

A Refined Image for Oil

Joe Minton makes a striking metaphor for fossil fuel in the Midland, Texas executive offices of oil operator Perkins D. Sams

This may be a new way to say Texas—especially when the subject is Texas oil. In these 7800 square feet of offices on the top floor of a new Midland high rise we see the bold sense of scale, the sweep of space of *Giant* country synthesized with strata of allusions to a fossil fuel theme. Joe Minton, of the Fort Worth design partnership of Minton-Corley, has melded ammonites, geodes, fossils, and fossil impressions with off-beat antiques and sophisticated contemporary pieces in natural materials to create a distinctive image for a highly responsive client, the independent oil operator Perkins D. Sams. In the course of the project, in fact, Mr. Sams developed a scholarly interest in fossil finds and minerals that he is now seriously pursuing.



Within a highly contemporary shell with Italian travertine flooring laid like flagstone and woven straw wallcovering, the spaces are steeped in the past—the millennia represented by fossil shells—and fossil fuel—and in layers of recorded time. There is a suggestion of the amphorae of ancient Greece in a cluster of tall, double-handled vessels actually shaped by French sculptor Gerard Bitboul. More recent centuries are summoned diversely. There are 17th century elements—a Spanish carving, an English box. Mr. Sams' office is serenely ordered with 18th century English panelling. And on through the 19th century, and up to the sophisticated current simplicities of pine log furniture upholstered in hand-painted silk.

Presently occupying two-thirds of a floor, with more to come, the Perkins Sams layout (see plan) includes a dozen private offices around the perimeter. Two prime curving corners are occupied respectively by secretarial stations and the executive conference/lounge area, the site of frequent night meetings. With the shimmer of city lights outside and the glints of light off the giant crystals on display within, the spaces have a genuine glamour.

Day or night, Joe Minton's juxtapositions are sheer theatre—a jade boulder on a parchment finish coffee table, Windsor chairs pulled up to a great slab of a cedar table, stump tables on a William Morris rug. This is a solution which has a lot to do with angles of perspective.

L.W.G.



Above: Straw cloth-covered wall behind the white oak reception desk is hung with ammonites. Flooring is travertine laid like flagstones. To the right is a glimpse of a chair in the adjacent waiting area

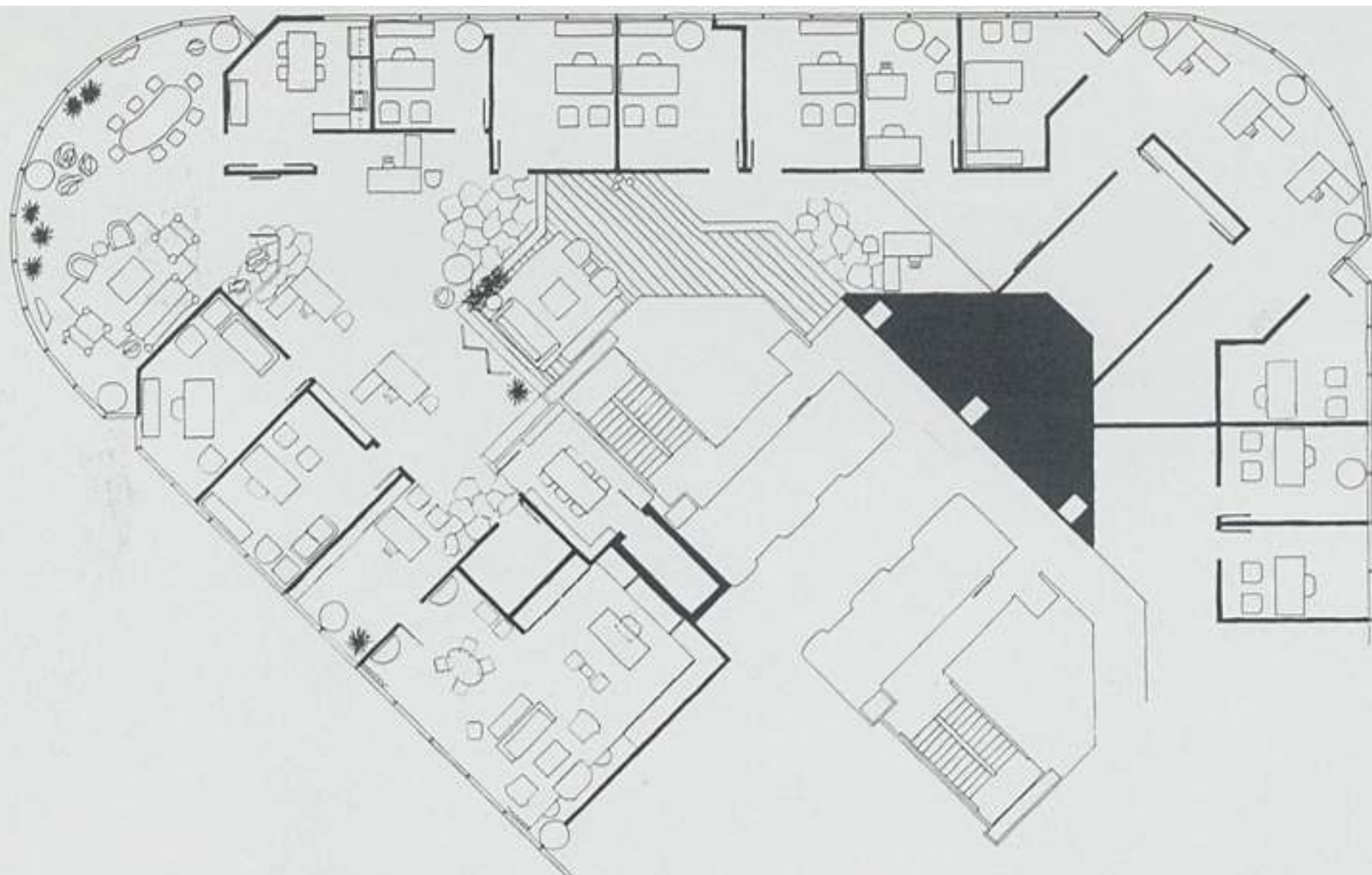
Left: Elevated waiting area is a bleached pine platform. A nine-foot wide Irish dresser, Scottish horn chairs with a 17th century English box between, a leather sofa with an antique English porcelain garden seat used as a table, and a hammered iron coffee table, prototype of a new collection by Minton-Corley, are positioned on a Portuguese needle-point rug. Behind the sofa is seen the first panel of a screen composed of English pine panelled doors; in the opposite direction, a contemporary amphora by Gerard Bitboul. Painting behind the secretarial station is by James R. Blake.

