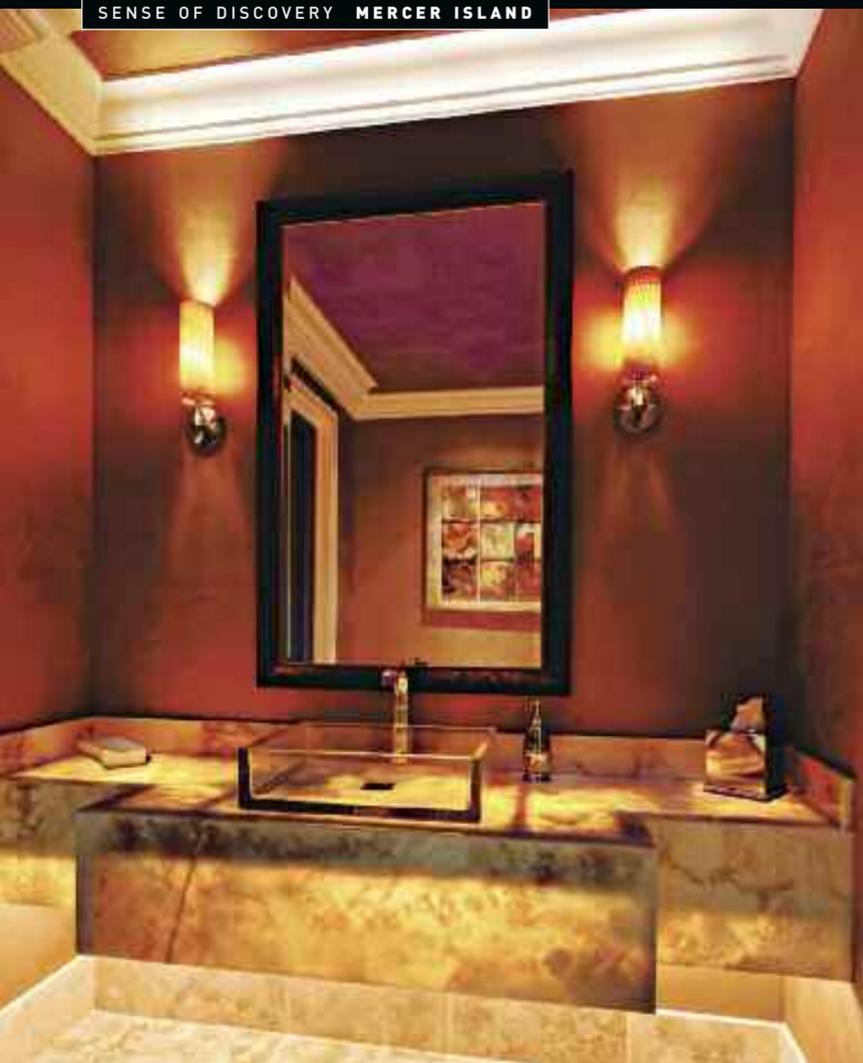


SENSE OF DISCOVERY

WRITTEN BY **NANCY A. RUHLING**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DANE GREGORY MEYER**

THE ENCHANTMENT OF THIS MERCER ISLAND CHÂTEAU STARTS WITH THE PALM TREES. They stand, sentinel-like, in the beds of clipped boxwood that lead up the gently curving drive from the front gate, their fronds waving a warm welcome. The stucco and west Texas limestone U-shaped home—a showpiece of sophisticated Southern European style—makes its presence felt immediately by embracing its environment. “It’s a house you discover,” says Kirkland, Washington, architect Vassos Demetriou, AIA, of Demetriou Architects. “With its *porte cochère* and arches and columns, you want to look at it twice.”

