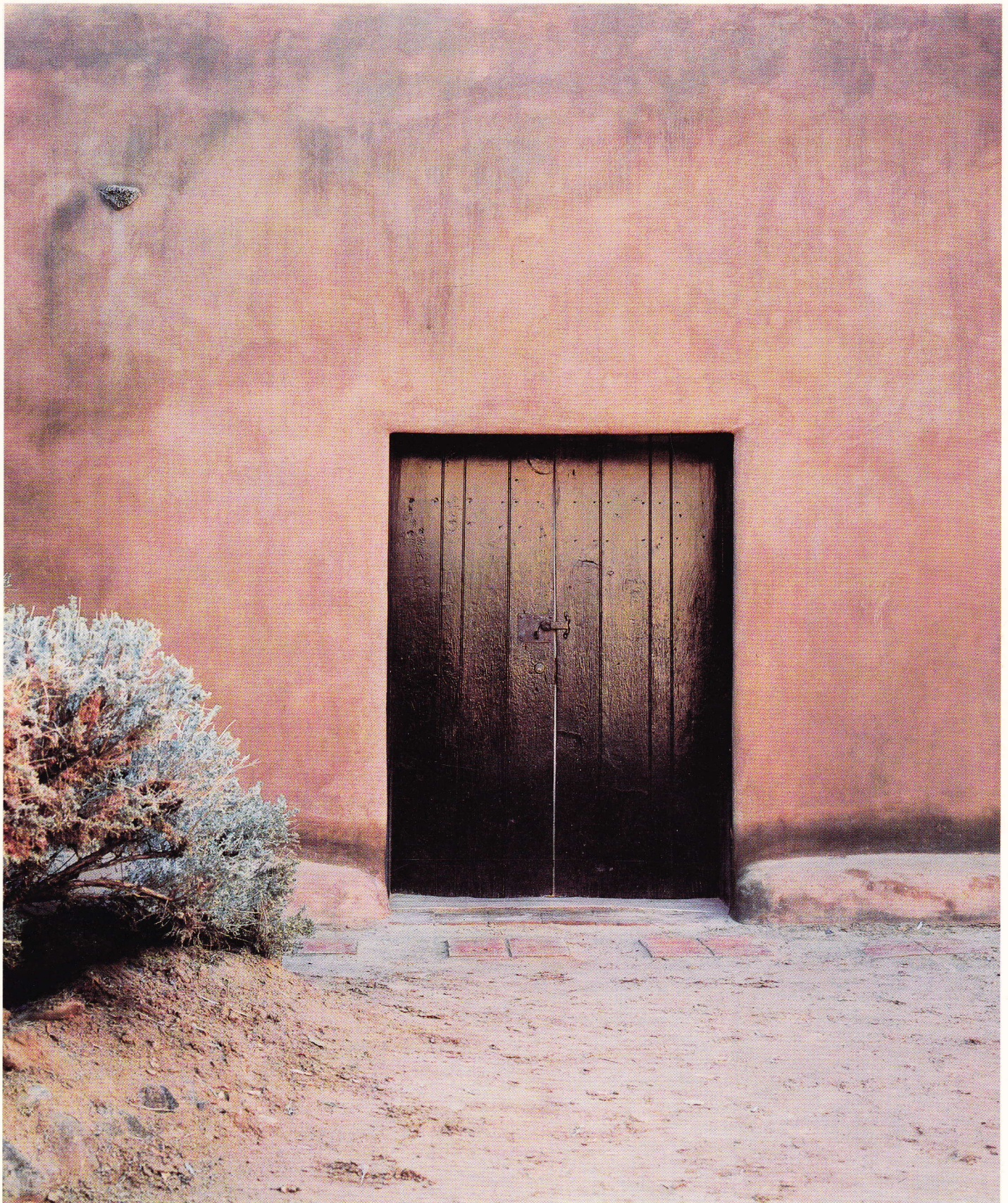


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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# Décor in the Grand Manner

*An Unabashed Opulence in Texas*

INTERIOR DESIGN  
BY CHARLES PAXTON GREMILLION, JR.  
AND LOYD R. TAYLOR  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY E. NICHOLS

WHEN SPACE IS TREATED with the visual aspect as its primary consideration, rooms can easily take on the qualities of an art form. Under such a dispensation, proportion and texture, symmetry and craftsmanship become the major concerns. It may well be called the "art of enclosed space," and it is one form of interior design with which Dallas-based Charles Paxton Gremillion, Jr. and Loyd R. Taylor find themselves particularly comfortable.

"We don't think of a room as being a background for people, or revolving around a particular kind of life, but as a form of art, complete in itself," says Mr. Gremillion. Under such direction, space can take on unique qualities; in the present design there is an abundance of richness at nearly every turn—and few visible necessities. Although this approach allows somewhat less leeway for the preferences of clients, the deliberate orderliness and precise symmetry attract many. For the owners of a penthouse in north Texas, the concepts of Loyd Taylor and Paxton Gremillion were exactly right.

