

# rise & shine

With living spaces upstairs and bedrooms downstairs, this handsome hillside home shows that good things can happen when there's nowhere to go but up.

displayed behind glass doors that line the upper cabinets snug against the ceiling.

"The island is marble, and the back countertops are granite," Silk says. "Having the island with a different material makes it feel more like a separate piece of furniture." The checkerboard backsplash incorporates both the light and dark countertop colors.

The home's elevator, just steps away from the kitchen, eases everyday chores, such as bringing up groceries or firewood.

Just below the living spaces, the home's main level includes the master suite, with bath and dressing areas tucked into the windowless rear of the house. A projecting bay with banquette seating creates lounging space inside while adding architectural interest to the exterior.

The lower level houses a guest suite, laundry facilities, storage rooms, and the garage.

The home works well for its owners and has settled nicely into its established surroundings. "This is an old, great neighborhood. It has an eclectic mix of styles and periods of development."



Silk says. "For me, it was important to create a home that had connections to the existing context without mimicking it.

"We paid huge attention to the legacy of the neighborhood yet created something that is unique, fresh, and inviting." \*

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**OPPOSITE TOP** | With a fireside sitting area, the master suite offers a great escape.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM** | The windowless master bath, buried in the hillside, provides the utmost privacy.

**BELOW** | Eyebrow dormers peek out at the world from atop the home. The master suite's windows extend from the house in their own structure.



## About this Home

**SQUARE FEET:** 4,000  
**BEDROOMS:** 3  
**BATHROOMS:** 3 full, 1 half

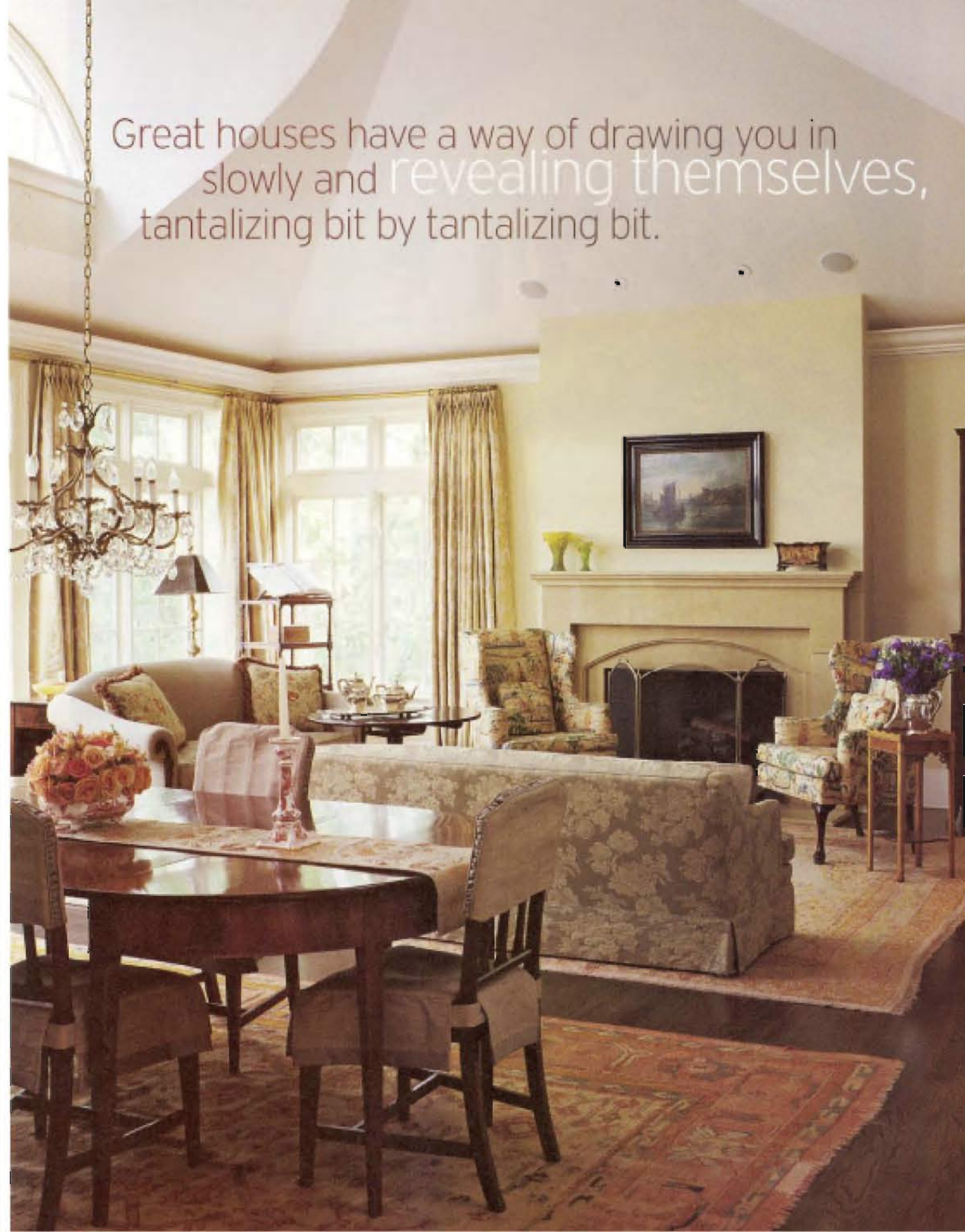
**FOOTPRINT:** 32x50 feet  
**LOCATION:** Near Seattle  
**EST. COST:** \$250-\$375 per square foot

