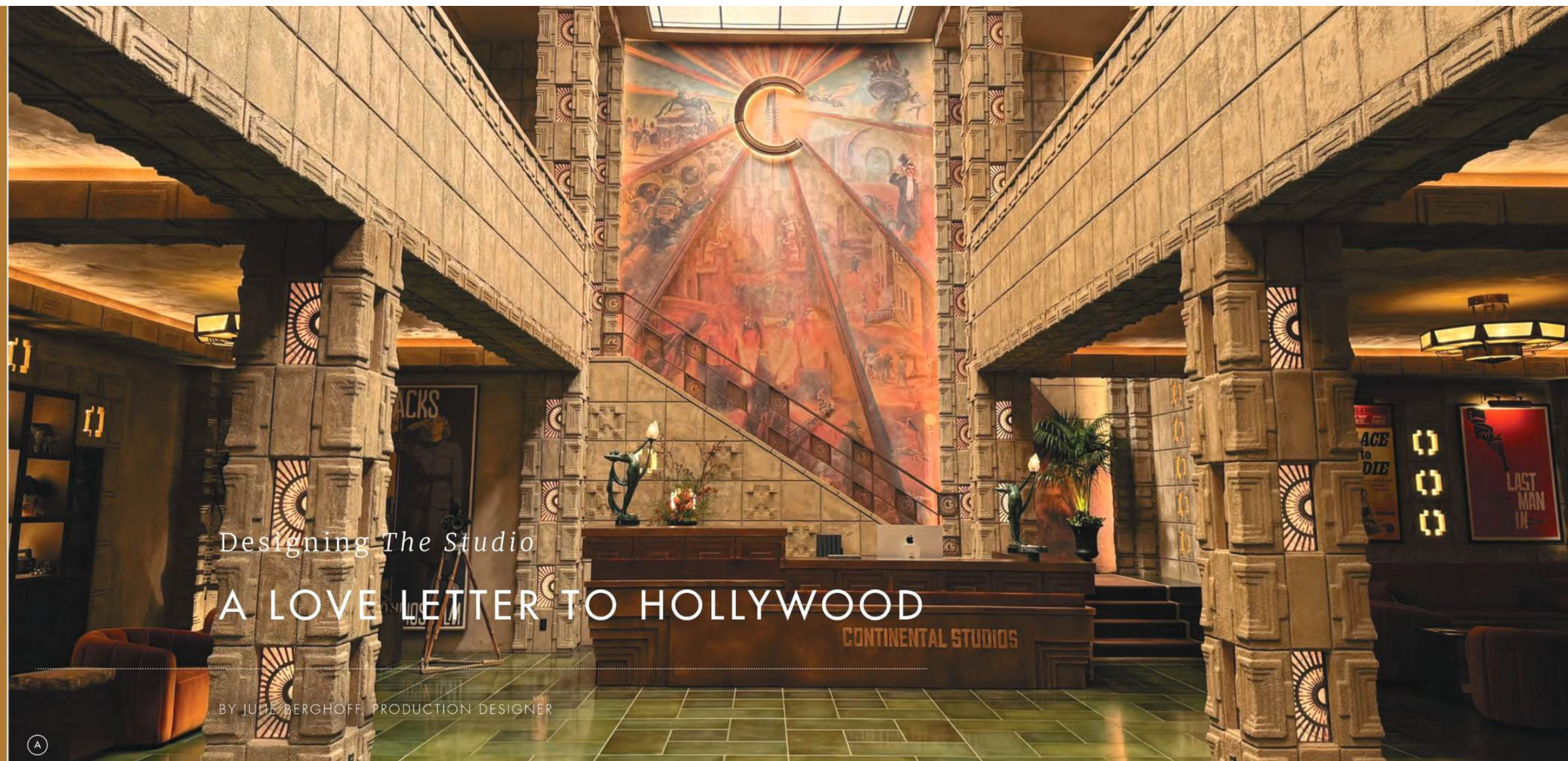




Designing *The Studio* A LOVE LETTER TO HOLLYWOOD

BY JULIE BERGHOFF, PRODUCTION DESIGNER



A

A. CONTINENTAL STUDIOS, INTERIOR STEINBERG BUILDING LOBBY. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

Created by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, *The Studio* is a behind-the-scenes comedy about the absurdities of Hollywood executive culture from their experiences.

The Call: October 13, 2023

Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg called...

