

INSIDE LOOK

Catherine & Baz

Step into the creative power couple's THEATRICAL world, expressed within the elegant confines of a New York City townhouse.

By Tiffany Bakker
Portraits by Roger Davies



THIS PAGE Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin in the living room of their New York City townhouse; sofas from West Elm and 1940s armchair upholstered with Catherine Martin for Mokum Bespoke fabric in Macaroon from James Dunlop Textiles; Terrace coffee table from West Elm; Hutton rug from Designer Rugs; photographs by Rex Dupain and Douglas Kirkland. Luhrmann wears Acne Studios suit and Prada T-shirt and shoes. Martin wears RedValentino dress. Details, last pages.

HAIR & MAKE UP: JACQUELINE COVSON

FROM TOP in the bedroom, bed frame and bench from Tracey Boyd; bed linen in Catherine Martin for Mokum Leopardo, Bengal Tiger, Trianon and Bespoke fabrics, all from James Dunlop Textiles. Outside, sofa from West Elm upholstered with Catherine Martin for Mokum Coraline outdoor fabric and cushions in Flamingo fabric from James Dunlop Textiles.



For Australian creative power couple Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, risk-taking is at the very heart of both art and life. “Baz has a great saying: ‘Taste is the enemy of art’, and I think, in a way, prejudice and preconception is the enemy of interior design,” says Martin, smiling.

The brilliantly theatrical and rebellious sensibilities that Luhrmann, the auteur filmmaker, and Martin, the Oscar-winning costume and set designer, share and bring to their work are immediately apparent in the vast five-storey, 1980-square-metre Anglo-Italianate Gramercy Park townhouse they’ve called home since 2016.

“As soon as we walked in, it was the sheer volume of the space and the fact that it was 8.5-metres wide, which is so rare in New York,” remembers Martin, affectionately known to everyone as CM. “There’s space to be together but there’s space to be apart.”

The couple embarked on a three-month “crash and burn renovation” before they moved in, transitioning the former three-family home into a single-family residence. “It’s been more of a decorating process than a massive renovation,” Martin recalls. “It was really about finding a quality of life for our family.”

Professionally, Martin describes herself as “in service to Baz’s overall vision”, but in the family home she takes full creative control. “CM drives all of that,” confirms Luhrmann. “In our work it’s absolutely much more collaborative, to some degree.”

The home is an effortless mix of antique and modern sensibilities.

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The couple’s children, Lillian, 15, and William, 13, might describe the entrance as like “coming into the Munsters’ house” but for Martin, who’s no fan of open-plan living, it’s about instantly creating that drama. “There’s a reason people had entryways. Then a visitor gets an entirely different feeling moving through other rooms. There’s a rhythm to that experience — it’s theatrical. You’re not just going from one untextured space to another.”

The ‘green room’ on the ground floor is a place to house Martin’s well-travelled reference library (on stunning acacia wood bookshelves), while the grand dining table and multitude of bentwood chairs, which Martin began collecting during production of 2001’s *Moulin Rouge*, is where the family hosts regular dinner parties. >>

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE in the living room, Terrace console from West Elm; hat from the set of *Moulin Rouge*. In the powder room, Catherine Martin for Mokum Splendour wallpaper from James Dunlop Textiles. Baz Luhrmann on the staircase; Catherine Martin for Mokum Majorelle wallpaper from James Dunlop Textiles; Luhrmann wears Acne Studios coat and pants and Sunspel T-shirt. In the ‘green room’, lounge upholstered with Catherine Martin for Mokum Leopardo fabric from James Dunlop Textiles.



PHOTOGRAPHER: EMILY ANDREWS (INTERIORS)



« Original 19th-century green tiles framing the fireplace inspired the deep red and green decor, which includes Martin's own striking Majorelle wallpaper in Emerald. The designer re-covered a 12-year-old Restoration Hardware sofa in deep green and gave a bespoke red velvet touch-up to an armchair that was in Martin's childhood home and has followed her through university and numerous continents. "Maximalism hides a multitude of sins and so in the spaces where there's a lot of traffic, I do tend to go for highly patterned and eclectic combinations that allow for red wine spillage, dogs, children..."

In contrast, the cool and icy hues of the second floor's 'white room' is all about finding calm among chaos. "We call it the adults' room," Luhrmann says with a laugh. "That's where CM and I go in this noisy, always busy house, to sit in a kind of serene environment to be with each other."

There are the nods to their professional lives as well: a top hat from *Moulin Rouge*; a Douglas Kirkland portrait of the couple on set; and an antique Thonet side table, taken from the set of their 2008 film *Australia*. But the most significant piece for the couple is housed on the top floor. "It's the original Hawaiian shirt that Leonardo DiCaprio wore in *Romeo + Juliet*. I'd say it's the

ABOVE Catherine Martin in her bedroom; Catherine Martin for Mokum La Palma wallpaper from James Dunlop Textiles. Avalon rattan bar console from CB2; antique mirror; Polarise and Partisan collage artworks by Anthony White. Martin wears J Crew Collection dress. *Details, last pages.*

most iconic piece for us," says Martin. "It's a special memory." The top floor serves purely as Luhrmann's creative cave: a place he can work, sleep, plot and plan until all hours of the night. "It's like an art studio," he explains. "It's also where my daughter says the 56 conga-liners go when they turn up, or the lesbians with the long cigarettes and dancing bears — that's where the circus is."

Martin's self-described sanctuary is her bedroom. Encircled by wallpaper from her Mokum collection (a new range is slated for late 2020), a Tracey Boyd bed frame and another artwork from her friend Anthony White, it's a place for the designer to retreat and relax. "I meditate and I watch TV in there. I can shut the door and just have a minute to myself."

The couple — who are said to be contemplating a film on the story of rock'n'roll's most famous rebel, Elvis Presley — say they plan to undertake a major renovation of the home in late 2020. For Luhrmann, that means diving head first into the network of subterranean coal cellars, which run beneath the back garden. "It's like there are secret underground rooms. I'm like, 'Oh, I can see some wine going in here'. There's so much more to this house than I think we even know. We're just getting started." **VL** *The Catherine Martin for Mokum range is available at James Dunlop Textiles; jamesdunloptextiles.com*