The fine Standard Bank Building on the corner of Harrison and Commissioner Streets, Johannesburg — today a listed historic building — was designed in the modern Renaissance style and built in 1907 of Steenpan stone quarried near the borders of the Orange River. One of the exceptional features of the design is the loggia on the top floor, comprising a regular forest of Corinthian columns, running around three sides of the building.
The finesse of finish

Lambert Pringle, decorator and interior designer, has a philosophy that is simplicity itself. It all lies in the finish, he believes, so he has specialised in just that. In renovations to the banking hall of the historic Standard Bank Building on Harrison and Commissioner Streets, Johannesburg, this belief is borne out – beautifully.

The once dreary banking hall, now a symphony of light, says Pringle, was done out in three shades of grey – Astroid, Snowberry and Speculum – in no less than eight different finishes and techniques. Two other colours, Orchid Smoke and Turkish Blue, were used to accentuate detail. "The hall was particularly gloomy. It had all been done in one colour, a kind of insipid cream that did absolutely nothing for the building and the unpainted wall surfaces had been hung with a very drab and boring vinyl paper which had been up for years."

Proposals

"So we gave the bank a colour perspective of what we thought this magnificent building should like. We proposed finishes that included immaculate painting, rag-rolling, lining, rubbing, distressing, highlighting, marbleling and glazing. And we did a mock-up which gained the chairman’s approval and went ahead. Lambert Pringle Interiors (LPI) was sub-contracted to Penny du Plessis of Penton Interiors who made the impressive curtains and silk tie-backs that highlight the handsome wooden windows. Penton Interiors and LPI worked together on colour selection and finishes. The net result — a corporate environment which makes banking business a pleasure.

This Standard Bank building is a fine example of Victorian architecture. Built in 1907 it is now a listed historic building. Every square centimetre was painted and finished with specialised paint finishes. The hall’s main columns were marbled to enhance the bank’s corporate image and colours.

Wallpaper. Our rates are better than wallpaper too. Paint easily lasts just as long and is easier to touch up and people want something new."

Service

Pringle offers a full design service, from drawing stage to final execution which includes fabric selection, fittings and furniture. Another convert to rag-rolling is Fedlife Pringle, through Penton, completed its executive dining rooms and "they're intrigued with our rag-roll finishes and instead of using wall coverings they're now looking at paint finishes."

Pringle is well-equipped to fulfil the interior design and contracting needs of a wide variety of clients and projects.

He has executed projects for offices, showrooms, synagogues, cathedrals, shops, restaurants and houses.

Reporter

Lambert Pringle, one of whose forebears is so strongly associated with Press freedom in SA, started, not unnaturally, as
Mock-up of window arch approved by Standard Bank’s chairman. Walls rag-rolled; columns marbled; curved architraves lined, rubbed and highlighted; shields above columns distressed; egg and key cornice rubbed. Soft white voile curtains and plaited tie-backs in silk enhance this beautiful window.

The finished look.
Originally the columns, architraves and detailed cornices were all finished in drab, dull cream paint. The walls were covered in a boring vinyl wallpaper. After all the surfaces were stripped and prepared, the marbled and rag-rolled specialised finishes transformed this grand banking hall into an area of elegance, light and magnificent detail.
The magnificent entrance flanked by marbled columns after completion. Note the effect achieved by highlighting detail in the curved architrave using the technique of lining with colours. Orchid Smoke was used in this instance.

The main Commissioner Street entrance before specialised paint finishes were applied.
taught me to communicate and
to handle people and I now find
the marketing aspect vital to my
business".
In 1986 he joined one of SA's top
decorating companies as interior
designer. Two years later he was
back as Lambert Pringle
Interiors, this time in SA. He
still works with London
associates and makes sure he is
informed about the latest trends
in design.
LPI now has its own contracts
division that reports to a
seasoned contracts manager.
There is a staff of 28 qualified
people. "We have a very highly
skilled and I think unique team
of master painters. I don't think
there's a company in SA that has
the skilled labourers we have,
who've been trained by us and
people who can handle some
very complicated paint finishes".
Pringle's portfolio includes
furniture manufacture. Most of
his furniture is custom-
designed. Other techniques
perfected are lacquering,
sponging, antiqueing,
distressing, colour washing,
gilding, woodgraining,
tortoiseshelling and stippling.
All the faux finishes.

Projects

Projects and contracts
undertaken by Lambert Pringle
Interiors as nominated sub-
contractor or main contractor
include: Midpoint, Midrand;
various Standard Banks; Diners
Club, Johannesburg; St Mary's
Cathedral, Johannesburg;
Caesar's, Hyde Park,
Johannesburg; Kinekor's
Sterland cinema complex,
Pretoria and Adverto House,
Pretoria. LPI has done
numerous houses in
Johannesburg as well.
"We're in an enviable position.
When a corporate client wants a
desk we do samples of colours
that really enhance and accent
his corporate image".