

# L.A. at Home

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« Previous Post | L.A. at Home Home | Next Post »



## The homes of 'Smash': Interiors that steal the show

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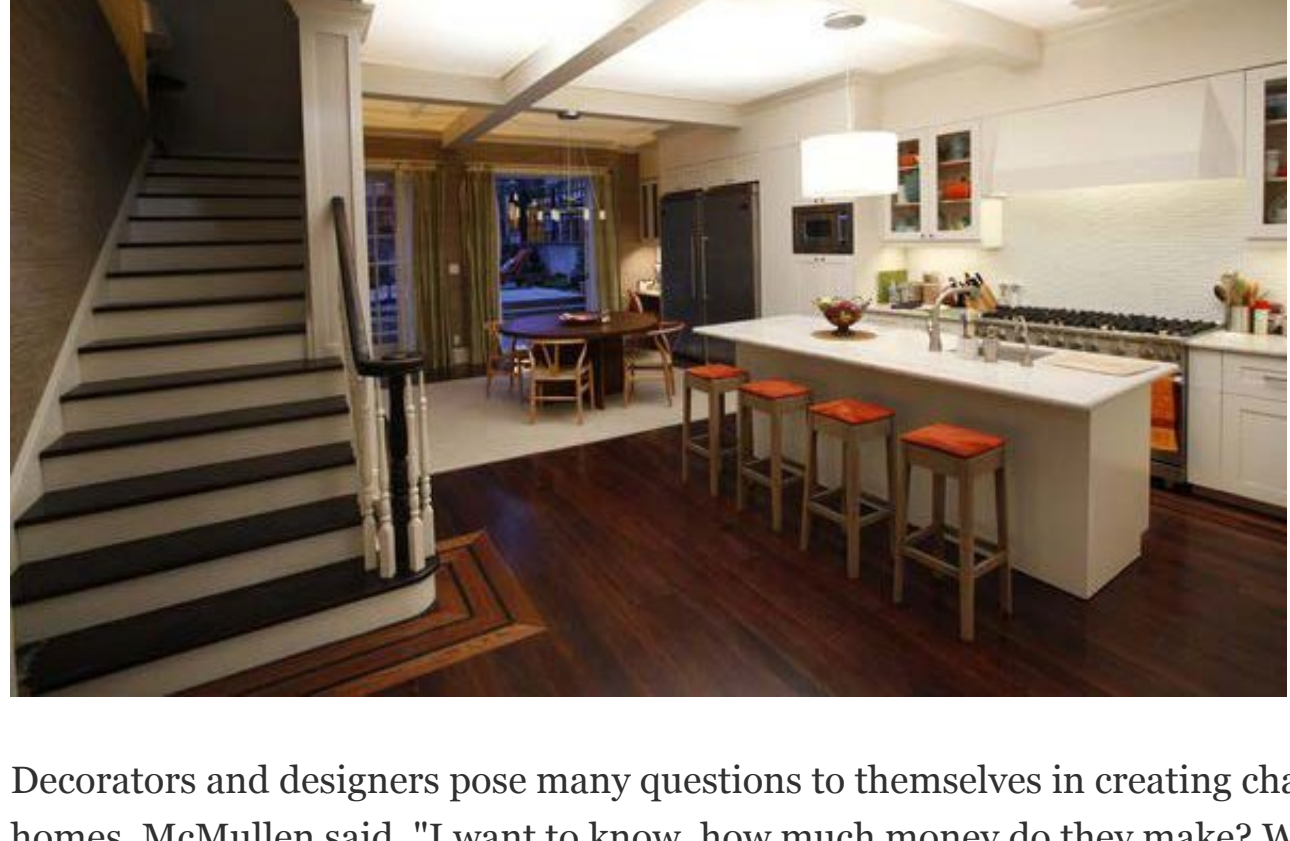


Drama may have spilled off the TV screen last week as the creator of "Smash," playwright Theresa Rebeck, stepped down as the lead producer on the NBC series. Design fans, however, will be pleased to know that the show's eclectic and luxurious interiors for its Broadway-based characters will be back for a second season.

Production designer Cabot McMullen and set decorator Andrew Baseman recently talked about the look of the homes on the show, which [McMullen](#) said the production had made a big commitment to make as realistic as possible. "The criteria from [executive producer] Steven Spielberg was to make it real," he said. "We were asked to demonstrate the lifestyle of Broadway people that was honest and true."

McMullen credits [Baseman](#) for choosing furnishings that tell a story. "You can do more color and push the envelope with theater people," said Baseman, an interior designer who has clients in the theater world. "Some people in the business get very close to the characters they create and they want to live in that world."

Both men admitted that the loft of Derek (Jack Davenport) -- filmed in a vast Flatiron District apartment with a gorgeous view of the Empire State Building -- is a bit of a stretch for a theater director. But what about the luxurious Upper East Side brownstone of writer Julia (Debra Messing), pictured below? "She's successful. She has a Tony Award," Baseman said. "She has a show running on Broadway and is making \$10,000 a week in residuals. So yes, she would have bought that townhouse."



