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'Only Murders in the Building' Has All the Design Inspiration You Need

A Look at the Gorgeous Sets From Hulu's Hit Series

By [ASHLEY CHALMERS](#) | Published on 11/19/21



 Craig Blankenhorn / Hulu

When it comes to [fictional homes](#), few have inspired us this year like the apartments of Hulu's *Only Murders in the Building*. If you haven't caught the 10-episode premiere season, the show follows three characters—Oliver Putnam (Martin Short), Charles-Haden Savage (Steve Martin), and Mabel Mora (Selena Gomez)—as they start a podcast while attempting to solve a murder in their luxe apartment building, the Arconia, on New York City's Upper West Side.

But what is it about these apartments that makes them so enviable, and so deserving of prime real estate on our interior design mood boards? We turned to the show's production designer, Curt Beech, as well as three interior design experts—who also happen to be fans—to discuss. Their (spoiler-free!) thoughts are ahead, and you can stream the entirety of the first season of *Only Murders in the Building* now [on Hulu](#).

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- Caron Woolsey is the founder and principal designer of [CW Interiors](#).
- Chrissy Fehan is the design director at Detroit-based interior design firm [Pophouse](#).
- Ashley McCollum is an associate color marketing manager at [Glidden](#) Paint by PPG.

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“[Production design, for me] is a mix of three things: story, authenticity, and visual content,” says Beech. “I’m always trying to get right into the middle of these three elements ... to find the sweet spot. In the case of *Only Murders*, I feel like we nailed it.”

As Beech explains, the result is three apartments that are perfectly representative of their inhabitants. “For Steve Martin’s place, there’s a sophisticated playfulness to it. For Martin Short’s place, I would say it’s scattered and gentlemanly—a messy gentleman. And then for [Selena]’s place, it’s more of a cipher, it’s intentionally mysterious ... it’s one of the great things about that apartment—it’s so weird and so strange.”

Because each apartment serves as a visual representation of the character, each pulls elements from its resident’s past—and even, possibly, hints toward their future. Read on for a look inside the design of each space, and even a few tips you can try in your own space.

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Charles's Moody Condo

“For [Charles’s] place, it’s the lines of the ’90s—[like the] boxed out beams,” Beech says. “That was architecturally what we were going for. And that would contrast to Oliver and Mabel’s places, which retained a lot of the classic details—the pre-war details that are so important in these New York apartments.”

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After discovering a striped Paul Smith fabric to serve as inspiration, Beech says, “We made that the anchor of Charles’s living room with the sofa. We found a good silhouette that worked with this fabric and that’s what we wound up with, in his place.”

With pieces by Alex Katz, Josef Albers, Ed Ruscha, and Saul Steinberg, Steve Martin’s character’s apartment is also extremely centered around his art collection. As Beech explains, “With Charles's place, it's very much about when he made his money, and what he did with it, and that he spent very smart with it. There are pieces of art in there that are clearly investment-worthy, but not enough to sell those pieces and move. He’s comfortable there ... and he's very smart.”

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Caron Woolsey of [CW Interiors](#) noticed exactly that: “The home of Charles—the former TV star who hit it big some time ago—exhibits superior intelligence and sophistication in the form of his extensive art collection,” she says.

“Charles’s apartment gives off sophisticated transitional bachelor pad vibes with an investment in his art collection featured throughout,” agrees [Pophouse's](#) Chrissy Fehan.

A tendency toward investment is obvious in other parts of Charles’s apartment, too.

“I feel the Charles-Haden Savage apartment would translate really well in everyday life because of the modern fixtures, the timeless investment in furniture, and bold paint and wallpaper choices,” Fehan says.

The vibrant color scheme is one of the most notable features of Charles’s apartment, and it’s present in nearly every space we see in his home, though his kitchen particularly stands out.

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“Green kitchens are making a big splash right now, and that, paired with deep orange wallpaper, makes for a space I would definitely love to spend some time in,” Fehan says.

Woolsey agrees. “His gorgeous green kitchen—a surprising but beautiful choice—is both bold and tasteful, [as is] the incorporation of French lighting and on-trend, upsized cabinet hardware.”

“We’ve seen a rising trend in using [non-neutral colors on cabinets](#), much like the teal green on Charles’s kitchen cabinets,” says Ashley McCollum of [Glidden](#) Paint by PPG. If you’re interested in getting a similar look at home, McCollum suggests using [PPG’s Color of the Year, Olive Sprig](#), which, she says, “pairs beautifully with brass accents and wood tones on an island or lower kitchen cabinets—matching Charles’s tasteful bachelor pad.”

