



WHAT DID Joseph Minton, the owner, say to Joseph Minton, the designer, about the requirements for redecorating his home? What prohibitions did Mr. Minton, owner, set forth about color schemes and fabrics? "I found him very difficult," says Mr. Minton, who with David Corley owns the design firm of Minton-Corley. "As a homeowner, I couldn't make up my mind. I had too many ideas."

The two Joseph Mintons do agree that attempting a design job for oneself is tough. When a client decides on the scope of a project, he sets guidelines for the designer to follow. A de-

signer certainly doesn't go out of his way to antagonize his client, but when a designer is his own client, conflicts of jurisdiction are apt to occur.

The Minton house, a modest one on the edge of Fort Worth's most fashionable residential area, is buffered from its neighbors by lush evergreen plantings and an enclosed patio with a swimming pool. With the earth-colored stuccoed walls, it's hard to remember that the locale is Fort Worth and not Aix-en-Provence.

Several times during this project, Mr. Minton found it particularly difficult to reconcile the personal and

opposite: "A wonderful backdrop for a hodgepodge of antiques" is how Joseph Minton characterizes his Fort Worth home. In the entrance hall, a Southwest pine table holds Chinese jars and Fu dogs, arrayed before a 1920s French screen. *below*: The painted tray ceiling and walls blend with the bleached floors in the living room, a neutral scheme carried through the house. Cotton chenille from Donghia Textiles on the sofa, and a Lee Jofa print covering windows, pillows and cushions, inject color. The painting at left is by Julio Larraz. Leather upholstery from Jack Lenor Larsen.



Balancing Act

Dual Challenge for a Designer in His Fort Worth Home

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professional aspects of his role. When, for example, he insisted on purchasing an eighteenth-century stone gateway he found resting in the grass in an antiques dealer's yard, his designer's eye doubted whether the dimensions of the house would accommodate the piece. But the following day, the dealer brought a scale drawing that showed the portal was within inches of the required measurement. Joseph Minton, convinced that his homeowner's instincts were correct, overrode his professional concerns about the cost of transportation and the installation of a two-ton door frame. Ultimately, his worries were justified—it was costly—but now Mr. Minton concedes that his "client's" judgment was right all along.

The designer likes to establish a strong axis in his floor plans, to create a clear sense of location. Similarly, he is strict about maintaining uniform levels for the tops of paintings and furniture, to avoid a feeling of clutter. The living room axis runs from the dining room on one side through to the entrance hall on the other, permitting the eye to focus on the windows and their pleasant views.

The house has an atmosphere of coziness and warmth, partially because of the wood tones of the bleached oak floors and the nineteenth-century furniture. The blond floors are a fine foil, too, for deep-toned Bessarabian rugs. Both the living room and dining room have handsome pots, baskets and vases that hold miniature trees and flowering plants. These, together with the outdoor landscape seen through the French doors, give the impression of being in the treetops.

Most of Joseph Minton's designs for his clients have called for furniture and decorative objects on a different scale than those for a compact

urban domicile. Despite his personal attraction to more dramatic antiques, the designer limited himself to just a few large pieces, such as a handsome nineteenth-century Dutch tortoiseshell and ebony curio cabinet and a pair of large Sicilian oil jars in the entrance hall; a rustic four-poster bed; and a half-dozen striking Palissy-style earthenware platters gracing the walls of the dining room.

Throughout the house, Joseph Minton has judiciously used neutral-colored cotton, damask, natural jute, and an Italian silk and linen herringbone weave—all of which have great textural quality—to serve as backgrounds for his objets d'art and paintings. The materials contribute to the low-key color scheme that he demanded of himself in the first place.

In the end, there was complete accord between owner and designer. On all levels, Joseph Minton is perfectly content with his home. □

OPPOSITE: The designer extended his small dining room with a wall of French doors that open to a balcony overlooking his garden. English Windsor chairs surround a table made of slate set in an antique iron-wheel frame and steel base. **UNDERFOOT:** an antique Bessarabian rug. **BELOW:** A mix of the rustic and the elegant informs the master bedroom, where a timber four-poster bed and a painted blanket chest stand in contrast to the Empire-style chaise longue. Wooden shutters shade the windows instead of draperies. The painting is by Julio Larraz. Carpeting by Stark.



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