme throughout the home went to interior designer Darla Bankston May. "We'd seen Darla's work on various houses and could tell very early on that she got what we wanted," says Renée. "The ideas she was bringing to us were really hitting the spot." Adds May, "The exterior was fine-tuned but not too formal, like it had been there for years. We wanted to incorporate that feeling inside and chose to make the spaces inviting and comfortable while enhancing the flow."

At Renée's request, a neutral color palette was established, creating an elegant, streamlined background for select design elements, accessories and art pieces that provide pops of color and visual interest. A key example is right inside the front door, where a continuum of arches greets guests. "The entry sets the tone, with muted Venetian plaster walls

The house's open floor plan allows for easy flow between the family and dining rooms. Interior designer Darla Bankston May positioned a custom sofa and chaise, fabricated by Artisan Upholstery, around a coffee table from Lam Bespoke, all centered on a neutral Madison Lily Rugs carpet. The sofa is dressed in a fabric by Zinc Textile.

A focal point of the family room is the dramatic large-scale fireplace, which protrudes from the wall and then slants back as it reaches the beamed ceiling. The modern sculpture by Caprice Pierucci from Gremillion & Co. Fine Art contrasts with more traditional elements, including a console from Back Row Antiques.

The kitchen offers plenty of space for cooking and entertaining. Pendants from Circa Lighting illuminate a distressed limestone-topped island from Alkusari Stone, which features a leather-like finish applied by Legacy Granite & Marble Co. Custom barstools from Designer's Furniture Mfg. pull up to the area. Cabinetry was fabricated by Dimas Flores Construction.

An arched doorway off the kitchen lends a glimpse into a pantry and office space, where an existing antique wooden chair resides next to a built-in desk. Segreto Finishes hand-painted the distressed shutter doors, which feature hardware by Ashley Norton from Lighting Inc.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 234

by Leslie Sinclair of Segreto Finishes and artwork by Steven Alexander incorporating a jolt of color," says May. An off-center stairway with an ornamented custom-fabricated iron rail adds a sculptural accent.

Furnishings and finishes are a reflection of the owners' tastes. "My aesthetic is more contemporary than Steven's," Renée says. "One of our goals was to blend the two styles using clean-lined furniture balanced by warmth from wood detailing and antiques while enhancing the contemporary art pieces." The concept works particularly well in key living areas. The two-story family room, for instance, features a modern wall sculpture by Caprice Pierucci and a more traditional fireplace with a stone mantel, which both accentuates the space and acts as a focal

A series of poolside arches defines a loggia, and in this enchanting vignette, existing Restoration Hardware chairs in a neutral fabric that sandwich a petrified-wood-topped table from Kuhl-Linscomb. A Primo fixture, purchased from Light, is overhead.

Above: Stone pavers edge the pool, which is surrounded with lush plantings by landscape designer Steve Henry, including silver cedar trees, gardenias and cavalier zoysia grass. At left, a graceful arched window frames the ground-floor master bedroom. *Left:* Homeowners R. Steven and Renée Klimczak's table and chairs establish the outdoor dining space.

A prime example of May's effort to combine the contemporary and traditional tastes of the Klimczaks lies in the dining room, where chairs from Designer's Furniture Mfg. upholstered in Pierre Frey fabric from Culp Associates surround a table from Custom Floors Unlimited. The structured pendant is from Design House; the bowl is from Back Row Antiques.

In a corner of the music room, a carpet from Madison Lily Rugs lays the groundwork for the owners' existing chair featuring a pillow covered in Romo fabric. The Maitland-Smith chest is balanced with artwork by Joseph Cohen, sourced by Sushi Diebold Chughtai of SDC Creative.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 237

point for an intimate grouping of sleek upholstered furnishings. In turn, the master bedroom sitting area features structured chairs, which are juxtaposed with a scroll side table.

Three major axes organize the first floor and provide uninterrupted views through the house and landscape. The precision of these axes and the alignment of their respective arches were designed to orchestrate the spacial sequencing of the home, and affected everyone's creative process at one time or another. For Steven, getting their alignment right was one of his biggest construction challenges. May treated them as frames for certain areas, such as the entry to the pantry and the

The inviting master bedroom's subtly patterned linens from Kuhl-Linscomb offer relaxation. A custom bench from Designer's Furniture Mfg. is upholstered in Schumacher's Marcq chenille herringbone, while a table lamp from Memorial Antiques & Interiors rests upon the nightstand. A rug by Stanton Carpet runs underfoot.

Above: A pretty sitting area in the master bedroom provides respite with chairs from Designer's Furniture Mfg. swathed in a woven material from Robert Allen. The table from Mecox offers a counterpoint to the streamlined seats. *Left:* The daughter's bathroom includes a faucet by Newport Brass and accessories from Eclectic Home.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 241

master bedroom sitting area. Landscape designer Steve Henry accented them, and the home in general, with a landscape program that includes olive trees, iris and myrtle, and a self-watering planter below a front window. "The overall design is so European," Henry says. "Our approach was to create a textural bridge between bold and refined."

Reflecting on the result, Steven says, "People can't put a finger on what attracts them to the house or what makes it special. We kept our eye on the final product, and I'm simply amazed with the outcome." Adds May, "The home feels timeless and current all at once. As soon as you walk into the house you feel warmth. It makes you want to stay awhile."