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Mabel's Work-in-Progress

While Charles and Oliver's homes are finished and refined, "Mabel's apartment is in stark contrast," notes Fehan. (Literally and figuratively —on first look, the apartment is almost completely empty and appears to be in the middle of a renovation, and Mabel says she's redoing the space for its owner, her aunt.)



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"[Her] space is a mix of so many styles and eras—and not her own—
 SKIP TO CONTENT l to tell what mark she has put on the space," Fehan says. "A

mix between '50s pink everything and the '80s glass block.”



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But as Beech tells us, that’s intentional. “[Mabel’s apartment] is a visual metaphor for her character, which is not fully developed. She doesn’t know who she is herself, and the apartment doesn’t know what it is, either.”

And that’s all part of the fun! “[Of the three], I think I’d want to live in Mabel’s, ironically,” Beech admits. “It has so much potential and I’d have a lot of fun doing the projects in Mabel’s apartment.”

Part of that potential is the bare walls.

“Mabel’s palette is obviously very neutral—like her,” reveals Beech. “Her sofa was the single most expensive piece of furniture in the show, ironically. It looks like a beater, but it’s like a high-quality beater in the apartment.”

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But while Mabel’s apartment seems bare at first glance, there’s much more than meets the eye. Along with a mural by Mabel (done IRL by artist Laura Perez, who did the show’s title sequence), the apartment also features blush pink accents throughout the apartment. “We pulled in some old-world pinks into her bathroom, [as well as blush] into Mabel’s bedroom to give it a little bit of color—a little bit more than whites and creams,” says Beech.

And because Mabel’s place is technically her aunt’s, Beech added small homages to her heritage: “There are some Mexican-inspired textiles in the drapery, and that’s a detail that’s really left from the old place.”

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Oliver's Maximalist Bachelor Pad

Of the show's three main characters, Oliver is the dramatic, extravagant one—a personality that's reflected in his home.



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“Oliver’s apartment has rich, luxurious colors—a nod to the ambiance of NYC theaters. His collection of Broadway memorabilia, thick drapery, and velvet furnishings are just as eclectic as the man himself” McCollum says.

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“From the elaborate draperies to the mahogany-paneled walls to the herringbone floors, fluted columns, and crown-canopied dog bed, more is more for this person,” Woolsey says. “Any one of these finishes on its own is beautiful and storied, but together in one apartment, it creates a cacophony of space, just like the actions of the man who inhabits it.”

Fehan tells us there’s a lot to be learned from observing the maximalism of Oliver’s space: “Bold colors with applied molding, rugs, and dramatic accessories are a very easy way to transform your space without major investment,” she says. “Don’t be afraid to lean into the maximalist approach when mixing patterns and textures.”

As a former Broadway producer, Oliver lives for theatrics and is a long-time New Yorker, another trait Beech represented in the character’s apartment.

“Looking at Oliver’s place, we built a stage within his parlor, and we just sort of worked out from there,” Beech says. “[We wanted] someplace that felt very familiar, very New York, and very uniquely rooted to the arts community—reflected as a sort of Old New York that is disappearing.”

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Just as Charles’s place was anchored by the fabric chosen for the sofa, Oliver’s was also born from a piece of fabric. “For Oliver ... it was this Ralph Lauren plaid, and that became the wallpaper in the living room,” Beech says. “We went darker and more classic New York with the plaids and the velours and the jewel tones—trying to keep it a little bit more sophisticated.”

Oliver’s walls might not display a valuable art collection like Charles’s or a self-done mural like Mabel’s, but they’re still adorned with meaning. “There’s a whole story behind the dining room,” says Beech. “We created a wallpaper for the dining room—our painters painted a version of the La Scala Opera House [in Milan].”

“My story for this is that his father was an opera director. And he might not have been so proud that his son went to Broadway ... but this is sort of an homage to his past and his family and his father. It’s the La Scala Opera House surrounding him in his dining room, and the idea here is that every time that he is pitching, he is literally on stage,” explains Beech.

“The funny thing about this apartment is that Rich Murray, the decorator, and I were both theater students,” adds Beech. “We all had all this stuff left from grad school. The theatrical models that are in this apartment are mine from school. And then Rich brought all of his theater books from his own personal library into this, and it was very personal.”

