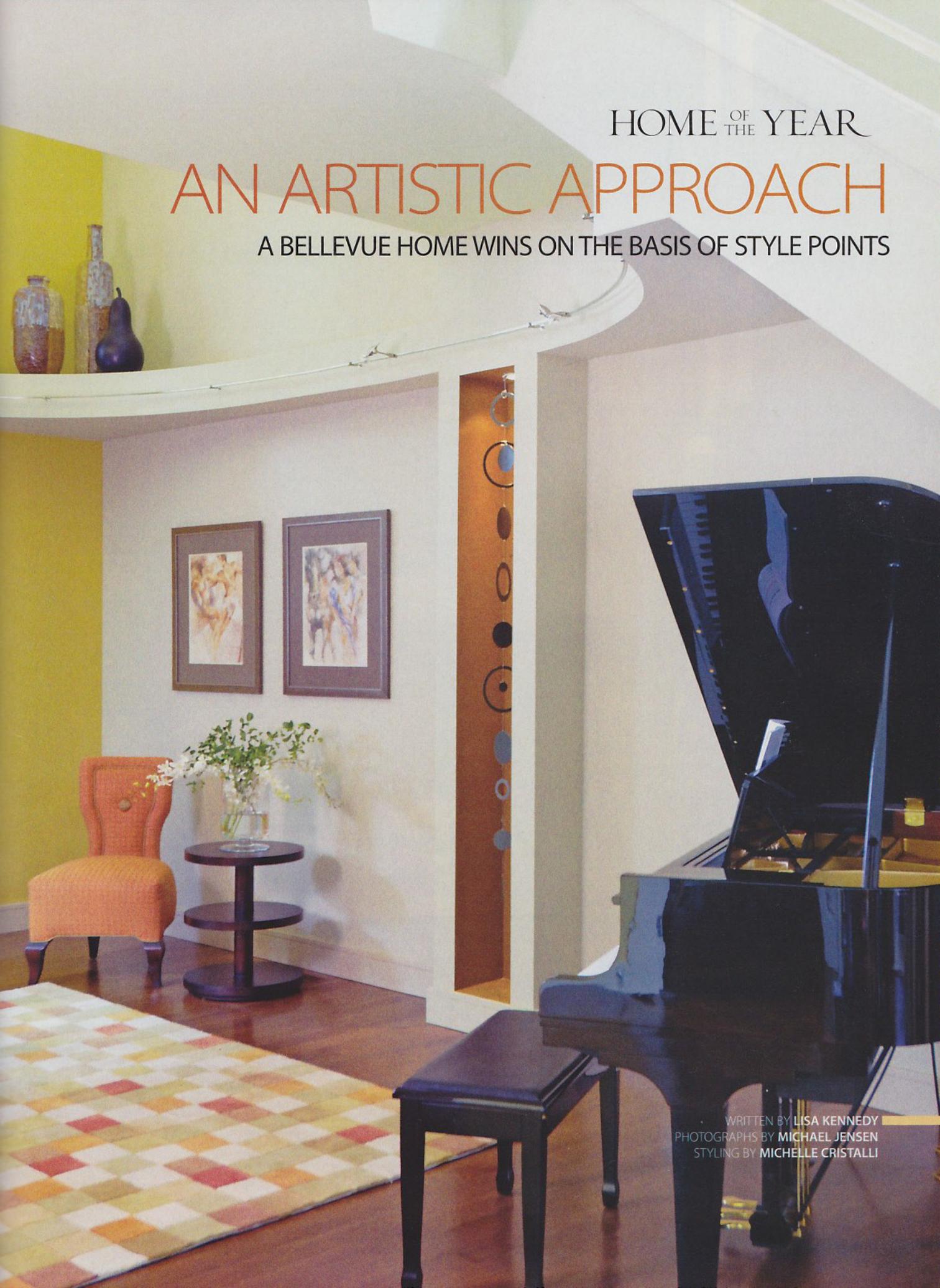




HOME OF THE YEAR

AN ARTISTIC APPROACH

A BELLEVUE HOME WINS ON THE BASIS OF STYLE POINTS



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From the start, Greg and Marina Itkin had strong ideas about the new house they were planning and weren't much taken with what they saw being built in the area. "Everything was too similar and the houses felt overdone," Greg says. "We wanted details, but not overbearing architecture. And we really wanted to work on the house like a painting." And so the intrepid Bellevue couple made the decision to design and build their own home with the help of subcontractors.

Focusing on their habits, and using light, height and privacy as their mantras, the Itkins formulated plans for a very spacious, yet

compact, home that would function well for their family, including four children ranging in age from 16 to 27. Once the house was framed, they brought in interior designer Lena Fomichev to help select finishes, materials and furnishings. It was the young designer's first big project, but Marina knew instantly that Lena had talent. "She really listens and understands what you want," Marina says. "And she made our relationship easier!" adds Greg, jokingly.

Capitalizing on the inherent drama of the space, Fomichev suggested a few architectural refinements, like the high shelf and tall art niche in the entry. She encouraged the Itkins to add strong focal points, extending the pale-green glass-tile backsplash all the way to

Style Point #1 (page 69): With the addition of a vertical art niche in the entry, designer Lena Fomichev immediately draws the eye up toward this home's soaring ceiling.

Style Point #2 (page 69): A gently curved display shelf in the entry softens the angular lines of the architecture.

