

SHOWTIME DESIGNS

Borrowing style cues from TV shows, top interior designers transform a Manhattan townhouse into a home that any pot-dealing soccer mom or serial killer would love

# Let's eat in my Dexter dining room

BY TIM McKEOUGH

When hunkered down in front of the television, do you ever find yourself focusing more on the painstakingly designed sets than on the scripted action? Maybe you quietly lust after Carrie Bradshaw's Manhattan apartment on *Sex and the City*. Or you secretly dream about bringing the hip 1970s vibe of *The Brady Bunch* compound into your own home.

Borrowing style cues from TV shows is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, a group of top interior designers recently agreed to do the same — and created Metropolitan Home's Showtime House in New York's tony Gramercy Park neighbourhood. Taking over a \$20-million, 8,800-square-foot Greek Revival townhouse, the designers renovated rooms to reflect a range of current Showtime programs, from *Weeds*, *Dexter* and *The L Word* to *The Tudors*, *Californication* and *The United States of Tara*.

In the hands of designers such as Jamie Drake, Laura Kirar, Vicente Wolf and White Webb, however, the rooms go far beyond mere imitation and instead use the shows as raw creative inspiration.

"We decided to take the high road," explains Matthew White of White Webb, the firm that designed a room around *Weeds*, the series about a suburban mom who deals marijuana. "We went with an organic theme rather than something that was super overt on the pot front. In this season, Nancy Botwin, the lead character, is a little more edgy, sexy and glamorous, and there's a bit more mystery involved. We wanted to incorporate that."

The resulting interior is a warm, inviting space filled with curvy furniture that any

mid-century modernist would love. But if you look closely enough, you'll notice that White Webb did actually manage to weave in some pot paraphernalia, including hemp wallpaper, a custom-made screen that holds translucent lanterns made from rolling papers and botanical prints that are hung from twine with roach clips.

While White Webb created a comforting space, designer Amy Lau — tasked with developing a dining room that reflects *Dexter* — designed an over-the-top house of horrors. That's no insult when you consider that *Dexter* is a forensic scientist who specializes in blood spatters — and moonlights as a serial killer. Lau's glossy white room is cut with splashes of red and features unnerving installations from 21 different artists, making it a perfect themed party space.

"It's more like theatre," Lau says. "Every single piece in the room is total couture." Indeed, she even designed the dining chairs and worked with artisans to produce special dishes, glassware and cutlery, all of which are now being sold as limited editions through New York's Spring Design & Art Gallery ([www.spring3d.net](http://www.spring3d.net)).

Other designers landed somewhere between White Webb and Lau, combining practical interiors with a dash of fantasy. Drake, for instance, designed a characteristically sumptuous room for *Californication*, but added a floor-to-ceiling column made from stacked books and drastically oversized furniture. "He's sitting a lot, trying to get over his writer's block, so we have a big daybed," Drake says, referring to *Californication*'s main character, writer Hank Moody, who is played by David Duchovny. Drake notes that a massive daybed is especially appropriate for Hank, as "he's always hoping that he's going to score."

Given his recent admission of a sex addiction, perhaps an out-of-character Duchovny might enjoy it too.

» Special to *The Globe and Mail*  
 » Metropolitan Home's Showtime House is open to visitors until Oct. 26 at 23 Gramercy Park South in New York. Proceeds from tickets, which cost \$25, go to the Happy Hearts Fund. Visit [www.meth](http://www.meth)



Top left: A *Weeds*-inspired room by New York-based White Webb includes hemp wallpaper, a custom-made screen that holds translucent lanterns made from rolling papers and botanical prints hung from twine with roach clips. J. MCCARTHY WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Top right: Jamie Drake designed a characteristically sumptuous room for *Californication*, but added a floor-to-ceiling column made from stacked books and drastically oversized furniture. J. MCCARTHY WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Left: Amy Lau's glossy white *Dexter*-inspired dining room is cut with splashes of red and features unnerving installations from 21 different artists. She even designed the dining chairs and worked with artisans to produce special dishes, glassware and cutlery. J. MCCARTHY WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

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Amy Lau, designer

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