ARCHITECT Vassos Demetriou, Demetriou Architects
HOME BUILDER Steve Bender, Bender Chaffey Corporation
INTERIOR DESIGNER Kathleen Berman, KB Designs
BEDROOMS 8 BATHROOMS 11 SQUARE FEET 15,400



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The owners, a young couple expecting their first child, created the Mercer Island waterfront castle, which includes an independent guest wing, to cater to their exuberant entertaining. “The house has a tropical feeling; it makes me feel happy, like California in the summer,” the husband, a local real estate agent, says. It features a wine cellar that holds the 1,700 bottles they have collected from their travels around the world, a 500-square-foot his-and-her walk-in closet, two offices, a playroom, a media room, an exercise room, a recreation room and an eight-car garage. “We have a lot of large gatherings,” says the husband, “and it was designed with that in mind.”

The great room, which folds the kitchen and family room under its ceiling, opens to the covered and heated veranda via floor-to-ceiling retractable doors and bi-fold windows over the kitchen counter. “My main goal was to put all these rooms together so people could gather there and move inside and out,” the husband says. “I didn’t want the bar or pool table in the basement.”



ON THE WATERFRONT
The back of Le Château, which has a European flair, slopes down to the water, where the owners dock two power boats, a yacht and a wakeboarding boat on lifts.