Walls, floors and ceilings were removed, and the designers began with the open shell. Although the finished space is a culmination of years of thought and experience, it was not achieved by formula. "When I work on a space like this, I try to keep my mind open, free of preconceived solutions, and then new ways of doing something will come to be," says Mr. Gremillion. "It is a dangerous game, however, because when you conceive of something, you're never quite sure how it will turn out. For

Sumptuous detailing and symmetry evoke timeless luxe in a Texas penthouse devised by Loyd R. Taylor and Charles Paxton Gremillion, Jr. OPPOSITE: Revealing an emphasis on meticulous craftsmanship, a fitted cabinet in the Terrace Room recalls the delicacy of a coromandel screen; each panel is actually a door concealing storage. The cabinet, sofas, and pillows covered in Oriental embroideries are Loyd-Paxton designs. RIGHT: The Salon shimmers with wall panels of patterned and mirrored obscure glass, mirrors, and canvas that has been textured and coated with pearlized enamels. ABOVE RIGHT: Distinctive art ennobles the Salon. A Flemish chest-on-stand joins furniture upholstered in fabrics from Brunshawig & Fils. FOLLOWING PAGES: Louis XIV-style chandeliers illumine a balanced Dining Room arrangement.









In the “art of enclosed space,” proportion and craftsmanship become the major concerns.



PRECEDING PAGES: To increase the sense of height in the Terrace Room, the designers conceived a domed skylight, mirrored arches above the windows, and vertical panels and columns fitted with mirrored obscure glass. Adding to the air of resplendence, a complex lighting system provides a repertoire of atmospheric effects. Minton porcelain garden seats are grouped amid seating delineated by a circular band of dark marble flooring; a Louis XV-style piano offers another gleaming focus. ABOVE: The spherical Master Bedroom, soundproofed and windowless, suggests a gilded cocoon. Virtuoso architectural restructuring included a domed ceiling installed by helicopter. An unusual wallcovering, composed of voile stretched over stainless steel, enhances the soft glow. A Southeast Asian Buddha communicates repose. Carpeting is from V'Soske. OPPOSITE: Color in the Sitting Room, and throughout the master bedroom suite, echoes the Aubusson rug and a giltwood screen with Aubusson tapestry panels. Interpreting the subtle hues are pillows and a Louis XVI-style daybed and wing chair clad in Old World Weavers fabrics. A fragment of Coptic cloth is framed in glass. When raised, Levolor blinds disappear into a hidden pocket in the ceiling.

instance, there's an Oriental lacquer done with cracked eggshells that I like—and I wanted that kind of surface for walls in the main salon. The lacquer is done by pressing a piece of eggshell onto a flat surface and cracking it. We did a similar treatment to canvas panels, and then experimented with the finish until we found one that had a kind of glow.”

Mr. Taylor agrees: “It was not until the walls were complete, for example, that we knew how they would react with the other elements.” And the other elements are many. Marble, gold and white gold, silk and silver, ebony and glass are used over and over. French voile was stretched over stainless-steel walls, to give space a soft shimmer, and a ceiling was visualized in silver, but treated in white gold to eliminate tarnish. Craftsmanship is open and visible, giving a space that might seem languid and iridescent a feeling of substance and strength. The beauty of the rooms has more to do with this muted glow than with any particular period of style, since the designers do not draw from a specific time in history for their work. “We're primarily interested in the refinement of a given piece.”

With their attention focused so exclusively on the visual, there were engineering tasks the designers, by their own admission, would have been unable to execute. They needed an architectural engineer to interpret the concepts. “We talked to four before we found the right person. He understood what we wanted and didn't look at us as if we were crazy.” As a result, the dome for a ceiling was put in place by helicopter, and a way was found to remove an outside wall of twenty-one panels, each weighing two tons, to make a space for walls of glass, beveled mirror and marble—all assembled on a site twenty-two stories above the ground.

The design was challenging in other ways, too. “Prior to this project, I had always done my own lighting,” says Mr. Gremillion. “It is the single most vital element in good decoration, and one in which I've been trained. But the technical aspects here were really beyond me. For instance, the great heights of the ceilings were a problem. If you want to highlight a piece of sculpture that is perhaps fourteen feet away from the light source, it is terribly important to know what beam can be thrown, and how to isolate the diameter of light to best effect.”

Wherever the need for the technical was encountered, it continued to serve the visual, and in some fields this combination produces a definite permanence. This is not often the case for the interior designer, since his work is dispersed sooner or later. However, as Mr. Paxton and Mr. Gremillion have shown in this Texas penthouse, interior design—ephemeral as it sometimes may be—has many of the valid attributes of a true art form. □

—Suzanne Stark Morrow











