



# A Timeless Loyd-Paxton Interior In Turtle Creek

Though this Turtle Creek penthouse was completed more than two decades ago, the Loyd-Paxton design is still fresh and glamorous.

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Almost every wall and ceiling in the penthouse suite is mirrored, giving the rooms an air of fantasy. Flowers by Harold Hand Creative.

## Crystal Palace

A Turtle Creek penthouse enshrined in marble and mirrors is as fresh today as it was when completed by Loyd-Paxton in 1979.

Pure glamour. That's how two young designers envisioned the interior of the Turtle Creek penthouse. From their terrace in an adjacent building, Paxton Gremillion and Loyd Taylor, the principals behind legendary Dallas design firm Loyd-Loyd-Paxton, watched luminaries come and go in a glittering parade of fashionable parties that defined Dallas' most exclusive social set in the late 1970s. "Loyd and I had this divine illusion of what we would see if we ever walked into that apartment," Paxton says.

**CHINESE TAKEOUT:** On the back walls of the dining room, the raspberry Chinese embroidered-silk panels, which were created in 1870 for the Imperial family, are the "single most important acquisition in the apartment," Paxton says.

Serendipitously, in 1978, the new owner of the penthouse approached Paxton about redecorating it, and Paxton got his wish. As is so often the case, the interior didn't live up to his expectations. "I walked in, and I nearly fainted," he recalls. But the space *was* enchanting in the early morning light and a celestial wonder once the sun set. "At night, the apartment's vistas were absolutely heavenly," he says, "I told the owner, 'I would *love* to do this.'"

That was late 1978. Only 10 months later, after a whirlwind renovation, the penthouse was finished. "The intensity of doing this in 10 months was a killer," Paxton recalls. "There were 45 master carpenters on this job. Everyone became personally involved, and a camaraderie developed that I've never seen before – so many people of different crafts working together."

The notion of pure glamour stuck with Paxton while he designed the apartment. "I love mirrors and materials that have shimmer and sheen," he says. "I guess that was the inspiration for this project." The result is one of the most unique interiors in the city. Paxton's design is a study in strong contrasts: icy-white marble floors and pearlescent walls ground bold, striking furniture pieces, such as a black secretary or black baby grand with heavily carved, white-gold accents. Mirrored panels on the walls and ceilings are set in lacquered grids and faceted like gems. A friend of the family described the effect as akin to "standing inside a Faberge egg."

The main rooms appear to have been washed in silver moonlight, but they're saved from starkness by bold splashes of color: turquoise Oriental garden stools serve as occasional tables in the now enclosed terrace, and floor-to-ceiling displays of art include brash red, blues, and greens. Paxton introduced an unabashed geometry to the space: throughout the penthouse, furniture is arranged in circular groupings, from the seating areas in the salon to the terrace with a barrel-vaulted ceiling. And the owner's bedroom is a silvered, domed circle, on the circumference of which sit the study, dressing room, and bath of the lady of the house.

**ART & MUSIC:** The dining room's 14-foot-tall embroidered wall panels had not been unrolled since they were created, explaining their amazing, vibrant hue.

The baby grand piano was a gift to the homeowner from her mother. The mahogany frame is lacquered in black and gilded in white gold. The keys are mother-of-pearl.

All of these dazzling contrivances might have led to the making of a stage set, rather than a home, were it not for the homeowners' very personal collections of antiques and art. Their art collection includes everything from Motherwell to Rouault to Gainsborough, but what is equally impressive is the art that does *not* have a

provenance. An extraordinary Thomas Gainsborough portrait hangs above an obscure 19th-century portrait by a complete unknown. These choices, dictated by the collector's eye rather than the artist's name, give the apartment an air of true sophistication.

Asked to explain these dramatic results, Paxton says, "My clients ask me to make something for them, and what I give them is a sculpture, a work of art that they can live in." Defining his finished projects as works of art might be audacious, but there is no question that he is the master of detail.

Paxton wanted the walls in the salon to have an iridescence that he couldn't find in any conventional paint. "I wanted the walls in the salon to look like mother-of-pearl," he says. "So we went to every drugstore in town and bought every bottle of iridescent nail polish." Canvas wall panels were covered with cracked eggshell, and then Paxton's staff applied three coats of the nail polish.

The project was almost foiled when a shipment of nail enamel was held up by Revlon. "We'd started ordering the color in 50-gallon drums direct from the manufacturer," Paxton explains. "Revlon suddenly demanded proof that we weren't re-bottling and re-selling their product. They wouldn't believe I was painting the walls with it. I had to prove it by sending Revlon a sample of the wall treatment."

Paxton's design may have been created and installed more than 20 years ago, but, standing in the apartment today, it's impossible to connect it to a particular time or place. The interior is ageless and timeless, which, Paxton says, is his aim. "It's one of the things I'm most proud of in my work," he says, "that it has no time identification." Rather than working with trendy materials or patterns that would have quickly appeared dated, Paxton chose top-quality, hand-woven Indian silk upholstery to grace elegantly lined, classic pieces of furniture, such as French bergeres and tufted sofas. His extensive use of mirrors and white gold-leaf lend an air of formality, even aristocracy.

While the penthouse is certainly one of his firm's masterpieces, he has not returned to it since it was finished almost 24 years ago. "Once I have actually completed every detail and the keys have been given over and it now belongs to someone else, I cannot go back," says Paxton, who has not accepted a job for the past seven years but has been waiting for something 'terribly important' to come along. "I couldn't look at it without thinking of something that should be changed."

Nothing has changed since Paxton walked out of the front door 24 years ago. While that might pose a painful problem for his perfectionist eye, to find an interior perfectly

intact after more than two decades is the greatest compliment any decorator can receive.

**REACHING FOR THE STARS:** “To make glamour as it should be, it has to be in some way removed from the earthbound,” says Paxton. “This apartment belongs in the heavens.” Four tufted, arching sofas encircle an 18th-century Italian marble table.