- 1 Getting a lift. An elevator makes it easier to get groceries or firewood from the lower level to the upper-level living spaces.
- 2 Plenty of sunshine. The two-story stairwell includes a large south-facing window that spills light into a welcoming main-level entry.
- 3 Outdoor room. The family room steps back from the dining/living room's exterior to make space for an outdoor terrace with a lake view.

OPPOSITE | A mix of stucco and painted wood and an interplay of recesses and projections break up what could have been a bland three-story facade.  
THIS PHOTO | Richly detailed, this Seattle-area home draws visitors up to the charming arched entry.



Great houses have a way of drawing you in slowly and revealing themselves, tantalizing bit by tantalizing bit.



**L**ooking at this Seattle-area home today, it's hard to believe it rose from a simple need: Contractor John Hunter wanted to stabilize the hillside on the property below his home.

A retaining wall would do the trick, Hunter initially believed. But a brainstorming session with architect Stuart Silk yielded an unexpected, creative solution.

"Building a house below created value and shored up the hillside," Hunter says. "It was a win-win situation."

Given the unusual setting, it quickly became apparent that no ordinary floor plan would do. Because homes across the street blocked lower-level views of a nearby lake, the team decided on an "upside-down" house with the living area on top and bedrooms below.

The result always delights first-time visitors. The inventive three-level design allows them to experience the house step-by-step, culminating in an upper-level living area that offers voluminous space and unexpected views of the water and other tree-covered hillsides in the distance. "People do most of their living in the living room, dining room, family room, and kitchen, and that's where the view is," Hunter says.

The flipped floor plan is an option for anyone with a site that rises steeply from the street, or for those who want to elevate living spaces above the streetscape. Most often, this choice is driven by a wonderful view. But it comes with a big

**OPPOSITE** | A traditional fireplace and divided-light casement windows happily coexist with the contemporary vaulted ceiling in the dining/living room. Windows wrap partway around the room to bring the outdoors in.

**RIGHT** | The kindred colors in the antique Chinese painting and Turkish rug set the dining room's palette. True to their eclectic tastes, the homeowners mix a venerable Hepplewhite table with casually covered chairs.

challenge—creating a deft way to get from parking on the lower level to the upper level.

