

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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Exclusive

CELEBRITIES AT HOME

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**DIANE VON
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**PLUS:
Ali Wentworth
& George
Stephanopoulos**



COMMAND CENTRAL

The Beverly Hills office of Oscars producer Brian Grazer provides a calm backdrop for a man known as a supreme multitasker

One of Hollywood's most celebrated producers, Brian Grazer has made films that have been nominated for a remarkable 43 Oscars—and in 2002, he took home the Best Picture prize for *A Beautiful Mind*. So who better to mastermind the 84th Annual Academy Awards? “Having been both a winner and a loser has made my job producing the show this year easier because it’s been demystified for me,” he says.

Grazer’s office, overlooking Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills, provides him with maximum support and style. Located in a midcentury building that serves as the headquarters of Imagine Entertainment, the production company Grazer founded in 1986 with partner Ron Howard, the suite was dreamed up by designer Michael S. Smith, another Hollywood heavyweight.

“Brian has a real artist’s sensibility,” says Smith of his client, for whom he has also decorated two houses. “It was

important that his office reflect his eclectic tastes, and that it feel creative and loose. But at the same time, it had to have a calming effect.” Smith achieved all of this by dividing the L-shaped room into two zones. The first is dominated by an imposing Scandinavian-modern desk, usually piled high with scripts, while floor-to-ceiling shelves hold art books and photos of Grazer with colleagues and family. Then there is what the producer describes as “the living room,” a seating area with twin sofas, plush armchairs, and a cocktail table, all of Smith’s design. “This is where I have meetings—it’s very comfortable,” Grazer says. (So much so, in fact, that most afternoons he throws a blanket down on one of the sofas and takes a ten-minute nap.) Unifying the two spaces are walls painted with subtle horizontal stripes—Smith’s homage to the architectural period—and examples of tribal art, which both designer and client value for its warmth and exoticism.



Clockwise from top left: Brian Grazer worked with decorator Michael S. Smith on the design of his office. An African chair and stacked TV monitors. Smith-designed furniture in the seating area. For details see Sources.

In addition to enabling regular shut-eye, the office allows for seemingly all the human needs of a modern entertainment-industry potentate: It is a first-rate spa/gym/barbershop/disco/media center. After cranking up the volume on his Beatbox, the wiry, spiky-haired producer grabs an electric shaver to give his chin a touch-up, then scoops up a dumbbell to perform bicep curls while scanning three TV screens. This display is cut short, however, when his assistant appears, weighted down with a three-ring binder labeled 84TH ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS.

“I want the show to be many things,” Grazer says before taking his next meeting. “But they are all very simple. I want it to be classy and funny, and I want it to be on time. I think we will succeed.”

—JAMES REGINATO

AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE

Ali Wentworth recounts how she and George Stephanopoulos relocated to New York in a flash—aided by their close friend and favorite designer, Michael S. Smith



TEXT BY ALI WENTWORTH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT FRANCES
PRODUCED BY ROBERT RUFINO

Actress and comedian Ali Wentworth (above) and her husband, George Stephanopoulos, turned to Michael S. Smith to decorate their family's new Manhattan apartment. **Right:** The living room features a skirted sofa and armchairs, all by O. Henry House, upholstered in fabrics by Cowtan & Tout and Jasper, respectively; the Regency mirror and the mahogany bookcase were bought at auction, the settee is a Swedish antique, and the cocktail table and the curtain fabric are both by Jasper. For details see Sources.







Opposite, from top: High-gloss wallpaper by Elizabeth Dow provides a colorful contrast to the foyer's floor tiles, which are part of Smith's collection for Ann Sacks; the chandelier and the striped upholstery fabric are by Jasper, the drawing at left is by Lucian Freud, and the pagoda *étagère* is by Bardeaux Mobilier. A pair of hand-painted gouache panels are displayed above a velvet-covered sectional sofa in a corner of the living room; the antique Bibikabad carpet was acquired at auction.

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peaking before thousands doesn't cause me an ounce of anxiety. But moving? I'm on the floor, panic-stricken. Two years ago my husband, George Stephanopoulos, and I had finally settled into the Colonial Revival house in Washington, D.C., that we'd bought in 2005. There was no more trim to paint, and we had enough throw pillows to cushion all of Uzbekistan. Having just signed a book deal with HarperCollins [*Ali in Wonderland* is in stores now], I was spending my days in sweatpants, eating Milk Duds in my home office. Then George got the call confirming that he would be taking over as coanchor of *Good Morning America*—which meant I would have to quickly relocate him, our daughters, Elliott and Harper, and myself to New York City. I didn't leave my bed for days, except to get more Milk Duds.

