



In the Dallas penthouse of H. Ross Perot, Jr., and his wife, Sarah, Emily Summers designed a modern décor inspired by the sky, the couple's collection of British contemporary art—"As it turned out, a lot of their artwork has incredible blues," notes Summers—and his passion for aviation. **THESE PAGES:** Metal-framed doors along the main corridor and between the living and family rooms have laminated glass for added privacy.



# The Sky Is the LIMIT

MODERN SENSIBILITIES  
AND STELLAR VISTAS DEFINE  
A PENTHOUSE IN DALLAS

Interior Design by  
Emily Summers Design Associates  
Text by Jeff Turrentine  
Photography by Scott Frances







Peter Lanyon's painting *Blue Round Corner* hangs in the living room. Ample natural light allowed Summers to use dark furnishings for contrast. The Arne Bang stoneware in the room is from Maison Gerard. Manuel Canovas velvet on sofa at rear. Larsen fabric on chaise longue. Slipper chair silk, Jim Thompson. Beauvais carpet. Murano glass lamps, John Salibello Antiques.

There are more than enough places to sit in the 12,000-square-foot, 19-room Dallas penthouse belonging to H. Ross Perot, Jr. But there's one chair—off by itself, next to a window in the breakfast nook—that he must find especially comfortable.

It's angled in such a way that a person sitting in it looks directly onto Victory Plaza, an outdoor video *Kunsthalle* that also serves as the path leading up to the American Airlines Center, a \$420 million

sporting arena that's home to the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, a team Perot once owned. A slight turn of the head and the view is of the still-under-construction Victory Tower, a 43-story skyscraper that, when completed, promises to become the newest star of the city's already distinctive skyline. Both are integral components of Victory Park, a \$3 billion, 75-acre mixed-use development project northwest of downtown Dallas.

The chair is a uniquely satisfying perch for Perot, because these views would not





exist without him. As the Victory Park project's prime mover, he has overseen the transformation of this once decrepit brownfield into a bustling destination for sports fans, shoppers, diners and visitors to the city. And though he and his wife, Sarah, maintain their primary home nearby, it's up here—high atop the W Dallas Victory Hotel & Residences—that the native Dallasite can have the unusual experience of literally looking down on his creation.

Dallas-based designer Emily Summers knew the Perots as essentially traditional,

though open-minded. So when they approached her after seeing some of her strikingly contemporary projects and asked her to do something in the same vein, she jumped at the opportunity to usher them into the world of clean lines, open plans, floor-to-ceiling glass and modern furnishings. "It was thrilling," she says. "I loved that we were going down a path they hadn't been down."

It's true, says Sarah Perot, that she and her husband have followed a more traditional course in the past. But that didn't

The penthouse is in the W Dallas Victory Hotel & Residences, part of a major downtown development spearheaded by Perot (above, with his wife). "They've never lived in a place as contemporary as this," says Summers. "They wanted the interiors to fit the modern building." **Top:** The family room. Fabric on swivel chairs, right, Clarence House. Beacon Hill cream felt. FJ Hakimian rug.





Many of the design elements, including the pocket doors throughout and the African teak cabinetry in Sarah Perot's study (above), were created by Summers's architectural team. The painting *One More Day 4* is by Hungarian artist Zsolt Bodoni-Dombi. Edelman leather on guest and desk chairs.

reflect any sort of judgment on contemporary design; they were simply waiting for the right opportunity. "We love the clean, calming lines," she says. "I guess it had always been something of a suppressed desire to have a more modern plan, but we didn't want to sacrifice comfort or glamour. We felt like they had to be incorporated into the project. For us, using the apartment for family enjoyment comes first and foremost, followed by using it as a place to entertain and introduce people to this part of downtown Dallas."

Summers, working with her senior designer, Wendy Konradi, and architects Jason and Signe Smith, came up with a plan organized by a single axial corridor. After riding up the elevator (or descending from the private helipad, where Perot—who, with a friend, completed the first circumnavigation of the globe by helicopter—parks his chopper), a visitor enters a serene transitional space with warm-toned limestone floors and Marmorino plaster walls. At the end opposite the elevator are four LCD screens that





can be programmed to feature the same video art installations that are on display at Victory Plaza.

