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## Michael C. Hall's Spanish-Style Renovation

The Los Angeles actor enlists interior designer Kishani Perera for a transformation that combines elegance and edge

Written by **Melissa Goldstein** Photographed by **Joe Schmelzer**



In the dining room, a trio of smoky glass pendant lights from Lawson-Ferning hangs over a 13-foot farm table.



Architect (obby Rees restored the 1920s house to its original Spanish-inspired style.

If “match the powder room to its celebrity owner” were a game (and it should be), we’d easily pair Michael C. Hall with his guest bath: a crisp, enigmatic retreat with black subway tile and an anatomical light fixture grasping a bulb in its palm. “I can’t deny the resonance of disembodied hands,” jokes Hall, best known for his roles as a sympathetic killer in *Dexter* and a mortician in *Six Feet Under*. It was this “pocket of rock and roll in

the midst of a grand and austere main floor,” in Hall’s words, that helped sell him on his 1920s Spanish-style abode in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles, as well as on the mastermind behind its aesthetic—Kishani Perera, L.A.-based interior designer and owner of home decor store Rummage. “That little space has tons of personality,” Perera says of the room. “When the developer who originally hired me was selling the house, he told me some people thought it was too weird. But I knew the right person would love it—and he did.”



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Loved it so much, in fact, that Hall hired Perera when he moved into the two-level, 4,000-square-foot residence. (The designer had already collaborated with architect Bobby Rees on an extensive nine-month remodel of the home, which included the construction of a bell tower and the exposing of the master bedroom's original ceiling beams.) In terms of decor, Hall was hardly starting from scratch; his impressive collection of statement pieces ranged from a stunning silver-and-gold herringbone-patterned console he discovered at the Rose Bowl flea market

to a Vivian Maier print. “He has the most amazing objects ever—the coolest tchotchkes of any client,” Perera says. The mission, then, was to incorporate his existing possessions with new ones in a cohesive way that honored his self-proclaimed “sense of symmetry and earthiness.”



Watch the transformation: From dated finishes to a symphony of sleek grays and whites, the kitchen embodies the graceful renovation.



**1. Play to Your Space** Architect Bobby Rees's remodel resulted in a 20-foot-high entryway with sight lines reaching all the way to the top of the second floor. "I thought, 'We have to do something cool and dramatic here,'" says Perera, who hung an Arteriors chandelier composed of vintage glass bottles to draw attention to the altitude without blocking the light.

**2. Break It Up** In the living room, Perera paired a leather chair from the 1800s with a piano stool in a corner to "create a moment away from the rest of the seating." The tête-à-tête arrangement also makes the room more inviting. "It seems very formulaic when you just have a sofa and chairs," she says. "I like to have multiple seating areas—so you have a lot of things to look at."



Arteriors' Sedman Chandelier dominates the entryway.



A 19th-century leather chair adds character to the living room.

**3. Pick Your Opening** The barn door separating the living and dining areas is a must-have of the moment. But the monumental rustic touch doesn't work just anywhere: "You can't force it," says Perera, who recommends a wide and tall opening (in this case, about nine feet high by eight feet wide), as well as a room that works when either open or closed. For Hall's home, she installed a reproduction made from alder wood with custom fabricated iron brackets and a track.

**4. Splurge on Comfort** "When we met, Michael told me that he had some really cool pieces that were good to look at but weren't necessarily comfortable," says Perera. To balance out the mix with items that were both beautiful and functional, she purchased a pair of worn leather early-20th-century chairs from JF Chen for the library, and stuck to luxurious washed-linen textiles in the master bedroom.





**5. Restrict Palette, Explode Texture** "Cream linen pillows on a cream linen sofa is boring," says Perera. "But a monochromatic palette doesn't have to be." The family room features a neutrals-heavy color scheme with an interplay of diverse textures—fuzzy throw pillows from Lawrence of La Brea and a vintage leather sofa among them.

**6. Bring in Uninvited Elements** "I like to incorporate things that don't belong," says Perera. She and Hall moved one of his prized pieces, a citrus-hued midcentury bench from West Hollywood design boutique Orange, into his otherwise sleek, grayed-out kitchen to make the space pop. Perera also recommends a table lamp on a kitchen counter: "I put drip-glaze lamps everywhere because they warm up a space so quickly and work in modern or traditional decor," she says.



