

A colourful home of unanticipated acquisitions hh4-5



house & home



Everett Collection / Rex Features

Impeccable sets
in film and TV
define the styles
for a touch of
Hollywood at
home hh3

cheap chic

Ikea's great new Fiskevik rail with hanging clips for photos and postcards is the kind of thing we'd try to make ourselves – and not succeed nearly so neatly, Dh39, www.ikeadubai.com

Films that hit home

The tastes of James Bond and Ugly Betty have wheedled their way into our hearts and homes, attuning our eyes to new styles and rekindling our love for the old. Yvonne Courtney considers Hollywood's abiding influence

Who can forget the sets in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*: Audrey Hepburn's tiny flat, with its mod plastic Italian furniture, and Patricia Neal's grand residence, with its high-gloss floors, matte carpet and textured furnishings? How about *Diamonds are Forever* and the fiercely futuristic John Lautner-designed Elrod residence in Palm Springs – where the minimal decor has maximum impact thanks to some choice sculptural furniture pieces. And the fabulous Danish Modern living room in *Auntie Mame*, with its hydraulic lifting couches and hanging goldfish bowls.

For decades, set designers working on cinema and television blockbusters have defined a moment in style – but today they are becoming more influential than ever in shaping our tastes. Just as it spawns certain fashion trends (not to mention a wildly successful online fashion store, ASOS – As Seen on Screen) celluloid is inspiring us to bring a slice of Hollywood home to our living rooms.

And if the movies are not actually influencing furniture designers, they are certainly helping to attune our eyes to new styles – and new ways of mixing things together in a domestic interior – as well as helping to revive periods that have fallen from favour.

You may not remember how Merchant Ivory's 1988 hit, *Heat and Dust*, suddenly made Raj-inspired Indian furniture chic – a look that has since become almost classic, with its planters' chairs, studded wooden chests and colourful dhurries. And you may not have seen the cult hit *Hideous Kinky*, Gillies MacKinnon's adaptation of Esther Freud's Marrakech-based novel. The spectacular interior of the Ali Ben Youssef Madrasa – with its tiled facades and serene courtyard – was so striking that it almost upstaged Kate Winslet and the hotly coloured settings (vivid silks, intricately patterned tiles, lacy cut-out metal, arches everywhere) triggered a style stampede to Morocco – and another look that resurfaces time and time again in today's interiors.

But it would be hard to have missed the recent plethora of mid-20th century settings – which have ranged from 1950s futurism to 1960s sophistication. Think of the fantasy sets for the *Mode* magazine office in the television series *Ugly Betty*; they were almost as much the star of the show as the actors were. Created by the production designer Mark Worthington and set decorator, Richard Devine, they provide a heightened reality, transporting us into a glam world filled with nods to the coolly contemporary: Eero Saarinen, 1960s Mods, and 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (film influencing television, influencing interiors?). Runway-white floors, circular silhouettes, high gloss and bright colours; furnishings from Knoll and Vitra to Crate & Barrel; and a dash of Dorothy Draper and Marcel Wanders. Also featured are Front's distinctive Horse lamp, from Moooi, and Philippe Starck's gold-plated Gun lamp, for Flos, along with Arne Jacobsen's Egg chairs and Verner Panton's sculptural seating, Living Tower. Almost all of these are things we can go out and buy here in the UAE.

From the minute *Mad Men* hit our television screens last year the seductive sets of the 1960s-era drama have captivated viewers. Never mind the hedonistic plot lines, it was the smoke-filled scenes enacted against a backdrop of mid-century offices, divinely decadent dining rooms and glamorous hotel lounges that stole the limelight. This was down to the skills of the set decorator Amy Wells, working with the production designer Dan Bishop, and *Mad Men*'s creator and producer Matthew Weiner. The interiors may depict 1960s New York but – taking a cue from the furnishings, patterns and rich colour palette – they provide plenty of inspiration for today's spaces.

Interestingly, there are no big-ticket mid-century designer pieces to be seen. "I want to make *Mad Men* look... as if the people really have those pieces," Wells told *Interior Design* magazine. "It's important



Above, *Quantum of Solace* sets the pace for contemporary urban sharpness. Below, the fantasy sets of *Ugly Betty* provide plenty of inspiration. On the cover, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Karen Ballard / B&B Italia



that they be imperfect, not iconic. A lot of people had Danish Modern at the time because it was reasonably priced, and much of it still exists because it was so well made."

More to the point, perhaps, the popularity of the series has accustomed our eyes to the look – even created a desire for it. So, although some of the more avant-garde designers have been playing with similar looks for a couple of years, they no longer seem so "fringe". What's more, an increasing number of mid-market retailers are channeling the look through their new collections in the belief that we're ready to embrace it. (Flip through the current Ikea catalogue and you'll get the point.)

What is it about the 1960s right now? The fashion designer Tom Ford's recent directorial debut, *A Single Man*, has been deemed a must-see within design circles for its smart and sophisticated style, and pundits are saying that the film will be greatly influential in bringing back 60s-style decor. No surprises that its art direction came courtesy of the Bishop and Wells team, who borrowed from the era's most renowned designers, including John Lautner, Mies van der Rohe, Paul McCobb, Dorothy Draper and Tony Duquette.

