

# Retro Metro

By Nicole Pajer

For flower power or power suits,  
it took a team to reproduce the  
'60s on AMC's Mad Men.

Photographs Courtesy of AMC



Jon Hamm as Don Draper, dressed for success.





## FROM THE BUSTLING BULLPEN AT STERLING COOPER

TO DON DRAPER'S POLISHED POWER SUITS, IT'S THE INTRICATE ON-SCREEN DETAILS THAT BROUGHT *MAD MEN* TO LIFE OVER THE PAST SEVEN SEASONS. AS MOURNFUL FANS TOASTED THE MAY 17 FINALE — OVER *MAD MEN* MARTINIS, NO DOUBT — THE STYLE-OBSESSED WERE LIKELY MUSING: SO HOW *DID* MEGAN DRAPER SNAG THE PERFECT SHAG RUG FOR HER LAUREL CANYON BUNGALOW? AND HOW DID IDA BLANKENSHIP END UP WITH THOSE ON-THE-NOSE KNICKKNACKS ON HER DESK?



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Jessica Paré, as Megan Draper, serenades her husband with "Zou Bisou Bisou" in a sexy black mini-dress; Megan struts her stuff at the airport in a blue chiffon baby-doll; Vincent Kartheiser and Alison Brie as Pete and Trudy Campbell; Rich Sommer as ad exec Harry Crane in early and late-'60s looks. This page: Don in daytime and evening attire; Jay R. Ferguson as fringe-coated copywriter Stan Rizzo; Anne Dudek as a pregnant Francine Hanson, with January Jones, as Betty Francis, in a silk brocade romper; some of the many looks of Peggy Olson (Elisabeth Moss), whose style evolved as she climbed the corporate ladder.



According to the team behind the scenes of the Madison Avenue-based drama, it all comes down to research.

Prior to each season, *Mad Men*'s extensive crew spent hours scouring vintage stores and combing through catalogs, articles and newspaper clippings for anything pertaining to the 1960s. From there, everything went into a file until it was time to be referenced. And when series creator—executive producer Matthew Weiner handed out copies of his latest script, the real magic began.

"The script is our guide," said production designer Dan Bishop before the show took its final bow. "We'll go through that and make notes of the references that Matt makes for each episode. We draw pictures of things to get built and go out looking for locations to accommodate the scene."

The next step: sketch out a floor plan and confer with the episode's director to make sure that a scene can be blocked in a particular way. At this point, Bishop (a five-time Emmy nominee for his work on the show and a winner for HBO's *Carnivale*) and his team would loop in other parties, such as set decorator Claudette Didul (a three-time Emmy nominee for *Mad Men*).

"Using the knowledge I have collected over the years and referencing our research files, I'll team up with Claudette to go through the architectural elements of the set," Bishop explained. "She will then begin laying out the furniture plans and working in the details of the décor."



## Props



Didul's role involved scavenging for everything from chimneys to artwork, rugs, couches and plants at antique shops and elsewhere. Her success in decorating the scenes always came down to her treasure-hunting persistence.

"Most of the furniture on set is old," Didul said. "It's not stuff that I found at Room & Board. We occasionally will make a few things, but the majority of it is vintage and I take a lot of pride in keeping it that way."

Tasked with determining whether a roll of '60s-era Scotch tape should be yellow or white was propmaster Ellen Freund. "I handle the tiny stuff," she explained. "I'm looking for things like period-correct sandwich Baggies and ballpoint pens."

To track down accessories such as vintage eyeglasses and briefcases, Freund scoured Etsy and eBay. She also had her team create items that were unobtainable, such as snack foods and cereal boxes. Beyond that, she got creative in her quest for the quintessential props. "We find a lot of goodies through people's parents," she explained. "Any friend or production assistant on the show... if their parents or grandparents have lived in a house for more than thirty years, we ask to raid their basements. And it's remarkably successful."





Opposite: Betty, in a houndstooth coat and leather gloves, visits an East Village flophouse in search of a young violinist; Don gets behind an 8mm triple-lens movie camera; Mason Vale Cotton as Bobby Draper, with his period-correct breakfast; Christina Hendricks, as Joan Holloway, shows her skill at the accordion; Kartheiser stands in line with a Bonwit Teller box. This page: No vintage detail went unobserved on *Mad Men*. Newspapers were re-created — exactly and in their entirety — for events such as the 1969 moon landing. The chip-and-dip server was a wedding gift to *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner and his wife; it is now in the Museum of the Moving Image. Other items included restaurant menus and candy boxes, as well as personal belongings like medals, passports and wallets — and a mysterious package with items from Don's past. In season four, Don placed this full-page ad in the *New York Times* denouncing tobacco after client Lucky Strike left Sterling Cooper.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1969

## Why I'm quitting Tobacco.

Recently, my advertising agency ended a long relationship with Lucky Strike Cigarettes. And I'm relieved.

For over twenty-five years, we devoted ourselves to peddling a product for which good work is irrelevant, because people can't stop themselves from buying it. A product that never improves, causes illness, and makes people unhappy.