"We're making a series about our experience in Hollywood from an executive's point of view," they said. "And we want you to design a movie studio."

"Cool...past, present or future?" I asked.

"All of the above."

"Part of the Big Five?"

"Exactly. But we only make movies."

"Like Sony?"

"Yep."

When I first got the call to design *The Studio* for Apple TV+, I knew we weren't just building sets—we were building a mythology. It was a fictional studio that needed to feel as rooted in Hollywood history as the real Big Five, with the architectural and emotional weight of a place that had been around for a century. We had to create a world where screwball comedies were born, zombies roamed the backlot and award shows glittered overnight.

I was thrilled by the opportunity to delve into Hollywood's rich history. However, I quickly realized that my knowledge wasn't as extensive as anticipated. The prospect of creating a fictional studio that could stand alongside the renowned Big Five was both exhilarating and daunting.

Creating Fictional History

The first step was deciding where this fictional studio would exist. Paramount was off the table—it had been recently filmed for *The Offer*. Universal has a fantastic backlot, but it feels too modern. Sony has gorgeous Art Deco executive offices, but... let's say there is a history with Seth and Evan. Warner Bros.? Now, that was interesting—incredible backlot, classic Hollywood stages. It gave us the perfect setting for the show's small vignettes, where big-name directors and actors would play versions of themselves in stories they'd never get to tell in real life.

Next, the big question: What would the architecture look like? It had to feel unique yet timeless—something that could have been built

a century ago. That led us straight to Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Wright Choice

Frank Lloyd Wright came to Los Angeles around 1915, inspired by the Mayan exhibit at the San Diego World's Fair. That influence birthed the Mayan revival period, from the Hollyhock House to La Miniatura. His work was monolithic, tomb-like and ahead of its time—his version of brutalism, but with textile blocks. Prefabricated, straightforward and structurally solid, it was a natural fit for a fictional studio that had been around since 1927.

We leaned into this aesthetic, creating our version of Wright's textile block system and drawing

B. MATT'S OFFICE. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

C. FRONT ENTRY DOORS. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23.

D. CONFERENCE ROOM. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

A. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY. SKETCHUP DIGITAL MODEL VIEW BY TRAVIS KERR.

B. INTERIOR STEINBERG BUILDING LOBBY, CONCEPT ILLUSTRATION BY HENRY FONG.

C. COLUMN CONSTRUCTION DETAILS. SKETCHUP/LAYOUT DRAWING BY TRAVIS KERR.

D. TEXTILE BLOCK SAMPLES. SAMPLES WERE CRUCIAL IN DEVELOPING THE FINISHED COLOR, PLASTER AND AGING PROCESSES USED.

E. FLOOR PAINT SAMPLES. WORKING FROM REAL CERAMIC TILE SAMPLES, LEAD PAINTER KAY KROPP DEVELOPED A PROCESS THAT USED LAYERS OF GLAZES.

inspiration from the Japanese Imperial Palace, Chicago's Midway Gardens and his prairie period—clean lines, natural materials and architectural breathing room. We wanted something both cinematic and deeply rooted in Hollywood history.

Building the Executive Offices

The series had nine weeks of preproduction before filming the executive office set on Day One. At first, I worked alone with Concept Artist Henry Fong and 3D artist Travis Kerr, but the scope quickly expanded. The layout needed to accommodate the long, continuous takes Seth and Evan wanted. A one-story office didn't fit within our stage footprint, so we went with two stories. That decision also gave us dynamic camera movement—tracking shots up the stairs and crane moves in the lobby—turning architecture into cinematography. Travis was joined by Set Designers Nealy Orillion and Mike Stassi. In total, we released one hundred and eleven sheets of drafting for the exterior and interior executive

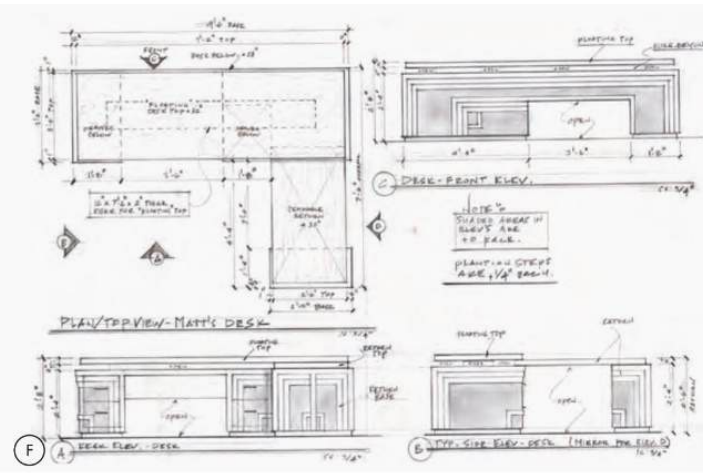


office set. There were so many details that we developed our own language of abbreviations. Perforated textile blocks became PTBs; lit column panels became LCPs.