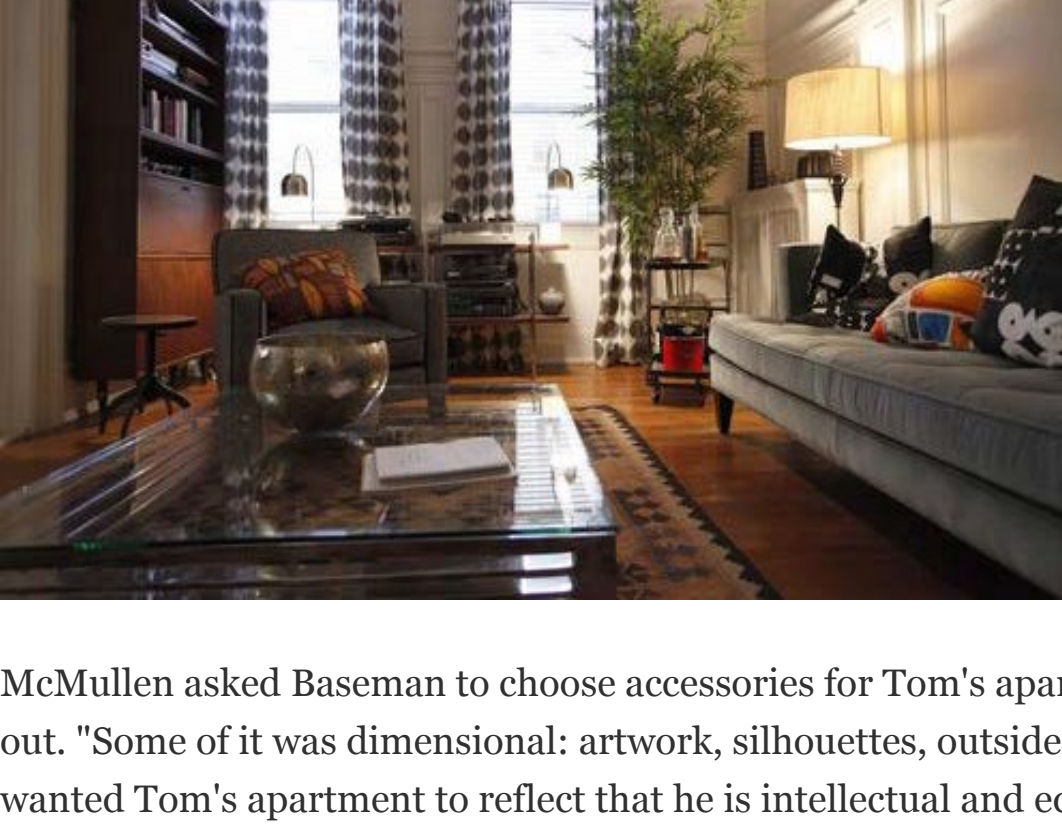
Decorators and designers pose many questions to themselves in creating characters' homes, McMullen said. "I want to know, how much money do they make? Where did they go to school? What are their interests? Do they cook? What do they like to do? The design criteria for the sets very often reveals things about the story that producers hadn't even come to terms with yet. I ask questions that drive the creative process."

When Episode 8 airs tonight, viewers will see sets that not only advance character but also illustrate how mixing pieces -- expensive and affordable, vintage and contemporary, CB2 and Lillian August -- can create warm, colorful, sophisticated interiors that are dramatic and personal. Keep reading to see more details of the "Smash" sets ...



Composer Tom (Christian Borle) lives in a prewar apartment on Riverside Drive. In the kitchen, McMullen employed white in various textures to reflect light and make the space more interesting. High-gloss lacquer cabinets give a kick of light, especially when doors open and close. The designers also wanted to reflect Tom's personality by doing something a little more retro, so ...

Baseman added vintage tile from the 1970s as a backsplash. "We pulled that out of a tile warehouse in New Jersey," he said. "They had had it for 40 years and wanted to get rid of it." He also added some vintage cookie jars and colorful accessories.



McMullen asked Baseman to choose accessories for Tom's apartment that would stand out. "Some of it was dimensional: artwork, silhouettes, outsider art, African things. We wanted Tom's apartment to reflect that he is intellectual and educated and has a lot of varied interests. I wanted it to be a place that reflected all those interests -- not a tunnel-vision music world." In the room pictured here, Baseman mixed traditional furnishings with contemporary accessories. The velvet couch from [Room & Board](#) is punched up with graphic pillows from [West Elm](#) and [CB2](#). The patterned drapes are from West Elm, the chrome and glass coffee table is an [Andrew Martin](#) piece, and the teak bookcase is vintage Danish Modern.



Reprints of Works Progress Administration posters hang in Tom's foyer. Posters figure prominently in several of the interiors, including the tiny apartments of Ivy (Megan Hilty) and Karen (Katharine McPhee). "We worked with wonderful graphic artists who designed a lot of the posters," Baseman said. "We worked hard to make sure the posters were Broadway appropriate."



McMullen papered the walls in Tom's piano room to give the room some texture and allow for play of light. Because Tom is a composer, Baseman added lots of references to other musicals, including theater books for the shelves. "I used to go to [Rodgers Book Barn](#) when I was growing up," Baseman said. "During high school, I would buy my theater books there. I accumulated a lot of books. I sold them back to them when I went to college in 1978. When I started working on 'Smash,' I called them and we sent a truck and got hundreds of feet of theater books. When I was decorating Tom's apartment, I opened Burns Mantle 'Best Plays,' and my name was in it."