But there was money in it. A lot of money.

In fact, our entire business depended on it. We knew it wasn't good for us, but we couldn't stop.

And then, when Lucky Strike moved their business elsewhere, I realized, here was my chance to be someone who can sleep at night because I know what I'm selling doesn't kill my customers.

So as of today, Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce will no longer take tobacco accounts. We know it's going to be hard.

If you're interested in cigarette work, here's a list of agencies that do it well: BBDO, Leo Burnett, McCann Erickson, Cutler Gleason & Chaough, and Benton & Bowles.

As for us, we welcome all other business, because we're certain that our best work is still ahead of us.

Sincerely,

*Don Draper*

Donald F. Draper  
Creative Director  
Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce



Set  
Decoration







Opposite: Cocktails were tantamount to office supplies at Sterling Cooper. This page, clockwise from top left: A vintage television console and Preway conical fireplace anchor Megan's L.A. pad; mid-century patio furniture; Jared Harris, as Lane Pryce, with Robert Morse and John Slattery as agency honchos Bertram Cooper and Roger Sterling; Don Draper's wrought-iron patio set — designed by Arthur Umanoff — was from the '60s, and the seats were reupholstered for the show; the blue pendant lamp seen in Don and Megan's apartment was found in a home in Pasadena; Roger Sterling's 1962 desk lamp was designed by Giancarlo Mattiolo and has been exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art; Don's leather recliner and ottoman were designed by Lied Mobler and made in Norway.

While Bishop, Didul and Freund were busy bringing the set to life, costume designer Janie Bryant came in to style the characters. After watching vintage movies and looking through '60s magazines and newspapers for inspiration, Bryant (a four-time Emmy nominee for *Mad Men* and a winner for HBO's *Deadwood*) would start fabric-swatching and sketching costume concepts for the various actors.

"I'll work with vintage vendors that sell me items directly," said Bryant, for whom wardrobe design is all about capturing the tone and mood of each episode. "I'll browse through vintage stores to try and find the perfect piece or I'll go to the incredible costume houses in Los Angeles. Don Draper, for instance, has this mysterious and elusive quality about him. I loved the idea that his many gray suits are like his armor. The suit is his uniform. The details are very minimal."

She dressed Roger Sterling, on the other hand, in more provocative pinstripes with monogram cufflinks





and showy, expensive ties. Beyond the principals, Bryant was responsible for styling 200 to 300 background actors on any given episode.

The charm behind *Mad Men* was always its ability to take viewers back in time to a world of chic sheaths and cigarette smoke. It's due to a crew that worked tirelessly to find the perfect items — but they all agree that it's a job that isn't always seamless.

Take, for instance, the IBM 360 computer that appeared in season seven. That wasn't something sitting around at the corner store. "We had the entire staff looking for parts around the country," Bishop said. "We did massive amounts of research and had to learn all about the IBM model. Eventually, we located the main board from a guy in Rhode Island, but that was just one of the parts. We had to clean it up, build a custom steel case for it and wire it so that the lights would flash."

Assembling the office flowers for this year's Valentine's Day episode was a large-scale production. First Freund had to track down period green-glass vases. Her team rifled through old newspapers with Valentine's Day ads to find out not only which flowers were available in New York in February 1969, but how they were arranged. Freund had to then create and re-create the various displays over the next nine days, as they were grabbed and passed around so many times in the episode.





Opposite: Don Draper's Manhattan apartment; Don gives his children a peek at his past (playing the kids were Mason Vale Cotton, Kiernan Shipka, and as the youngest, Evan and Ryder Londo); the Draper kitchen; Megan and Don entertaining the neighbors. This page, clockwise from top left: Allan Havis and Harry Hamlin, as ad men Lou Avery and Jim Cutler, with the agency's precious IBM 360 computer; colorful mod couches and abstract art clearly signaled the '60s; smoking was practically *de rigueur* in the office — and rotary phones, of course, as well as IBM Selectric typewriters.

Even the show's mastermind was astonished by the wizardry of his team in bringing the *Mad Men* world to life. "Almost every day when I would go to that set and walk in and see a three-dimensional representation — it would so exceed my imagination that I never got used to it," Weiner said in May, as the season closed in on its final episodes. "It was an emotional experience." And though he created the blueprints for what ultimately appeared on screen, Weiner credits his renowned production crew for drilling down and nailing every detail.

"I'd say, for example, '[Roger] Sterling is reading the paper in bed,' and Ellen would say, 'Well it's four in the afternoon. I think Roger has already seen the *New York Times*, and the *Herald Tribune* just went out of business. If you want him reading the paper, it's going to be sort of weird. Do you want to just give him a magazine? How about a *Playboy*?' I could never really get over the completeness of the environment."

For a series that has won the Emmy as outstanding drama series four times, it's not surprising that in the crafts departments of *Mad Men*, no stone ever went unturned. Said Bishop: "Every little thing is scrutinized." ☺