That's where the magic of this house begins. When visitors arrive, they are beckoned toward a wide stairway that turns its way upward toward a 1½-story arched opening, which is framed by antique French iron gates. Inside the arch, a few more steps lead to the front door, which opens into the entry hall on the home's main level.

"In a house like this, you could walk in on the



**THIS PHOTO** | The traditionally styled cabinets work with modern hardware and appliances to foster the home's mix of classic and contemporary styles. Glass upper doors show off the silver.

**OPPOSITE** | Hillside walls at the back and sides of the home limit window space but offer grand opportunities for floor-to-ceiling pantries and wine storage. Counters are light marble and dark granite.



Could you live with a flipped floor plan?

# UPSIDE DOWN

## PROs

- 1 Maximum light, air, and unobstructed views reach upper-level living areas.
- 2 Great vistas that you want to share with your guests aren't wasted on little-used bedrooms.
- 3 Vaulted or cathedral ceilings can add drama and volume to living areas.
- 4 A level above the bedrooms helps insulate against outside noise, creating quieter sleeping spaces.

## CONs

- 1 Hauling groceries from the car on the lower level to the kitchen can be a hassle.
- 2 Night owls walking around on living-area floors may bother those sleeping below.
- 3 An elevator, although a wise consideration for this arrangement, is costly.
- 4 Walking one or more floors from the parking area to the living room may be too much for people with health problems.

**OPPOSITE |** The eyebrow dormer gives the family room ample light, and the high bookcase fits well with the high ceiling of this space.

**RIGHT |** There's no better spot for morning coffee; this balcony off the family room faces the lake.



bottom floor and go up two flights of stairs," Silk says. "But it is a more graceful procession if you come up through a landscaped outdoor stair to the middle floor...so you only go up one flight of stairs once you are inside."

At the top of those stairs, there is an explosion of space as you step onto the home's upper level. "It's definitely a feeling of *Holy smokes! This wasn't expected!*" Silk says. Ceilings soar overhead, and light streams in through walls of windows and two large eyebrow dormers.

Putting living spaces on the upper level "gives you an opportunity to do wonderful things with the ceilings," Silk says. "With most two-story homes, you have flat ceilings in the living areas because the bedrooms are above."

At the ceiling line, a perimeter of low-voltage lighting hidden behind crown molding creates an inviting nighttime glow. This lighting is another way to underscore the advantages of this upside-down approach to design.

The upper level is divided into two related areas, both with walls of windows to admit maximum light and embrace the views. The dining/living room includes a wood-burning fireplace and the family's mix of traditional furniture and antique Turkish rugs. A peek

through the doorway reveals an open kitchen/family room with a second fireplace and another architectural surprise: a lofty lake-view terrace.

In the kitchen, a large island topped with marble and fitted with bookshelves and stool space invites chatting during meal preparation. Playing off modern hardware and appliances, a silver German chandelier adds a traditional note, as does the collection of 19th-century silver



## Dramatic Dormers

Eyebrow dormers offer grand style that can transform a space into something special. But construction isn't just a wink and a nod. It's a business for seasoned pros only.

- **Big job, big budget.** Eyebrow dormers are labor-intensive, which means they come with added cost.
- **Collateral costs.** They add significant expense to roofs because they impact the exterior as well as interior.
- **The eye in the eyebrow.** Window budgets also take a hit because eyebrows require custom windows.
- **Skilled labor.** Installation is tricky with all the curved drywall to shape and trim. Hire the best crafters available.



## Tradition with a Twist

Mixing traditional and modern styles can be done, if you use the right combinations. Consider how these elements are used.

1

Vaulted ceilings and open spaces define modern style but also welcome the height and visual weight of traditional furnishings.

2

Divided-light windows add a time-honored look yet impart modern appeal when they line a wall or wrap a room.

3

Charming touches, such as this home's eyebrow dormers, assume contemporary character when exaggerated in size.