The design approach stuck to Wright's philosophy: materials from the earth. Plaster, but with glass mixed in for a subtle sparkle. Emerald-green ceramic tiles. Copper desks instead of gold. Natural tones with rich textures.

The entire construction department made the impossible possible. Construction Coordinator Jeff Goyer used every fabrication method he

could think of to get our thousands of custom textile blocks completed in time: CNC, laser cutting and foam castings. Plaster foreperson Josh Soles ran 24-hour crews. The crew had the heaters on stage at full blast, trying to dry the plaster before the shooting company moved in. Lead painter Kay Kropp was



an alchemist—she turned hundreds of MDF sheets into glazed green ceramic tiles for our floor.

Graphic Designer Zach Fannin created an original logo inspired by the bronze doors on many of John Lautner's private residences—especially the Reiner house. To me, those doors have always felt like a brutalist exploding sun, which somehow captured the show's spirit: bold, cinematic and a little offbeat. Seth, a big fan of mid-century design, and Saul Bass in particular, was closely involved in the process. Zach and I reminisced that designing this logo felt like our version of that *Saturday Night Live* sketch with Ryan Gosling and the Papyrus font—hundreds of variations, tiny adjustments, near madness. After over one hundred iterations, we found the one. That logo became a core design element across the set, appearing in the custom textile blocks, on window screens and in subtle graphic details throughout the executive offices.

Curating Continental's Legacy: Set Decoration and Art

Set decorator Claire Kaufman played a pivotal role in bringing the world of Continental Studios to life, curating each space to reflect the studio's storied past and the layered narratives of its characters. Her approach seamlessly blended iconic Hollywood history with contemporary design, ensuring every detail felt authentic and relevant.

Claire's team designed and built nearly all of the executive office furniture within a tight 6-week window—a feat of craftsmanship and commitment. At the center of it all was Matt Remick's 10-foot walnut desk, exuding power and polish. It was surrounded by glass-walled offices that emphasized the show's theme of transparency—where everyone is both observer and observed.

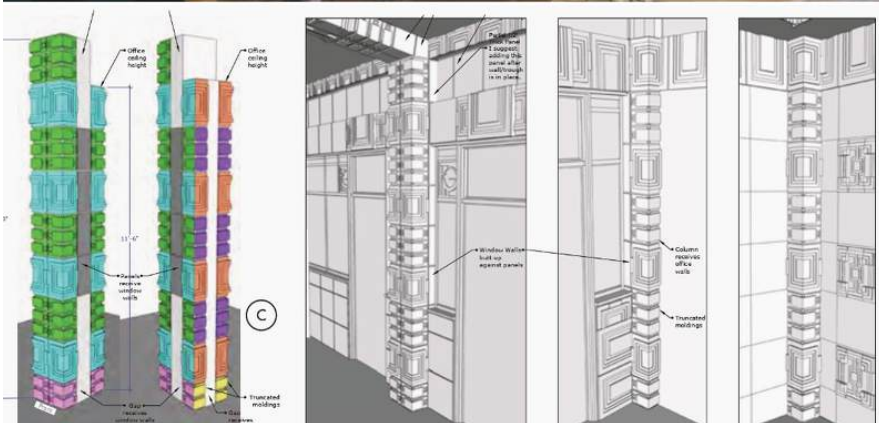
The art selections enriched the narrative: Custom paintings lined the conference rooms and executive spaces, including a standout

F. MATT'S DESK. CONSTRUCTION DETAIL DRAWING BY ADAM MULL.

G. DIRECTOR'S PLANS, INTERIOR STEINBERG BUILDING FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS. RHINO DRAWINGS BY MIKE STASSI.