I come from a long line of strong women—my grandmother built a boat out of yak hides and crossed China's Yellow River—so surely I could move my family, two dachshunds included, to Manhattan. No more than a tiny percentage of our possessions would fit into a New York apartment, but that was just as well: The only things worth saving, I decided, were photographs, some cherished works of art, and maybe a hot plate. Excited at the prospect of a clean slate, I wondered how we could evolve beyond our humble domicile toward a more sophisticated home.

Enter decorator Michael S. Smith. I had always worshipped his designs and studied his monographs as though they were religious manuscripts. A mutual friend had introduced us when Michael was in D.C. outfitting the Obama White House, and we became instant confidants, sharing sandwiches as I tagged along with him to antiques shops. Our e-mails are always in shorthand, and one day an exchange went:

"George and I are definitely moving to New York."

"Great! I'll do your apartment."

(Cue Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus.")

When I first brought Michael to see our new place—a three-bedroom prewar on the Upper East Side—it had the sad visage of a lady stripped of all her makeup and jewelry. Hangers were strewn on the floor; rectangles of dirt remained where rugs had been. He walked around, in his cashmere jacket and ironed jeans,

knocking on walls and cabinetry. It might not have been an Arabian palace, but the floor plan required no changes. George and I offered no direction at all, happy to have Michael wave his traditionalist magic wand. Sure enough, he did the equivalent: pulled out his cell phone, called his office, and started executing a plan.

Once our bare necessities had arrived from D.C., I got down to business on my writing, breaking to watch wallpaper and light fixtures being installed around me. It was a delightful jolt, during these stationary hours, to get Michael's e-mails full of furniture and rug options. Against my better judgment I sent back ideas of my own, only to be met with such fertile responses as, "Oh, for your dorm room?" When you work with a prolific aesthete, I realized, it's best to keep your pedestrian two cents to yourself and stick to more familiar topics, like soup and Labradoodles.

The 14th chapter of my book was nearly complete the day Michael rented a crane to hoist large furniture from the street through the living room window. Not being a native New Yorker, this was a first for me. In came a sectional sofa covered in rust-color velvet, a Swedish settee, and a pair of George II-style mahogany bookcases. When a mysterious piece of lacquer chinoiserie floated up, I stared at it blankly and asked, "Michael, what is this for? Dim sum?" The next day he organized our books and blue-and-white pottery on what I now know to be a pagoda *étagère*. It has become a spectacular showpiece in our foyer, which was tiled with stone in a graphic mosaic pattern of Michael's design.

When the apartment was done, after just six months, the results left me in awe. The airlifted furniture lends European flair to the place, especially in the living room, where pieces are arranged on a Bibikabad carpet around a marble mantel. I still can't stop pawing the Venetian-plaster walls, which extend into the adjacent dining room, anchored by a Regency table and set of George III ladder-back chairs. And our master suite, with its hand-painted wallpaper and Italian neoclassical walnut bed, is exquisite.

It's rare that a person exceeds expectations, but Michael certainly did—creating an exceptionally warm, cultured, and beautiful home for my family.