CLOCKWISE: FROM TOP A vintage typewriter and a pair of Joseph Albers prints form one of many unique vignettes. A photograph of Native American chef Sitting Bull is showcased in a hanging mirror. Succulents and ceramic vessels top a built-wood coffee table. The Art Deco-styled console was discovered by Hall at a flea market.



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**7. Put a Sink on It** An easy way to revolutionize a bathroom, regardless of its size? Forgo the typical basin. In the guest bath, Perera placed a sink on a vintage library cart, using the push-rail to hang hand towels. In the master bath, she commissioned a custom vanity that reads more like a dresser to add a sense of visual substance.

**8. Sometimes It Pays to Follow Trends** Yes, subway tile is everywhere, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't go there. "Even though some of my clients think it's overused now, I think it's classic," says Perera, who featured black, gray, and white versions throughout the home. "It's been around for a million years, and it will be around for another million."

## SIX QUESTIONS FOR MICHAEL C. HALL

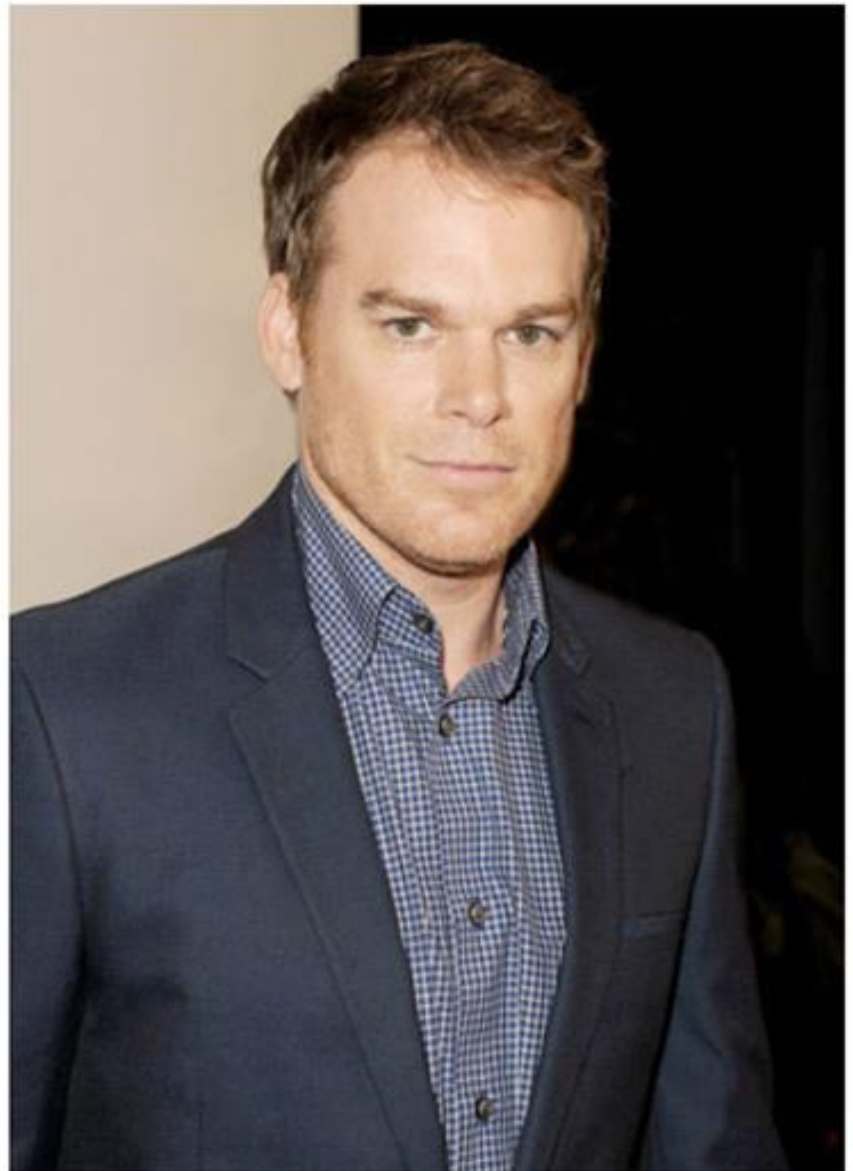
The Hollywood leading man proves he knows more than a thing or two about interiors

**WHERE DID YOUR INTEREST IN DESIGN COME FROM?** I spent 10 weeks studying and living in Austria when I was in college, and fell in love with the art and architecture of fin de siècle Vienna. That was probably the first time I became aware of an interest.

