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THE WOODLANDS PRACTICAL MAGIC

Designed for comfort—but with a flair for the dramatic—the Aquino family's home in The Woodlands blends glamour with livability.

By Rhonda Reinhart | Photography by Julie Soefer

Yvette Aquino's house wasn't on the market. In fact, she and her cardiologist husband, Vince, hadn't even thought about selling. Still, an offer came in. A friend of a friend had seen the house and wanted to buy it. But the prospective buyers' offers didn't end there—in addition to the house, they wanted to buy everything in it. As unexpected as this development was, negotiations began, and eventually the Aquinos struck a deal. Yvette had just one caveat: "They can't have our artwork," she said at the time. "That goes with me."

As it turns out, the house next door had gone up for sale. Wanting to stay in their beloved neighborhood in The Woodlands, the Aquinos decided to buy that property—a four-bedroom, two-story house weighing in at just under 6,000 square feet. "The funny thing about it is that when we sold the house next door, we actually became friends with the family," Yvette says. "When they finally settled on moving in, they said, 'So tell us about the neighborhood—do you enjoy living here?' At that time, we knew we were moving next door; we just hadn't told them yet," she continues. "I looked at my husband, and I looked at them, and I said, 'I can tell you this: You're going to love your neighbors!'"

Armed with nothing but their artwork, including a collection of vibrant contemporary paintings by a Colorado-based artist known as Britten, the Aquinos were ready to start fresh next door. To help update the interiors of the new place, they called in the team from Slovak-Bass, the Houston firm that had designed their three previous homes over the past two decades.



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INTERIORS SUMMER/FALL 2016



A FEAST FOR THE EYES An overdyed rug from Madison Lily and a table from Found are the centerpieces of the dining room. The shearling rugs in the adjacent sitting area are from Creative Flooring.



Design Details

Type

Single-family house

Location

The Woodlands

Interior Design

Margie Slovack, Julie Veselka
and Lauren Grumbles
slovack-bass.com

Contractor

Carl Williams
ckhconstruction.com

Vendors

Area
Velvet chairs in study
area-houston.com

Arizona Tile

Tile backsplash
in outdoor kitchen
arizonatile.com

Design House

Mirror in living room
designhousetx.com

Designer's Furniture Mfg.

Custom desk chairs in study,
custom sofas and chairs
in dining room
designersfurnituremfg.com

G&S Custom Draperies

Drapery in living room,
study and dining room;
drapery and fabric panels
in master bedroom
gandscustomdraperies.com

Ladco

Cocktail table in living room,
ivory and brass side table
in study, bed and chandelier
in master bedroom
ladcodesigncenter.com

Mirror Gallery

Antiqued mirror panels
in master bedroom
mirrorgallery.com

Spaces

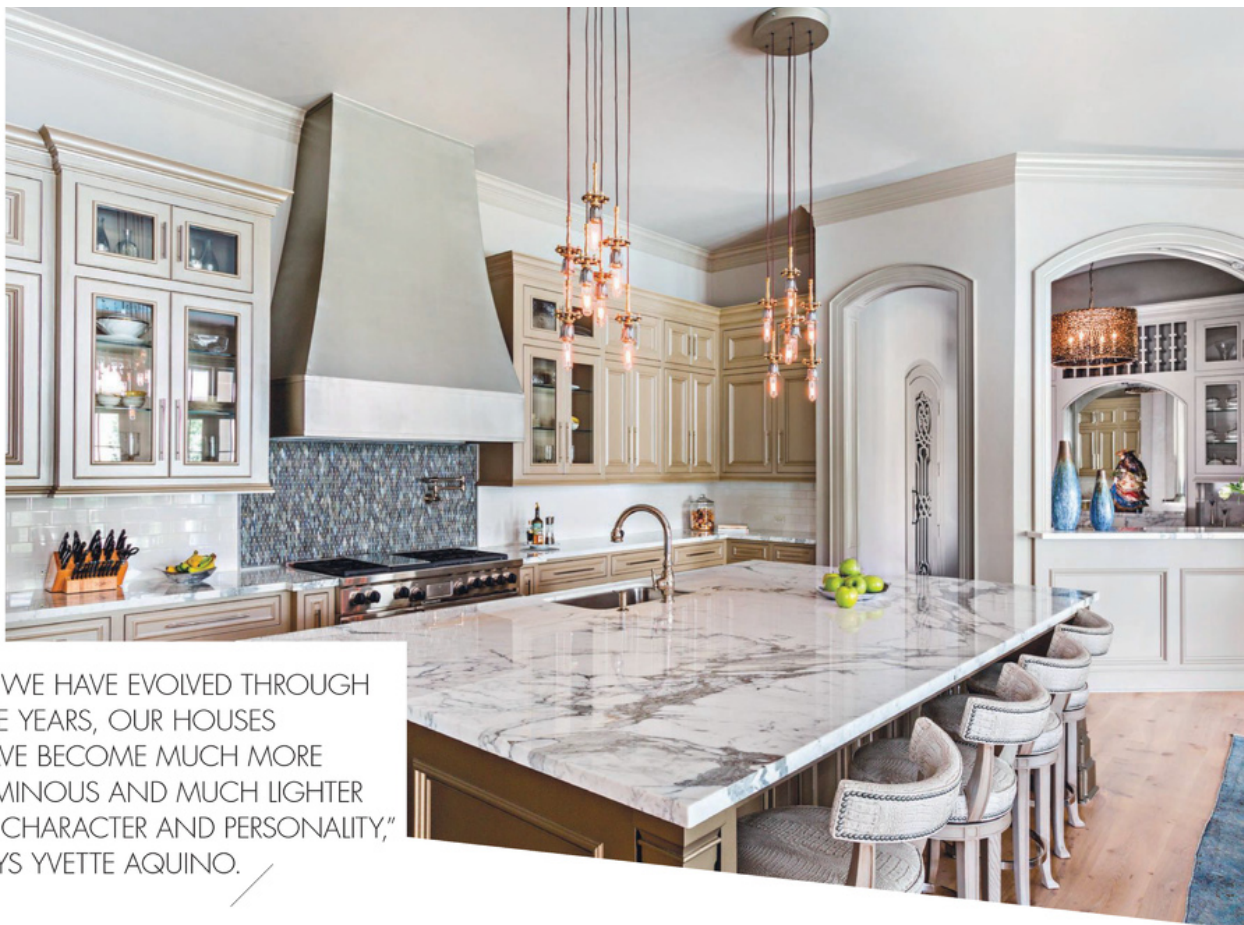
Velvet chairs in living room,
chandeliers in dining room
spacesforhome.com

