

DESIGN & DECORATING

Binge-Worthy Décor

Which TV series to commit to this summer? The set decoration in these shows will keep design lovers riveted. Plus: The pros behind these fanciful interiors share the strategies that work well in real-life rooms

BY INGELA RATLEDGE AMUNDSON

IN MY HOUSE, the fastest way to torpedo a perfectly good Friday night is to reach for the remote control without a plan. I'll start by staring down the offerings on Netflix, a digital Hydra that sprouts two new series for every one you contemplate. My husband will then request a diligence scroll through Amazon Prime, Hulu and our ever-more-dejected DVR. By the time we've done the rounds, we're too sapped to make a decision.

What a relief it would be to have a selection of shows that's been as expertly curated as, say, a drawing room on "The Crown." Or what if the filter were the design itself? To that end, *Off Duty* asked dozens of real-world interior

designers to name their favorite series based on the strength of the shows' décor as well as plot and characters, then narrowed it to these nine—including three whose aesthetics are so notable our panel recommended them despite finding the shows otherwise lacking.

And there are benefits beyond diversion: Even casual décor fans can be inspired to bring a touch of the shows' visual savvy into their own living rooms. According to Miri Katz, the set decorator for Netflix's "Sex Education" and Masterpiece's "Endeavour," viewers frequently try to replicate an appealing set. "They're like, 'Why doesn't my home look like that?'" said Ms. Katz from her base in Bristol, England. "I think, 'You probably need to get to a flea market and start building a more eclectic mix.'" Ms. Katz's collaborator on "Sex Education," produc-

tion designer Samantha Harley, of London, champions layering as well. "People in real life seem to be obsessed with things 'matching,' but we would never design a room all from one shop," she said.

Another trick of the trade: no unsightly personal items. "We don't dress a room with piles of mail and shoes on the floor—even the garbage bins are carefully selected," said New York production designer Ina Mayhew, who created the sets for the OWN drama "Queen Sugar." If you want an inviting glow, prepare to renounce overhead lighting. "We fill rooms with table and floor lamps," said Ms. Katz. "The moment a ceiling light goes on, it kills the atmosphere." Even in this heyday of TV antiheroes, that sort of sabotage doesn't fly.

RETURNING THIS SUMMER

Current-season series with dramatic and aesthetic appeal



Queen Sugar (Season 4 airs Wednesdays at 9 p.m. ET, on OWN) Although this family saga about the owners of a sugar cane farm in Louisiana is set in contemporary times, you'd never know it from the dining room in the plantation house inherited by Ralph Angel Bordelon (Kofi Siriboe). "It was his father's home, and Ralph Angel has left the room untouched in tribute," said the show's production designer, Ina Mayhew, noting the hand-hewn details throughout. "The traditional furniture is rustic and Southern, mismatched from the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Even the lace tablecloth has the feeling like his grandmother crocheted it."



Endeavour (Season 6 airs Sundays at 9 p.m. ET, on PBS's Masterpiece) The prequel series to the long-running UK hit "Inspector Morse" is typically restrained in its interpretation of mid-to-late '60s trends in Oxford, England. But this flat-home to 20-something Joan Thursday (Sara Vickers)—provided the chance to go all-out. "Joan is vibrant and playful, and this design was her fully expressing herself," said the set's decorator, Miri Katz. "There's so much going on with the bold reds and floral patterns, but it's cooled off by the large blocks of greens and blues, and manages not to look like a mental asylum." As for that ceramic-tiled coffee table? Said Ms. Katz, "It's so practical!"



Big Little Lies (Season 2 airs Sundays at 9 p.m. ET on HBO) In this tart, soapy drama, the tony seaside enclave of Monterey, Calif., is lousy with two things: secrets and meticulously decorated, multimillion-dollar homes. But when it comes to the latter, boho yoga instructor Bonnie (Zöe Kravitz) has set herself apart from the hyper-manicured herd, preferring to seek refuge in an earthy, unpretentious nest. "The mix of midcentury modern and Asian styles and quirky choices—like an umbrella stand that doubles as a vase for pine cones—show she's a rule-breaker," said series admirer Anelle Gandelman, creative director of New York's A-List Interiors.

