



Fusion of *Style*

A Dallas designer achieves *artistic perfection*
in loyal client's latest sanctuary

Interior design by J. Douglas Bradford | Text by Nancy Myers | Photography by Robert Morrell

J Douglas fondly recalls his first job for a local executive—the decorating of a classic-yet-smallish apartment in Dallas's Uptown Plaza area, near SMU. That was back in the early '90s, shortly after the inception of J. Douglas Design. Today, the far more ambitious effort of transforming this 4,500-square-foot Lakewood chateau into a stylized personal space serves as a testament to the lasting designer/homeowner trust forged during that early venture. Douglas considers his "dream client" a good friend as well. "He lets me create my vision, and while he certainly has the final say-so, I don't think there was anything he said 'no' to," he says. "He might take a couple of days to give me an answer, but it was usually 'Let's just do it. I trust you, and you always make things look fabulous.'"

Post-apartment and prior to the current endeavor, the homeowner had sought Douglas's expertise for yet another dwelling, further cinching the designer's *carte blanche* status when it came to his latest move. "Douglas really made it a home," says the homeowner, who describes the décor as neoclassical with a modern twist. "I liked what he did, and always had him in mind. I loved his work, and have never seen anything he's done that I haven't liked."





The kitchen [pictured] and den are among the most used rooms in the home, according to the homeowner.

Right The formal dining room furnishings are all by Marge Carson, one of the designer's favorite lines. The chandelier was imported from Pakistan.

Opening spread left The homeowner says he sometimes enjoys just sitting on the stairs in the grand entryway, and loves the way the high-ceilinged rooms are visually connected. The dramatic staircase makes for a grand entry to the upstairs spaces.

Opening spread right The homeowner was at first skeptical of the dark wood the designer selected, but ended up loving it, as it brings out the richness of the furnishings.

The client wanted everything ready to install upon completion, and Douglas was able to deliver. His biggest challenge—hardly an insurmountable obstacle—was coaxing the homeowner into the faux finish he insisted on throughout the house. “He thought the sample was way too dark, but he trusted me and let me do what I wanted,” says the designer. “Once it was completed, he absolutely loved it. I think a lot of times clients are afraid of color, or, I should say, a darker color. In this case it makes for a dramatic backdrop.” According to the homeowner, “We go back and forth, and he always gets his way. Ultimately, those dark colors really bring out the richness of the furniture.”

This client planned the layout of the home himself, and it took a year to build, and another year and a half to decorate and complete. “I think like any house, it is a work always in progress, and my client is always open to change,” says Douglas. Adds the homeowner, “He’s got a real feel for what I’m going to like. He did a spectacular job on the formals in front. Each room is still its own intimate [and separate] venue, but through the use of elevation shifts, balconies, windows, nooks, and crannies you always feel connected to the house in its entirety. It has a very cat-like feel. There’s always some high perch allowing you to take in the ambiance.”

Except for a couple of items brought from the previous residence, all of the pieces were custom for the house, either purchased new from the designer’s Oak Lawn showroom or special-ordered. Douglas selected everything—from fixtures to finishes to fireplace mantels. It’s customary for the designer to deliver this type of whole-house package, as his studio/gallery is set up to equip customers with the finest in paintings, sculptures, and accents to complement any array of fine furnishings.

The diverse nature of interior elements represents what Douglas’s vast collection is all about—pieces that possess a timeless quality. In other words, he’s more concerned with lasting looks than with chasing trends. “We cherry-pick everything we purchase for my showroom. A lot of clients





Many different elements work together to make this third-floor room a retreat.



Right In the master bedroom, the hand-carved mahogany bed is from Maitland-Smith, as is the entertainment center, featuring hand-wrapped leather and coromandel pocket doors.

tell me when they shop with us, it's like we went around the world and picked out the best of the best. It all works together very well, whether it's contemporary or more traditional. I think that is what most of the public likes—being able to mix pieces.”

The formal dining room and all of the upholstery in the family room are from Marge Carson, one of Douglas's favorite lines. “Such endless possibilities in finishes, and the best fabrics and trims in the industry,” he says of the California-based company known for its handcrafted, posh furnishings. The dining room chandelier is imported from Pakistan. Two elegant gilded cabinets on acrylic stands flank the French doors leading out to the swimming pool. These are among the few items brought from the client's previous home, and they're purchases from Allan Knight, who acquired them from a temple in Asia. “I think they're my favorite pieces in the house,” says Douglas.

The “floating chests” are among the homeowner's favorites as well, along with the Robert Franklin painting titled *Aphrodite*, which hangs over the formal living room fireplace; and the large mermaid sculpture by the pool, acquired through a local antique auction and presented to him as a gift. Since designer and homeowner are likeminded in terms of art, selecting works to adorn the walls was as easy as the rest of the collaboration. Douglas personally chose the works from artists represented by Phoenix Art Group. He would first run the options by his client, who appreciated the designer's sense of style and artistic eye. “Even though they are stand-alone pieces, most of the paintings were acquired to fulfill color and texture considerations to enhance the space they were complementing,” the homeowner says. “If Douglas ever presented me with an idea I initially felt uncertain about, always, after a little consideration, I would come to his same conclusion. When it comes to decorating, he's definitely the master. I've learned to trust his vision wholeheartedly.”

The master bedroom boasts a hand-carved mahogany bed and hand-wrapped leather entertainment center with Coromandel pocket doors. Both are from Maitland-Smith, famed for heirloom-quality furniture handcrafted from exotic materials. Rugs throughout the house were selected from Feizy Imports of Dallas.





The homeowner likens the house to an art gallery of perfectly matched pieces set in unique spaces, as reflected in this study. Most of the paintings were acquired to fulfill color and texture considerations and enhance their complementary spaces.

A third-floor retreat features a Maitland-Smith daybed with bedding Douglas designed himself. The bedspread is mink, topped with pillows trimmed in a menagerie of feathers and glass beads. The accompanying coffee table, which also serves as a storage trunk, is embossed alligator-printed leather. A hand-wrapped leather camel with a pen-shell top doubles as the room's walk-up bar. Outdoor furniture is by Florida-based Pavilion Furniture, and the designer also had the final word in all of the pool design and landscaping.

"Every portion of the house I use religiously, even if it's simply to sit and soak it in," says the homeowner. "As much as this house is a home, it's also an art gallery of perfectly matched pieces set in very unique spaces. Each room provides its own mood and purpose. Douglas's keen eye has woven them seamlessly together to provide a perfect 'life scape' for me to both live and entertain."TM