Style Point #3 (opposite): By keeping furnishings to a

minimum, they complement (but don't compete with) the home's architectural assets. The main conversation area consists of seating for six and a cocktail table to serve them all. **Style Point #4 (opposite):** Display niches high above the fireplace keep the level of interest high in this room; one sized specifically for the television

makes the high-tech piece blend quietly into its surroundings. **Style Point #5 (above):** Square and rectangular shapes—in the chairs, the buffet and the contemporary art—are balanced beautifully by a round table; the resulting equilibrium makes the dining area a more soothing spot.



the ceiling on the kitchen's window wall and adding display nooks high above the fireplace. Inspired by the baby grand that would

"I knew that the Itkins wanted a fun house and to experiment with color." Designer Lena Fomichev

reside in the entry, she redesigned a planned kitchen island into an angled, piano-shaped slab of granite. It looks smashing and allows diners to face each other while also keeping one eye on the plasma television above the fireplace in the adjacent living area.

The "painting" is now virtually complete; solid front doors open to a 20-foot-high, light-filled space that telegraphs the Itkins' openness and welcoming mien. Simultaneously drawing the visitor's eye are high windows, a sweeping staircase and balcony encircling the great room, and the unobstructed view of the outdoors. On the main floor, the entry, living room, dining room and kitchen all flow gracefully into one another, emanating a distinctive mix of informality and polish that lends itself to hosting teenagers, three grown children and countless friends.

"I knew that the Itkins wanted a fun house and to experiment



Style Point #6 (opposite): Along the kitchen's window wall, a simple backsplash becomes a focal point by reaching all the way to the ceiling. **Style Point #7 (opposite):** Inspired by the owners' beloved baby grand, Fomichev designed the kitchen island to echo the instrument's shape. **Style Point #8 (opposite):** Square windows located above the kitchen cabinetry inspired the square tiles used on the same wall—or, was it the other way around? **Style Point #9 (left):** The tight configuration of one microwave and two Miele ovens adds up to efficiency; an adjacent low counter, serving all three appliances, is the perfect place to set hot dishes. **Style Point #10 (left):** Open shelving beneath the "working" end of the island steps up the convenience of this kitchen, as does the fact that the pantry has no cumbersome door.

with color," Fomichev says. As a result, playful touches abound, from the spirited orange chair and checked area rug in the front hall to the giant martini glass vase on the dining room table.

The furnishings are stylish yet comfortable, in an earthy palette of browns, greens and golds punched up with splashes of cranberry red. A soft chenille sofa and boldly patterned chairs beckon in front of the living room fireplace, while espresso brown leather chairs cluster around the honey-colored dining room table and nearby kitchen island, accommodating large gatherings. A six-panel custom painting by local artist Blake E. Kirstine and two-toned, 16-foot drapery panels

warm the entire area with rich colors and textures. And the look moves seamlessly outdoors, too. A double set of Euroline glass doors (that tilt inward for ventilation) opens up to an expansive ironwood deck that extends the entertainment area with its teak furniture, heat lamp and hot tub.

Throughout the house, Marina was unafraid of breaking with convention to realize both her vision and optimal functionality. In the kitchen, custom cabinets by Acorn—with art-glass inserts designed by Fomichev—were hung low to suit the homeowner's reach. She added a small sink next to the stove, to both fill and empty





INTERIOR DESIGNER, LENA FOMICHEV

Style Point #11 (opposite): By using glass tile in the master bath similar to that in the kitchen, the owners not only cut down their number of design decisions but created a sense of continuity, too. **Style Point #12 (opposite):** "His" and "her" vanities are divided by a taller column of drawer storage in the master bathroom, giving Greg and Marina their own separate spaces. The latter seemingly floats off the floor, giving the room a more airy ambiance in the process. **Style Point #13 (opposite):** A double stack of horizontal windows balances the strong vertical lines of this space—where the backsplash meets the travertine wall, for instance. **Style Point #14 (left):** Minimalism is infinitely more soothing than cluttered chaos, so it makes sense that this master bedroom is furnished with little more than the requisite bed and nightstand. **Style Point #15 (opposite):** Throughout this house, the difference is in the details; the decorative doors leading to the master bedroom are just one example.

Design Details

INTERIOR DESIGN:

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LANDSCAPE DESIGN:

KD Pro Landscape Services, (206) 730-7256

pots, and insisted on positioning her microwave and two Miele ovens (one conventional and one steam) for best access, adding a low counter for depositing hot dishes.

The peaceful coexistence of fashion and function makes its way to the second floor, too. In the master suite, a two-sided gas fireplace warms both bedroom and bath. Understated furnishings in the former create a sense of serenity; in the latter, travertine surrounds the double shower and soaking tub, while mosaic glass tiles sparkle on the tub front and above the double sinks. Plus, java-stained cabinetry and a freestanding shelf add some deeper notes. But at the opposite

end of the serenity scale, a media room just down the hall—complete with a 10-foot movie screen, a pool table and a bar—keep the place jumping, and a mirrored studio makes dance practice convenient for the Itkins' 16-year-old daughter.

Reflecting on the fruit of their labors, Fomichev says modestly, "The Itkins' strong vision was a big help. I just made it a little better."

Clearly pleased with the final result, Marina adds, "It's just what we wanted. Sometimes we would rather stay in because it's so nice here. It keeps us home a little more!" ■

Contributing Editor Lisa Kennedy is a Mercer Island interior designer and freelance writer.