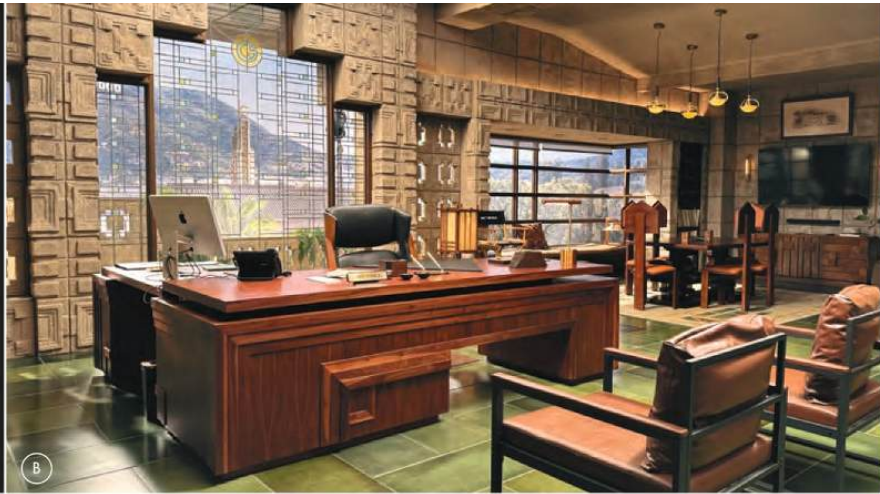
H. ENTRANCE LOBBY IN PROGRESS. EACH "BLOCK" WAS AGED BY HAND BEFORE PLASTER WAS APPLIED TO PROVIDE ORGANIC VARIATION.

I. MATT'S OFFICE IN PROGRESS. THIS IMAGE SHOWS THE VARIOUS BLOCK FABRICATION METHODS USED.





A. MATT'S OFFICE SET DECORATION RESEARCH BOARD BY CLAIRE KAUFMAN.



B. MATT'S OFFICE. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

modern rendering of the Cinerama Dome, which fused Old Hollywood iconography with fresh, bold brushstrokes. Claire also collaborated with Graphic Designer Kevin Kalaba to recreate original movie posters from the 1920s to the 1960s, each telling a piece of the fictional studio's legacy.

These elements—carefully sourced, designed and placed—helped transform the set into a space that felt lived-in, aspirational and unmistakably Hollywood. Claire's eye for detail and ability to weave stories through objects brought the soul of Continental to the screen.

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These artistic choices added visual appeal and served as storytelling devices, offering viewers a deeper connection to the studio's imagined past. Claire's meticulous attention to detail and ability to intertwine art with narrative were instrumental in crafting a set that felt both lived-in and aspirational. It encapsulated the essence of Hollywood's golden era while remaining relevant to contemporary audiences.

The Hollywood History Wall

What was Continental Studios' filmmaking legacy? That question shaped the foundation for the mural featured prominently in the lobby and staircase set. From the beginning, Seth and Evan were clear: They imagined Continental as a once-great studio known for screwball comedies—a legacy that should be reflected in the executive offices. I began with the Continental "C" logo and turned it into six radiating sun rays, creating a graphic backdrop that divided the mural into eras—from the 1920s to the 1970s. That first sketch became the anchor of the design. Each ray represented a different chapter in Continental's imagined film history. To bring it to life, I looked to the icons—filmmakers, stars and comedians who might have once called Continental home. With the tireless help of Soan Giacomazzi and the Apple clearances team, we built a fictionalized ensemble: our versions of Hitchcock, Charlie Chaplin, Fred Astaire, W.C. Fields, The Three Stooges, Lucille Ball, Barbara Stanwyck, Cary Grant and Buster Keaton. We paired them with stylized illustrations of classic LA landmarks like Grauman's Chinese Theatre and the Cinerama Dome to root Continental in the fabric of real Hollywood. Screwball comedies—fast-talking,



gender-flipping, gloriously chaotic—defined the 1930s and '40s, and we studied them closely. The genre's spirit shaped not only the mural but also the tone of the entire studio set. On the first floor, the crew built display cases filled with memorabilia and vintage filmmaking equipment, curated by Claire Kaufman, to further immerse the viewer. Each item helped tell the story of a faded studio clinging to its glory days—old awards (none recent, naturally), ephemera from past productions, and a portrait of the fictional founder. Together, these details turned the lobby into a kind of forgotten museum, a visual love letter to a golden age that's long gone—but still echoing through the halls. Every detail was researched, and every element was carefully chosen to reflect Hollywood's past while grounding the fictional studio in reality.