The drama unfolds in two distinctive homes. The Pasadena residence of Julianne Moore's character is

decorated in a cream and pink Hollywood Regency scheme with a Moroccan accent: oversized lamps flank a North African wooden mirror, which hangs on a white carved screen. This contrasts with the austere modern home of the British professor played by Colin Firth, which was filmed in the John Lautner-designed Schaffer residence in Glendale, California. Period-appropriate details were added, such as ceramic and wood lamps, an abstract sculpture and a modernist relief wall hanging.

In essence, film and television set decorators are the glamorous cousin of the interior designer. Their work can cover everything from choosing furniture and accessories to working with furniture artisans and scenic artists and can range stylistically from a lavish interior for a period drama to a high-tech lab for *CSI Miami*. Reporting to a budget-minded production designer, they take their design cues from the script and accommodate the needs of a director and cinematographer, while juggling a multitude of decorating demands.

But while their responsibilities are similar to those of an interior designer (budgets, floor plans and demanding clients), there's one crucial difference: they are working in a fantasy world. And so, when the budget is more eBay than Eames original, they can improvise. Such was the case for *A Perfect Murder*. The stunning Mexico-meets-Manhattan kitchen where Gwyneth Paltrow was scared out of her wits looks as if it cost a fortune – but those travertine floors were in fact wallpaper, some of the antique Mexican tiles were painted on to the

walls and the lampshades were made of cork-printed paper.

The Bond films have had a particular impact on the way we shop for the home – especially the more recent films, which capture current trends and place more focus on the lifestyle elements of the film sets – whether it's *Casino Royale's* colonial chic in the Bahamas, the contemporary urban sharpness of M's flat in London (where the Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chair from Knoll plays one of its countless cameos), or the dramatic monochrome interior of the Bolivian hotel in *Quantum of Solace*.

London-based Anna Pinnock worked closely with the production designer Dennis Gassner to create *Quantum's* glamorous, design-aware sets. For the hotel, suite pieces designed by Antonio Citterio for B&B Italia's Maxalto collection were used – including the Talamo bed and Max writing desk, night tables, armchairs and dresser. The lighting came from Foscarini and Artemide. Elsewhere in the hotel, coffee tables, cabinets and seating were loaned by the Danish manufacturer BoConcept. The bedroom suite included chairs and tables from Fritz Hansen, including the classic black leather Swan sofa and swivel chairs, and lights from Lumina, Luceplan and Oluce. Walnut and Macassar ebony desk accessories came from Linley, who also supplied console tables and a walnut cheval mirror from the Linley Classic Limited Edition collection. Kelly Hoppen Interiors provided ceramics and glassware, chosen for their sharp lines and scale, which work well in minimalist rooms.

None of this was product placement; some companies loaned items while the designers had to buy others – albeit sometimes at a discount. While furniture companies don't get the same brand recognition enjoyed by electronics and car companies (whose presence is almost invariably product placement), being in the business of selling a lifestyle, they understand only too well that having some stills from the film to use in a marketing campaign is priceless. This is just what B&B Italia did, as well as displaying some of the featured furniture in its key stores.

The director Nancy Meyers is known for films set in gorgeous spaces. Who doesn't love the East Hampton beach house in *Something's Gotta Give*, with its white louvred shutters and those comfy

sofas with their casual white cotton slipcovers? Her latest work, *It's Complicated*, is no exception. The romantic comedy follows Meryl Streep's character in a love triangle while renovating her Santa Barbara home, the supremely sophisticated, yet relaxed elegance that vies for attention with the star players.

What Meyers' films demonstrate above all is that gorgeous homes needn't be intimidating or cost the earth. Play the DVDs again then take a stroll around stores such as Flamant, Laura Ashley and Crate & Barrel. The chances are that it will all look rather familiar.

where to find it

Indian/Moroccan

- Marina, Mall of the Emirates and Abu Dhabi Mall
- La Maison Coloniale, Mall of the Emirates
- Indigo Living, The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence (Sadaf Plaza Level)

Contemporary/High design

- BoConcept, Mall of the Emirates
- B&B Italia, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai and Atmosphere, Khalidiya, Abu Dhabi (also for Moooi and Maxalto)
- Designers Hub, Zabeel Road, Dubai (for Knoll)
- Traffic, Al Barsha 1, Dubai (for Vitra)
- Boutique 1, The Walk at Jumeirah Beach Residence, Dubai

Retro glamour

- Andrew Martin, Gate Village, DIFC

New England chic

- Laura Ashley, Mercato Mall, Dubai
- Flamant, Mall of the Emirates
- Crate & Barrel, Mall of the Emirates and Mirdif City Centre (from March 18)



Hollywood has accustomed our eyes to look for avant-garde designs, such as B&B Italia's Talamo bed or Philippe Starck's Gun lamp.

