

STAR-TELEGRAM

STYLE



John Vaseppis



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**When
Joe Minton
decorates
a room,
it looks
fabulous,
not faddish**

Designer of **Distinction**

By CAROL MUCKOLS
FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM

FORT WORTH—Interior designer Joe Minton isn't kidding when he says he's decorating for the next millennium. He expects projects he's working on now to endure well beyond the year 2000.

Timelessness is of the essence. Not only does he expect his installations to still be there in the next millennium — he expects them to look good, too.

"Being faddish is a terrible mistake," he says. "What's very in today is gonna be very out tomorrow."

While Minton has been looking toward the future, a jury of his peers has been looking back — at the output of Minton's nearly 27 years as a

designer. That scrutiny has resulted in a prestigious national award for the Fort Worth designer.

The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) announced last week that it has named Minton the 1996 Designer of Distinction. The award honors "career-long professional achievements exemplified by creative and innovative work."

Minton is the 18th recipient. He will be honored at a ceremony Aug. 3 during the organization's Design Specialties and International Exposition in Baltimore.

Past honorees include New York designer John Saladino and Dallasites Andre Staffelbach and Trisha Wilson. More on MINTON on Page 2



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Minton

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Minton was nominated by the Texas Chapter of ASID; jurors studied a career-spanning portfolio of his work.

"There is a very inviting, comfortable elegance" to Minton's work, says San Francisco interior designer Joseph Horan, one of six ASID members on the award jury. He mentions Minton's attention to detail, use of scale and mixture of color and pattern. Even the early settings "were timeless designs that could have been done today, and still hold up as well."

Minton dislikes labels and declines to define his style.

"It's good," he says. (He chuckles, but he means it.)

Although he has done some contemporary projects, his work tends toward the traditional. "I definitely like to use old things," he says.

Minton has been a designer since 1969: first under the auspices of Minton-Corley Inc., a partnership with David Corley, and now doing business as Joseph Minton Inc.

His career has been glamorous and varied, populated with wealthy clients such as Kay and Ben Fort-

son, George Ann Carter, Charles and Anne Tandy and Cornelia and Jim Blake in Fort Worth; David and Becky Moritz in Arlington; and Anne Windfohr Marion on her 6666 Ranch in Northwest Texas.

Projects have ranged from elegant manses to log houses to big-city apartments in the United States and beyond. Country clubs, banks, offices, showhouses — even airplanes and boats — round out the list. Minton is now working on the new location of Ristorante La Piazza in Fort Worth, which will have an elegant, warm European flavor, he says.

His efforts haven't gone unnoticed. His work has twice appeared on the cover of *Architectural Digest* (on its pages more than a dozen times), and in other top magazines. Along with Corley, Minton was listed in *The AD 100: An Exclusive Guide to the World's Finest Interior Designers*, published by *Architectural Digest* in 1990.

Minton didn't set out to become a designer. After earning a law degree from Southern Methodist University, the Fort Worth native worked in law and banking. When asked to transform the top floor of the Continental National Bank building into a board room and executive dining room, he hired Cor-

ley, then a commercial designer.

From that project, the Minton-Corley partnership was born; it was successful from the start. The partners went separate ways in 1993, but they still produce the Minton-Corley Collection of furniture.

Over the years, Minton's work has taken him from Texas to San Francisco, New York and elsewhere in the United States, even to France. His designs are influenced by each new locale; he also welcomes the opportunity to work in new milieus. Log houses, for example. "That was a departure," he says. "But it was a nice departure.

"I like variety; I like the challenge of doing different things."

He strives for rooms that are interesting, beautiful and comfortable, without looking decorated or predictable.

"I like for a room or a house to look like it just happened — and isn't it lucky that everything goes so well together?"

He wants his designs to be appropriate, too: to the house, to the client's lifestyle and to the location.

Two designers Minton employs describe their boss as uncompromising in his quest for perfection, even if it costs more or takes longer than the clients anticipate.

The clients may think they need new upholstery, but Minton sees

that the room will never look right unless it's altered architecturally, designers Barry Williams and Paula Lowes explain.

"Joe will sweep in and say, 'Oh, this entry is hideous. Bomb it,'" Williams says.

Lowes adds, "He doesn't just put a Band-Aid on it. He opens their eyes to things that they may not have thought about. The clients are always pleased afterward, [though] it's real hard to convince 'em."

Says Williams, "People are going to forget about how much it cost, how long it took. But there's something immortal about the beauty."

Budget isn't uppermost on Minton's mind when he creates a design. "I plan it as it should be done, then figure the budget. Then I go back and find places to cut."

"Obviously, the bigger the budget, the more you can do." But money isn't the major factor. An open mind, intelligence and creativity matter more.

Minton's enthusiasm for his calling hasn't waned over the years. "I'm just as excited about jobs that I'm working on now as I ever have been," he says. He often considers "how lucky I am to be doing something that I really love doing — that I've found what I'm good at and I enjoy."