The Architecture of Movement

From the beginning, Seth and Evan envisioned *The Studio* as an immersive experience where the audience wouldn't just watch the characters



navigate power and chaos but move through it with them. They wanted long, fluid takes that followed the story's energy in real-time without cutting away from the absurdity or the tension. That meant the Production Design had to be more than just beautiful—it had to be functional, dynamic and intensely choreographed. The executive office set was designed with movement in mind: wide, uninterrupted walkways, layered glass walls, and a two-story layout that allowed the camera to snake through conversations, climb stairs mid-scene, and swing across the lobby in one continuous take. It turned architecture into cinematography. Working closely with DP Adam Newport-Berra, we mapped out camera flows alongside the design—ensuring every wall, window and doorway gave the camera purpose and momentum. The materials mattered too: reflective surfaces, layered glass, and architectural shadows added depth and contrast to long takes, so nothing ever felt static. When the show moves, the space breathes—and the design becomes a character.

E. THE VIEW FROM THE STEPS UP TO THE SECOND LEVEL. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

F. LOBBY SEATING AREA. BUILT SET, WARNER BROS. STAGE 23. SET PHOTO.

G. VARIOUS CONTINENTAL STUDIOS FILM POSTERS BY GRAPHIC ARTIST ZACH FANNIN.

H. CONTINENTAL STUDIOS LOGO STUDY BY GRAPHIC ARTIST ZACH FANNIN.

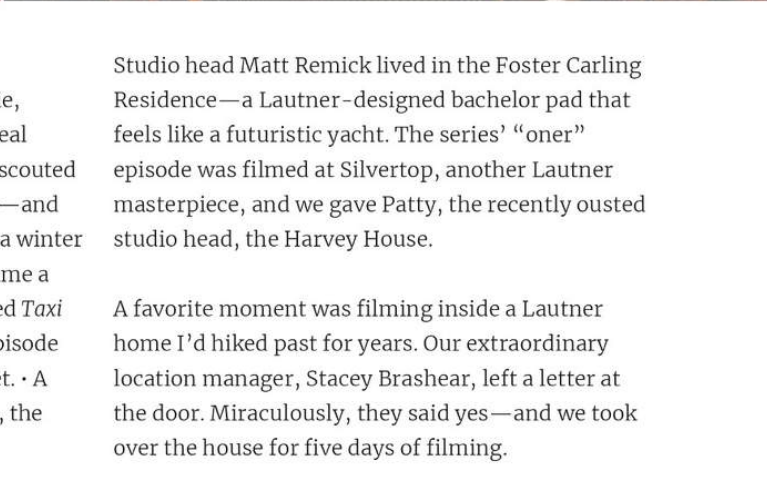




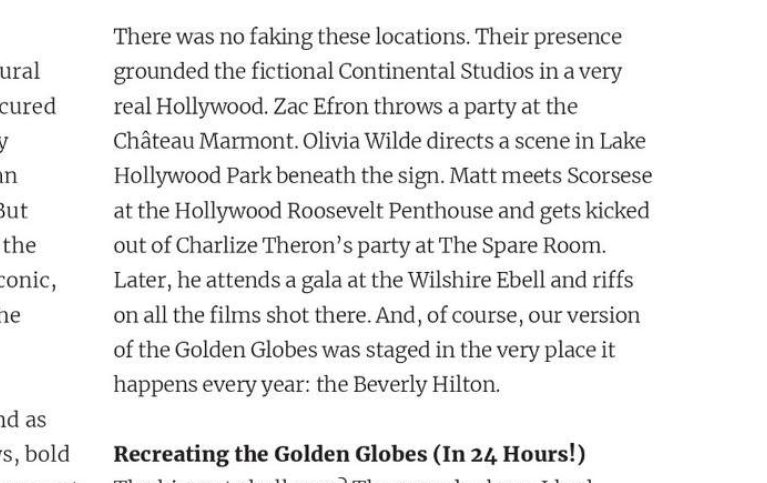
A. BACKLOT CHINATOWN STREET FOR THE FILM NOIR EPISODE. WARNER BROS. NEW YORK STREET. SET PHOTO.