Now if he could just get me out of these sweatpants. □

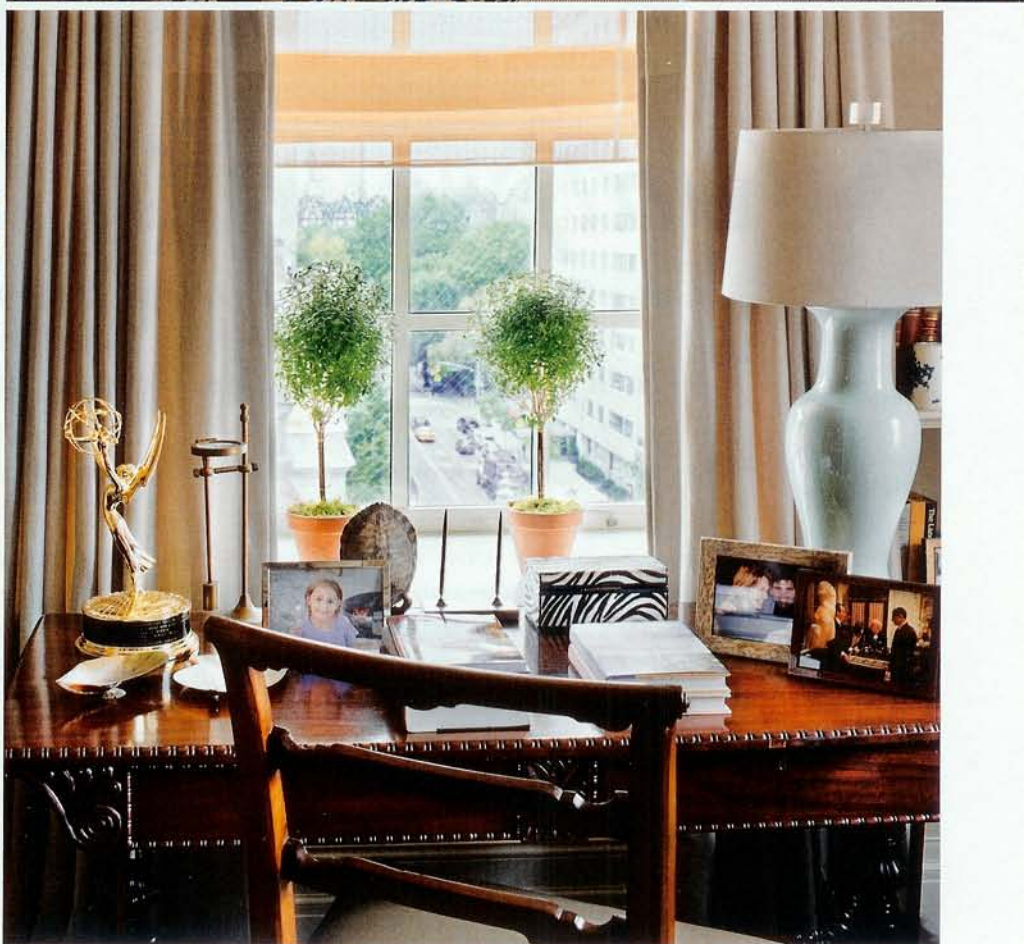


A Regency twin-pedestal dining table is grouped with a George III sideboard and ladder-back chairs, all of mahogany; the chairs are upholstered in a Jasper leather. *Opposite, from top:* Charlie, left, and Daisy on chairs by David Istanta in the breakfast area; the hanging lantern is by Vaughan. The kitchen's cooktop and hood are by Wolf.



The library's mirror and ottoman are by English Georgian, and the sofa and armchair are by O. Henry House. **Opposite, from top:** Hand-painted chinoiserie wallpaper by Gracie forms a backdrop to the master suite's Italian neoclassical bed, which is dressed in Nancy Koltes linens. A library window affords a view of Central Park; the Emmy was awarded to Stephanopoulos for his role in ABC's coverage of the 2009 inauguration.





SOURCES

Items pictured but not listed are from private collections or are not sourceable. Items similar to vintage and antique pieces shown are often available from the dealers listed.

DISCOVERIES

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PAGE 52: Dienst + Dotter Antikviteter; dienstanddotter.com.

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ART SCENE: CHARLINE VON HEYL

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PAGES 76–77: Hair by Michael Silva for Pure Management NYC; puremanagementnyc.com; and **makeup** by Tina Turnbow for Ray Brown Productions; raybrownpro.com.

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PAGE 82: Antique secretary from Hollyhock; hollyhockinc.com. **Vintage chrome bench** from Vermillion; galleryvermillion.com.

PAGE 83: Grizzly Bear Brown paint by Benjamin Moore; benjaminmoore.com.

Vintage chair from JF Chen; jfchen.com.

Bouillotte lamps by Circa Lighting; circalighting.com. **PAGES 84–85: Bed linens** by John Robshaw Textiles; johnrobshaw.com.

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In master bath, **Saracen Empire tub** by the Bath Works Inc.; thebathworks.com.

On floor, Hollywood Grand Pattern tile by Walker Zanger; walkerzanger.com.

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AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE

PAGES 134–41: Interior design by Michael

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