ALL-STARS

Great shows from recent years with admirable décor



The Crown (Seasons 1 and 2 streaming on Netflix) At its core, this fly-on-the-gilded-wall depiction of Queen Elizabeth II (portrayed in the first two seasons by Claire Foy) aims to humanize HRH. Her Buckingham Palace digs, though unquestionably posh, are thoroughly lived-in. "The private apartments of the royal residences are at once regal and homely," said Phillip Thomas, an interior designer in New York. The French-influenced furnishings and upholstery show signs of gentle wear, and "amidst the grandeur there are newspapers, a desk clock and family photos," said Mr. Thomas. "It's the kind of space you'd expect from the mother of a nation."



The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (Seasons 1 and 2 streaming on Amazon Prime) As Miriam "Midge" Maisel (Rachel Brosnahan) demonstrates, it was no picnic being an independent woman on the doorstep of the sexual revolution—but it sure was visually dazzling. "This is not a clichéd depiction of the [late] '50s," said interior designer Marina Hanisch of New York. In the Catskills beauty-parlor set, "I love how the Italian midcentury Stinson sconces pair with the traditional floral ceiling fixtures and wallpaper," said Ms. Hanisch. "But the hero is the geometric linoleum floor, which lends balance and a 'wow.' It's whimsical elegance."



Sex Education (Season 1 streaming on Netflix) Sex therapist Jean Milburn (Gillian Anderson) is effortlessly cool and worldly—unless, of course, you ask her perpetually mortified teenage son, Otis (Asa Butterfield). Her early-20th-century chalet in an unspecified part of England follows suit. "It's a placeless, timeless environment—the focus is on Jean," said production designer Samantha Harley. While the William Morris wallpaper and textured chenille sofa skew conservative, the accessories—like an African fertility statue and voluptuous crystal sculpture of the female form—do not. Still, noted set decorator Ms. Katz, "They're not vulgar. She's got great taste."

SCENE STEALERS

Sets so compelling they overshadow general so-so-ness



Forever (Season 1 streaming on Amazon Prime) What does the afterlife hold? For zestless married couple June (Maya Rudolph) and Oscar (Fred Armisen), it's "me!" of the same. At least the California midcentury abode they've been assigned to for eternity is a conversation piece. "The sunken living room, the arrangement of the furniture, the horizontal windows, the way books are stacked on shelves—the style is executed to perfection," said interior designer Joe Williamson, co-founder of Hollymount Design + Production in New York. An example of the decorating acumen: "This is a soaring space, obviously, but the windows, scones and book cases all create a datum line that brings the scale down to a human, livable level."



Scream Queens (Seasons 1 and 2 streaming on Hulu) Welcome to Psycho Barbie's Dream House. The first season of Fox's campy slasher series, set at a fictional university in New Orleans, had enough eye candy to make the toxic premise palatable. Dripping with Old Hollywood glamour, this boudoir was a tailor-made roost for vitriolic sorority president Chanel Oberlin (Emma Roberts). "It's a reminder of Chanel's minions that she's the richest and most powerful," said interior designer Maryline Damour of Damour Drake in Kingston, N.Y., pointing to the luxurious textures and oversize chandelier. "This room is pure fantasy, yet it's a gory show."



Versailles (Seasons 1-3 Streaming on Netflix) Yes, Louis XIV (played by George Blagden) had his flaws—a lack of ambition just wasn't one of them. This Ovation series follows the king's exorbitant (and controversial) given Francis's finances in the mid-1600s) renovation of Versailles. "The show itself was lacking gravitas, and the character arcs were a bit weak, but it was just sooo pretty," said New York interior designer Michael Tavano. "The palace was meant to shock and awe. Louis XIV felt his design was enlightening the ignorant." His materials of choice? "He brought gliding into interior décor on wood furniture, which was cutting-edge for the time," said Mr. Tavano. "And sparkling crystal was used to refract light around the rooms."