**WHAT'S THE FIRST THING PEOPLE COMMENT ON WHEN THEY COME OVER?** The generous proportions of the rooms and the abundant light.

**ASIDE FROM THE POWDER ROOM, WHAT IMMEDIATELY ATTRACTED YOU TO THE HOUSE?** The fusion of Spanish style architecture with a colonial floor plan was a turn on.

**IS THERE ANYTHING THAT MADE ITS WAY INTO YOUR ART COLLECTION IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER?** The photo of Sitting Bull with the caption "Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children" was left in the Hollywood house I owned previously. I think that one will always stay with me.





**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PIECE IN THE HOUSE?** The orange bench in the kitchen, which is mid-1960s and originally from a German university. Its sturdy structure and bold color soothes and reassures me. And it is remarkably comfortable. It's a forever piece, for sure.

**GIVEN THE FACT THAT YOU RECENTLY PUT YOUR PLACE ON THE MARKET, WHAT WILL YOUR DEFINING MEMORY OF IT BE?** The way it feels. Simultaneously open and cozy. Private yet inviting. There are so many wonderful places to be, but I think my favorite spot is sitting at the head of the dining table, looking down its length with a view straight out the living room window.



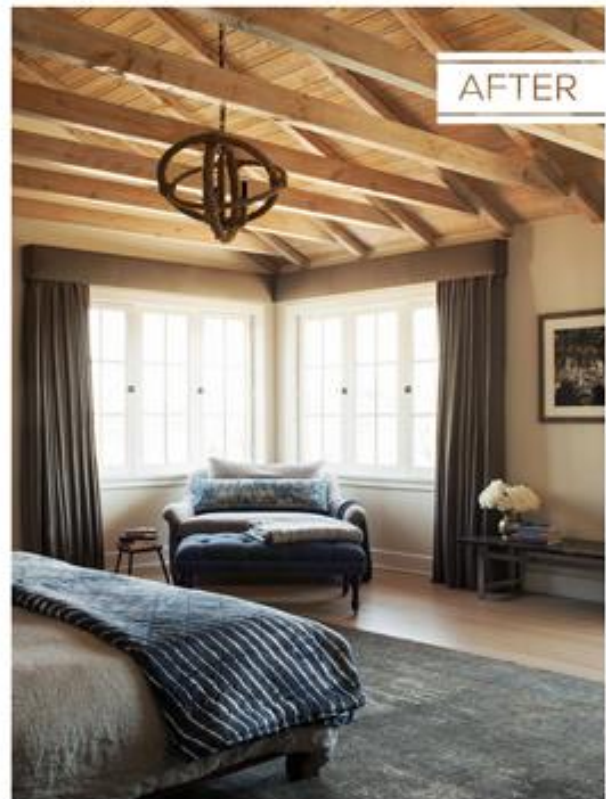
**9. Catch the Light** A window can draw attention to what's in front of it as well as what's outside. Perera suspended a wood-and-shell mobile off of Hall's built-in bookshelves (which he designed) to give the decorative piece its due. "I wanted to see it out and about," she says. "It's like a piece of jewelry on the window, and since it hangs on the bookshelf it still has sufficient breathing room."

**10. Be a Groupie** Perera turned low-traffic countertops and surfaces into beguiling displays by arranging Hall's manifold knickknacks and keepsakes in strategic ways. "I like balance—it's my main principle when it comes to accessorizing," she says. "You want your eye to rest, so vary heights and materials; don't put too many little things together, because it just looks messy. And mix materials and types of objects in collections rather than using all glass, for example, or all books."



BEFORE

The bedroom, pre-renovation, when the home's exposed beams were hidden under drywall.



AFTER

Post-renovation, the expanded master bedroom has a rustic-luxe sensibility.