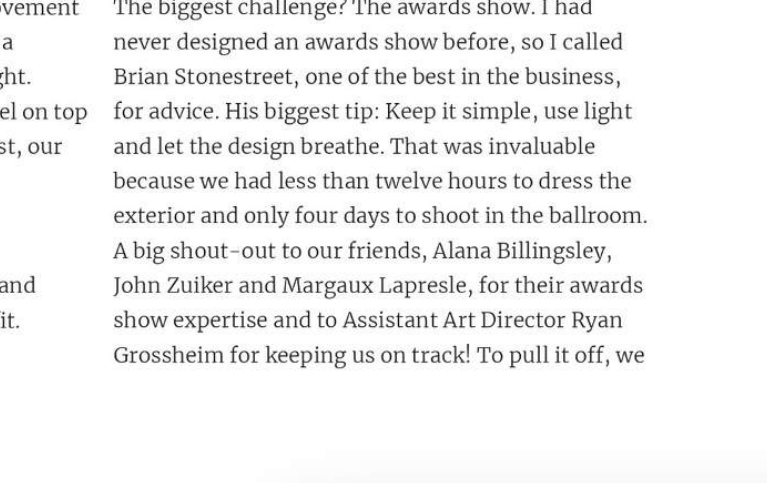
B. THE HOUSE FOR THE "ONER" EPISODE WAS THE REINER-BURCHILL RESIDENCE (SILVERTOP) BY ARCHITECT JOHN LAUTNER. LOCATION PHOTO.



C. MATT'S HOUSE, THE FOSTER CARLING RESIDENCE BY ARCHITECT JOHN LAUTNER. LOCATION PHOTO.



D. GOLDEN GLOBES "RED" CARPET ENTRANCE ON LOCATION AT THE BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL. SET PHOTO.



E. GOLDEN GLOBES STAGE, ON LOCATION AT THE BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL. PRODUCTION STILL. COURTESY OF APPLE.

The Backlots and Iconic Locations

Each episode featured a different mini-movie, requiring the Art Department to transform real locations into distinct cinematic worlds. We scouted everywhere—Universal, Sony, Warner Bros.—and crafted backlot stories. • The lagoon became a winter hideout for Paul Dano. • Hennessy Street became a gritty 1970s Bronx for a Ron Howard-directed *Taxi Driver* homage. • Olivia Wilde's Chinatown episode was set in the central New York backlot street. • A zombie apocalypse took over Warner Village, the residential area on the lot.

Iconic Homes, Characters

Scouting off the lot turned into an architectural tour through Hollywood. The production secured some of L.A.'s most stunning homes—many designed by Frank Lloyd Wright protégé John Lautner—as backdrops for our characters. But these weren't just locations. For *The Studio*, the homes were characters in their own right: iconic, singular and built on a scale that matched the personalities we were crafting.

I looked for spaces that felt as one-of-a-kind as our characters—homes with sweeping views, bold lines, and an openness that invited both movement and meaning. Places where you could make a dramatic entrance...or disappear in plain sight. These houses were designed to make you feel on top of the world—because, for a moment at least, our characters often are. And then it shifts.

That tension—between confidence and vulnerability, power and privacy, ambition and escape—made these homes such a perfect fit.