Taylor & Taylor

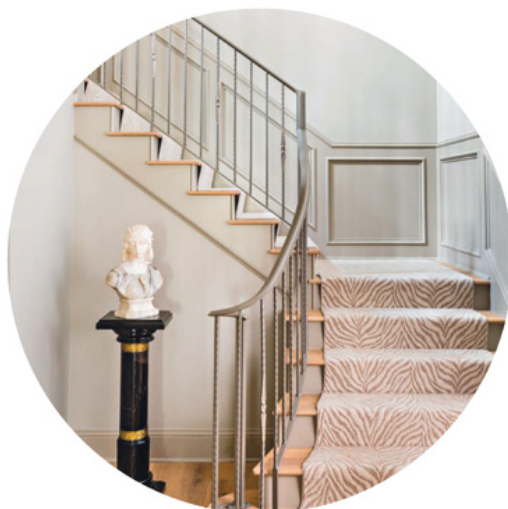
Counter stools in kitchen
taylortaylor designs.com

Vieux Interiors

Ottoman in study
vieuxinteriors.com



"AS WE HAVE EVOLVED THROUGH THE YEARS, OUR HOUSES HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE LUMINOUS AND MUCH LIGHTER IN CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY," SAYS YVETTE AQUINO.



FAMILY TIES From top: The Aquino kitchen, which features cabinet finishes by Janie Ellis of Anything But Plain, is a frequent gathering place for the homeowners and their five adult children; the stairwell mixes old and new, with an antique bust and a custom runner by M&M Carpet.

In the early years, the Aquino family—which includes five adult children ranging in age from 19 to 31—favored dark, traditional interiors, complete with heavy drapes and antiques. "As we have evolved through the years, our houses have become much more luminous and much lighter in character and personality," Yvette says. Now, as lead designer Margie Slovack puts it, their style is "a high-level blend between contemporary and traditional."

When designing the Aquinos' new house, Slovack, working alongside co-designers Julie Veselka and Lauren Grumbles, went for a casually elegant vibe. Bold colors and metallic accents add drama to the space, while low-maintenance fabrics and comfortable seating keep things warm and welcoming. In the living room, for instance, the designers removed the existing fireplace's cast stone surround and replaced it with a clean-line metal mantel. Above it they placed a custom antiqued gold-leaf mirror whose reflective quality adds a glamorous flair and plays off the free-form gold-finished light fixture overhead. Meanwhile, a thoughtful selection of seating and a hidden television make the space cozy and livable.



That juxtaposition of comfort and elegance continues in the combined kitchen and dining area, one of the Aquino family's main gathering places in the home. "We're an Italian family, and having four boys, we love to eat, so we had to have a nice big space for when they come home," Yvette says. To accommodate those festive family dinners, which often include Italian sausage and spaghetti (as requested by the Aquino sons), Slovack and her team placed a large dining table right in the center of the room. On one side of the table, curved custom sofas provide an extra seating area, and on the other, the open kitchen allows Yvette to chat with her husband and guests while preparing dinner. To anchor the room, the designers opted for a handmade, bohemian-style rug that beams with shades of blue, and to add shimmer to the space, they painted the previously white cabinets in a metallic champagne finish and added mixed-metal light fixtures.

"Our whole goal for the family," Slovack says, "was to create a beautiful backdrop that supports their lifestyle." For the Aquinos' part, they enjoyed watching the designer work her magic—on this house, as well as on their previous houses. "I've just loved every home that Margie's done for us," Yvette says. "We joke sometimes: I told her I would buy a house just to be able to do it again." ■

SLEEP TIGHT To cover a high window on the bed wall in the serene master bedroom, the Slovack-Bass team used a mix of fabric and mirrored panels. The table and bedside chests are from Alyson Jon Interiors. Other highlights include a sofa from Mitchell Gold • Bob Williams, bedding from Longoria Collection and a rug from Creative Flooring.





SWEET RETREAT
The chandelier in Yvette Aquino's study matches the one in the living room, and the Phillip Jeffries wallcovering provides a textured backdrop for a painting by Britten, one of the homeowner's favorite artists.