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Bringing the *Only Murders* Look Home

While you probably don't want to get caught up in a murder investigation, as the main characters of *Only Murders in the Building* are, there are plenty of other ways to bring the borderline nostalgic, dramatic atmosphere of the show home—mainly, by looking to your walls.

Play With Color

“Charles’s apartment features fewer colors, but he uses them in impactful ways, such as his blue shelves and teal cabinetry. [It makes] each room appear organized and compartmentalized, matching his need for simplicity and routine,” notes McCollum.

On the other hand, if Oliver’s over-the-top style is more to your taste, McCollum notes that “deep, rich colors, like Glidden paint’s Gooseberry, [make a perfect] backdrop to a gallery wall of your favorite theater and film posters, antique family photographs, and collected artwork.”

And while Mabel’s final aesthetic is still TBD, McCollum has some color-based predictions. “We imagine that she will opt for soft pastels, giving the space a feminine but modern facelift. We could see Mabel choosing a soft rusty pink like Glidden’s Tea Time, or maybe she’ll go for the green trend we’ve been seeing by opting for a color such as Sage.”

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“I’m a sucker for wallpaper,” Beech says. “Wallpaper is a really bold choice, and there are so many incredible wall coverings available now. I have used it judiciously in my house, in my own renovation, and I love every time I walk into the rooms where we used wallpaper. I love seeing it.”

Along with adding depth and boldness to any room, Beech tells us that wallpaper has another huge benefit—it serves as a starting point. “It gives you a bold springboard to work from, color-wise and texture-wise,” he says. “There are so many different textures now, and you can find anything you want in a wallpaper. And if you don’t like it, you can [take it down](#) and change it again!”

Best of all, if you can’t find a print you love, Beech has a tip: “For the project I just finished ... it was a period piece. We actually went back and found 70-year-old wallpaper, and had it scanned and reprinted, because you can’t work with [the original] paper. This is something anyone can do! If you find any pattern that you like, you can have it scanned and made into wallpaper.”

And if you want to know the killer before they’re revealed in the show—look to the wallpaper. “[The killer’s] wallpaper (Witch & Watchman’s [Belladonna Dark](#)) is a poisoner’s wallpaper!” Beech says. “It’s not so hidden by the time you see it. By then, it’s a bit of a sledgehammer if you’re looking for it. But it was an opportunity to really do something bold that moment in the show.”

But even before that impactful moment, Beech relied on a wallpapered space to hint that something isn’t quite right: “[The murderer’s] foyer is definitely trying to lull you into a sense of security and serenity that not does not exist.”

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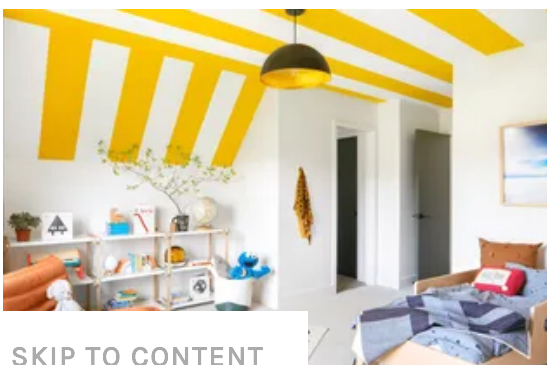
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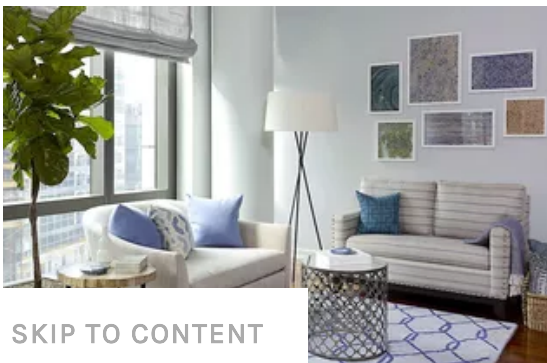
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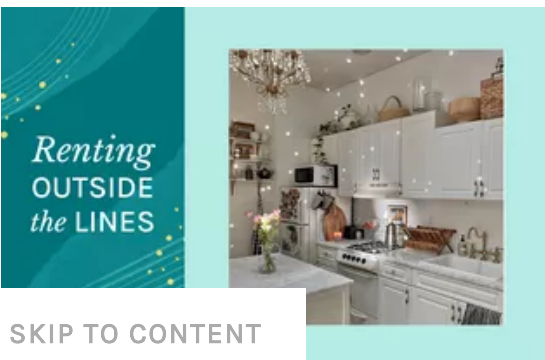
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