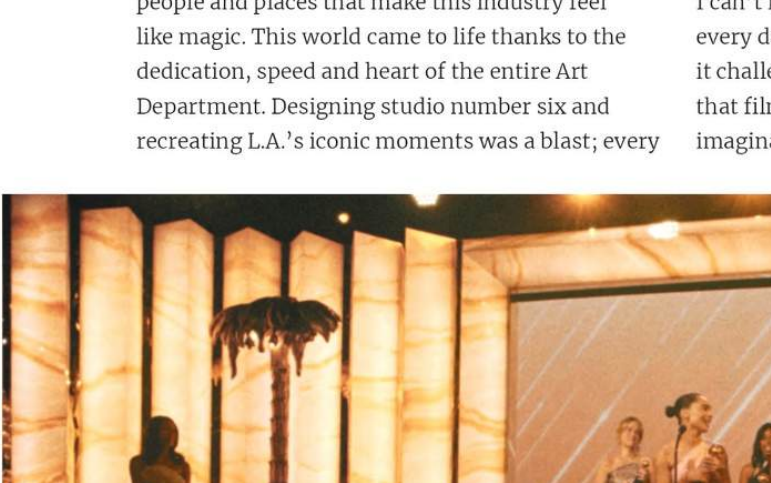
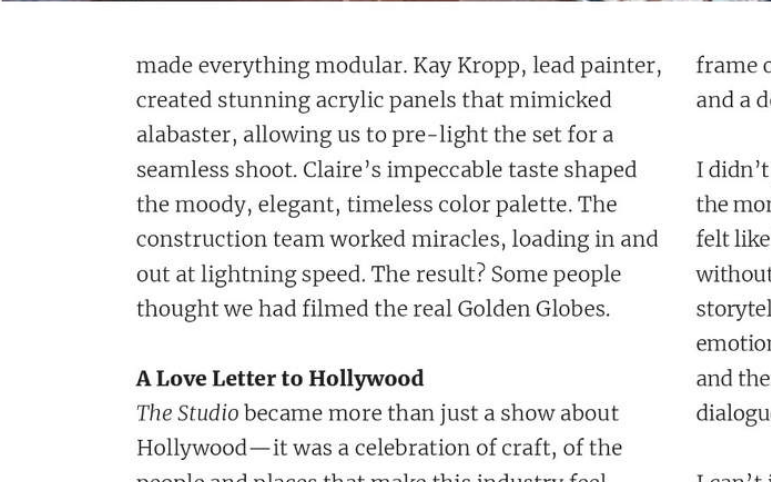
Studio head Matt Remick lived in the Foster Carling Residence—a Lautner-designed bachelor pad that feels like a futuristic yacht. The series' "oner" episode was filmed at Silvertop, another Lautner masterpiece, and we gave Patty, the recently ousted studio head, the Harvey House.

A favorite moment was filming inside a Lautner home I'd hiked past for years. Our extraordinary location manager, Stacey Brashear, left a letter at the door. Miraculously, they said yes—and we took over the house for five days of filming.

There was no faking these locations. Their presence grounded the fictional Continental Studios in a very real Hollywood. Zac Efron throws a party at the Château Marmont. Olivia Wilde directs a scene in Lake Hollywood Park beneath the sign. Matt meets Scorsese at the Hollywood Roosevelt Penthouse and gets kicked out of Charlize Theron's party at The Spare Room. Later, he attends a gala at the Wilshire Ebell and riffs on all the films shot there. And, of course, our version of the Golden Globes was staged in the very place it happens every year: the Beverly Hilton.

Recreating the Golden Globes (In 24 Hours!)

The biggest challenge? The awards show. I had never designed an awards show before, so I called Brian Stonestreet, one of the best in the business, for advice. His biggest tip: Keep it simple, use light and let the design breathe. That was invaluable because we had less than twelve hours to dress the exterior and only four days to shoot in the ballroom. A big shout-out to our friends, Alana Billingsley, John Zuiker and Margaux Lapresle, for their awards show expertise and to Assistant Art Director Ryan Grossheim for keeping us on track! To pull it off, we



made everything modular. Kay Kropp, lead painter, created stunning acrylic panels that mimicked alabaster, allowing us to pre-light the set for a seamless shoot. Claire's impeccable taste shaped the moody, elegant, timeless color palette. The construction team worked miracles, loading in and out at lightning speed. The result? Some people thought we had filmed the real Golden Globes.

A Love Letter to Hollywood

The Studio became more than just a show about Hollywood—it was a celebration of craft, of the people and places that make this industry feel like magic. This world came to life thanks to the dedication, speed and heart of the entire Art Department. Designing studio number six and recreating L.A.'s iconic moments was a blast; every

frame of the series was infused with history, humor and a deep love for filmmaking.

I didn't grow up knowing this job existed. But the moment I discovered Production Design, it felt like I had been searching for it my whole life without knowing its name. It's a perfect collision of storytelling, architecture, psychology, history and emotion. You get to build entire worlds from scratch—and then step into them. Every detail becomes a line of dialogue. Every material is a piece of memory.

I can't imagine doing anything else. I'm grateful every day that I get to do this work—for how it challenges me, humbles me and reminds me that filmmaking is one long, collaborative act of imagination. **ADG**

Julie Berghoff,
Production Designer
Brian Grego,
Art Director
Henry Arce,
Ryan Grossheim,
Assistant Art Directors
Mike Stassi,
Travis Kerr,
Nealy Orillion,
Adam Mull,
Set Designers
Henry Fong,
Jonathan Bach,
Rick Buoen,
Illustrators
Zach Fannin,
Kevin Kalaba,
Kevin Egeland,
Yi Lin Zhao,
Graphic Designers
Claire Kaufman,
Set Decorator