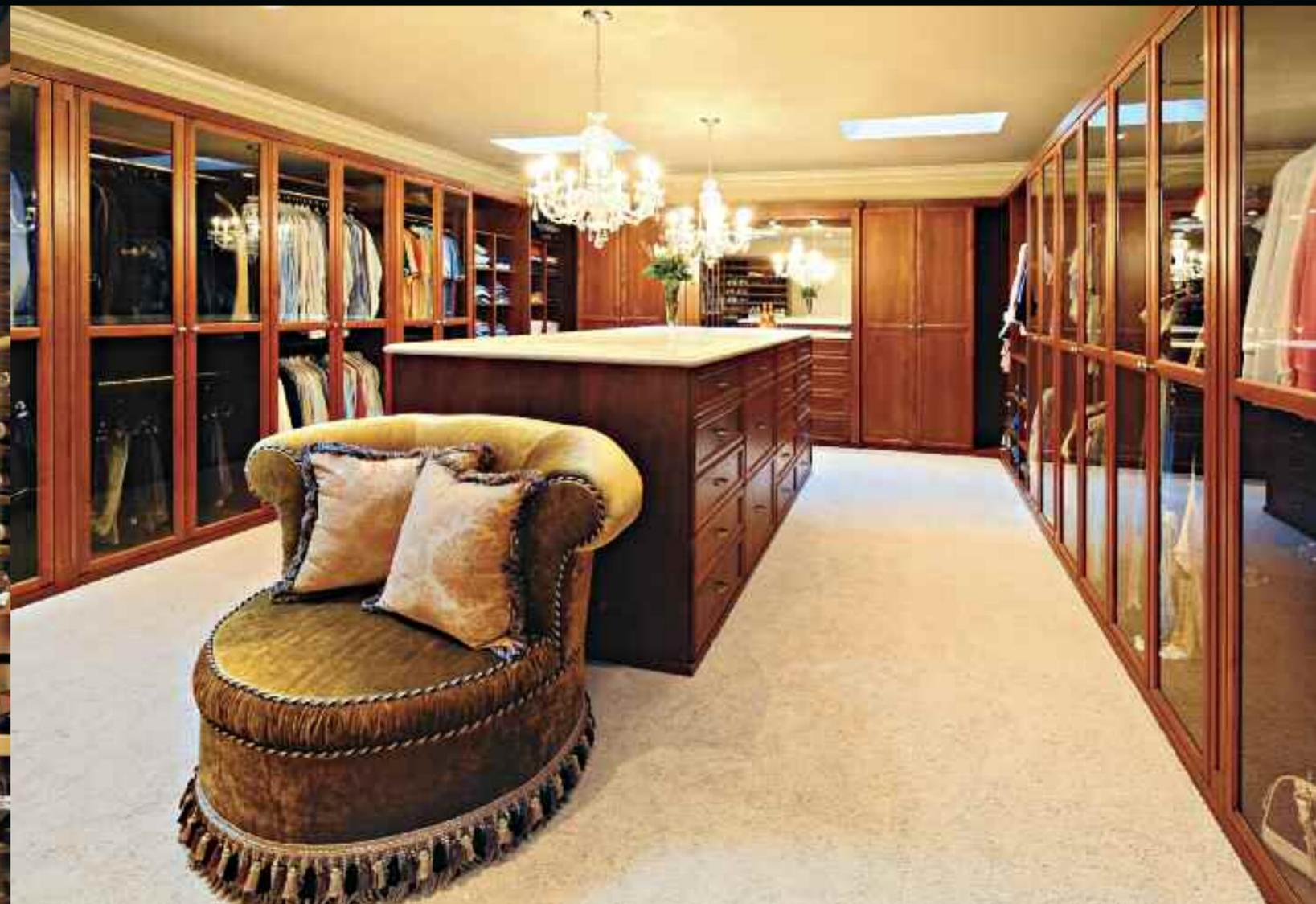
**LIFE OF THE PARTY**

With its illuminated liquor cabinet, three Sub-Zeros and island-style table, the kitchen is the hub. Outdoor serving is easy: A window opens to an exterior countertop with seating.



TOASTING GOOD TASTE

Wrought-iron door panels give an elegant feel to the lower-level wine cellar, which holds 1,700 bottles. In addition to a tasting table, the space also houses the husband's humidifier.



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Builder Steve Bender, vice president of Kirkland-based Bender Chaffey Corporation, says that the home's technology is impressive. In addition to a Crestron system, the temperature and body sprays in the master bath are computer-controlled, and a 60-inch flat-screen TV in the master suite glides into the ceiling when not being viewed. "There is a lighting system on the exterior that allows them to mix and match colors of light and their frequency," Bender says. "The husband is a sports fan, and when the Seahawks are playing, he programs it to flash blue and green. We've never installed anything like this before."

The 15,400-square-foot, three-level house is colossal yet as cozy as a cocoon. The rooms are generously proportioned and the open layout flows. Interior designer Kathleen Berman of Bellevue, Washington-based KB Designs chose a neutral, warm palette of beiges and browns

STYLE SELECTION

With traditional styling in painted iron and wood, this sculpture boasts the grandeur and magnificence of the horse. *Horse Iron Sculpture, \$159; arteriorshome.com*





COOL ART
Graceful sprays of water arc from the fountain across the infinity-edge swimming pool. Lush landscaping at the property's perimeter creates an oasis atmosphere.



STYLE SELECTION

This decorative vessel, which features heavy crackle ceramic with ivory glaze, shows design inspiration from the Roman classics. *Roman Vessel*, \$1,232; bakerfurniture.com



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grounded by walnut-color travertine flooring to coordinate with the earth tones of nature and added comfortably casual yet elegant furnishings. She and the client carefully selected key pieces; the marble columns in the foyer and the fireplace mantels in the living and family rooms were bought during a trip to China. “When you see the house, you say, ‘Wow!’ But it doesn’t go overboard,” she says.

When he’s not in his office, aka “the command center,” the husband loves to lounge in the family room, where a huge sofa and three flat-screen TVs make it the perfect place to hunker down on Sundays for football games. The wife is partial to the master suite—it goes without saying that she adores her closet, where her clothes are displayed behind glass doors—because she can open the French doors to the covered, heated patio and gaze at the lake. “This is our dream house,” the husband says. “I see a lot of high-end homes in my business, and I have taken the best and put them in my house. We don’t ever intend on leaving. It has everything we will ever want.” **L**



rites of passage
An elegantly arched arcade over the eight-car garage leads to the guest wing. At night, it and other architectural features of the house are illuminated in a rainbow of colors.