Photographer: Russell MacMesters

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An 18th century pine panelled room found in London at the commencement of the project, was adapted for Mr. Sams' 30-foot office. Fireplace wall, with niches carved from solid blocks, is installed intact and extended with 70-year-old pine French doors, now with mirrored panes. Painting from the client's collection, on the wall behind Mr. Sams' Empire desk, fits into what was an original window opening. Custom carpeting takes its colors from the tapestry upholstery of the wing chairs, the only reproductions in the otherwise 18th Century room. Chairs at the desk and around the round oak gateleg table—for small conferences—are English oak country Chippendale. Mr. Sams' fireplace has been made operative, thanks to the offices' top floor location.





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Specimen geodes and ammonites are displayed respectively on pine pedestals with travertine tops to match the floor, and on a console of gnarled cypress in executive conference area.

Opposite above: City lights make a backdrop for a curved perimeter executive conference/lounge area, frequently used for night meetings. From the lounge area, a view back to the solid 10' cedar slab conference table, surrounded by English broad back Windsor chairs. A cypress console table behind displays ammonites and geodes from the Sams collection. Structural columns are sheathed in clear pine veneer, matching the travertine-topped pedestals displaying more mineral specimens. Stump table in the lounge grouping has a fossil stone top.

Opposite below: Conference lounge area is defined by a William Morris needlepoint rug, its Queen Anne's Lace pattern making a striking foil to the pine log pieces upholstered in hand-painted striped silk, the straw cloth-upholstered tub chairs, and the tongue and groove of a giant clam shell fossil from Australia.

SOURCES

Reception and secretarial desks and chairs: Herman Miller
 Visitor chairs: Brickel
 Madagascar cloth walls throughout: LCS
 Reception sofa: Brayton
 Reception coffee table: Minton-Corley through LCS,
 London/Marquis, David Sutherland
 President's office carpeting: Pennsylvania Wilton Mills
 President's office wallcovering: Gretchen Bellinger
 Reproduction wing chairs: Minton-Speidell
 Wing chair upholstery fabric: Old World Weavers
 Conference chair upholstery fabric: Zumsteg, Inc.
 Empire desk: Loyd-Paxton
 Desk chair: Brickel
 Executive lounge pine log furniture: London/Marquis
 Log furniture upholstery fabric: Terri Roese
 Tub chairs and coffee table: LCS
 Needlepoint rug: H. L. Pollock
 Marble ashtray: Karl Springer