A right turn into the central corridor leads to an encounter with one of several metal-framed doors whose pixillated glass panels are opaque at the bottom and become gradually clearer near the top, lending a sense of vaporous texture to the light that flows through. The doors slide shut to close off the main public spaces—the living room, dining room and family room—or open wide, giving the Perots

a choice between cloistered privacy and an open plan.

In these rooms, each of which opens onto a long terrace offering postcard-ready views of the downtown Dallas skyline, Summers wanted to strike a balance between warm traditionalism and cool modernity. A collection of Robsjohn-Gibbings Klismos dining chairs was thus a perfect fit. They surround a pair of tables that have been pushed together to form one long table; it's topped with scagliola. A stabilelike chandelier, re-created from a

**Top:** The kitchen can accommodate both caterers for large events and the family for private meals. Banquette fabric, Lee Jofa. Bulthaup kitchen elements. Brueton barstools. **Above:** The dining room. Scalamandré velvet on chair cushions. Beauvais carpet. Crystal goblets, Neiman Marcus.





**ABOVE:** The master bedroom. Cowtan & Tout drapery sheer. J. Robert Scott velvet on chair and ottoman. Bench and bed skirt fabric, Larsen. Edelman leather on side table, far right. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The wife's bath. Chair fabric, J. Robert Scott. Chaise longue fabric, Jim Thompson. Column tiles, Ann Sacks. Lamps, John Salibello Antiques. Vanity mirror, Baker. Fixtures, Waterworks. **OPPOSITE ABOVE:** The northeast terrace. Side tables and chairs, Richard Schultz.

French design, adds a lighthearted touch to the room.

The Perots, frequent international travelers, have nurtured a love of Africa during their many trips there and are keen followers of the art scene in Great Britain, where they have a home. Both wanted the penthouse to contain tangible reminders of their visits. Their adjoining studies are paneled in African teak, which is matched in rugged warmth by leather-tile floors; in his study, nestled among the aviation memorabilia, is a gathering of handmade

antique African jugs used for storing and transporting beer. Artworks by celebrated British painters such as Ben Nicholson and Peter Lanyon hang prominently in the living and dining rooms. Other artworks playfully reference Ross Perot's love of flying—like the aerial photographs or images of contrails that seem abstract at first, then reveal themselves for what they are.

People with luxurious carpets often complain about visible footprints; Summers decided to use the markings of heavy





traffic to her advantage. The custom-made silk carpet in the master bedroom actually derives its richly luminescent texture from footprints. “I love how the shadows create a dappled effect, so that it almost looks like a blanket of autumn leaves,” she says. Another layer of texture is provided by the seafoam-green fabric panels behind the headboard; a delicate overlay of cross-hatched banana fibers adds visual interest and an unusual tactility.

“The space continues to surprise us,” says Sarah Perot. “Dallas is dazzling, and

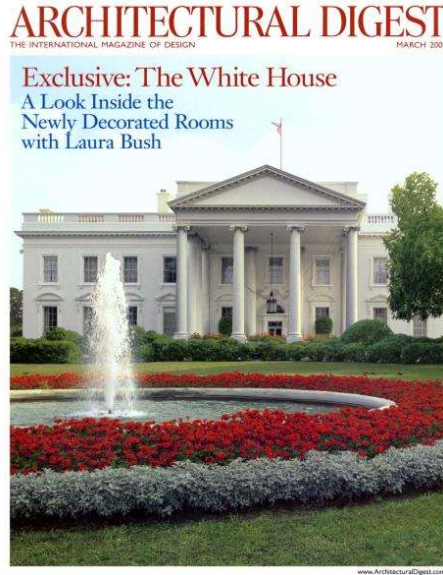
getting to experience the different seasons in the city from this high up makes us love it even more.” Standing on the terrace, overlooking a cityscape that is soon to be blessed with buildings by Rem Koolhaas and Norman Foster, not to mention three Santiago Calatrava bridges, Emily Summers states the obvious. “Coming up here before a basketball game, being able to see the whole city, all the activity and life on the plaza, even the pregame warmup on the LCD screens—this is the best invitation to have in the city, I can tell you.” □

It’s up here that the Dallasite can have the unusual experience of literally looking down on his creation.



# The Sky Is the LIMIT

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST | MARCH 2008



Reprinted from the Architectural Digest Archive

<https://archive.architecturaldigest.com/article/20080301131/print>



©2020 - ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST ARCHIVE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.