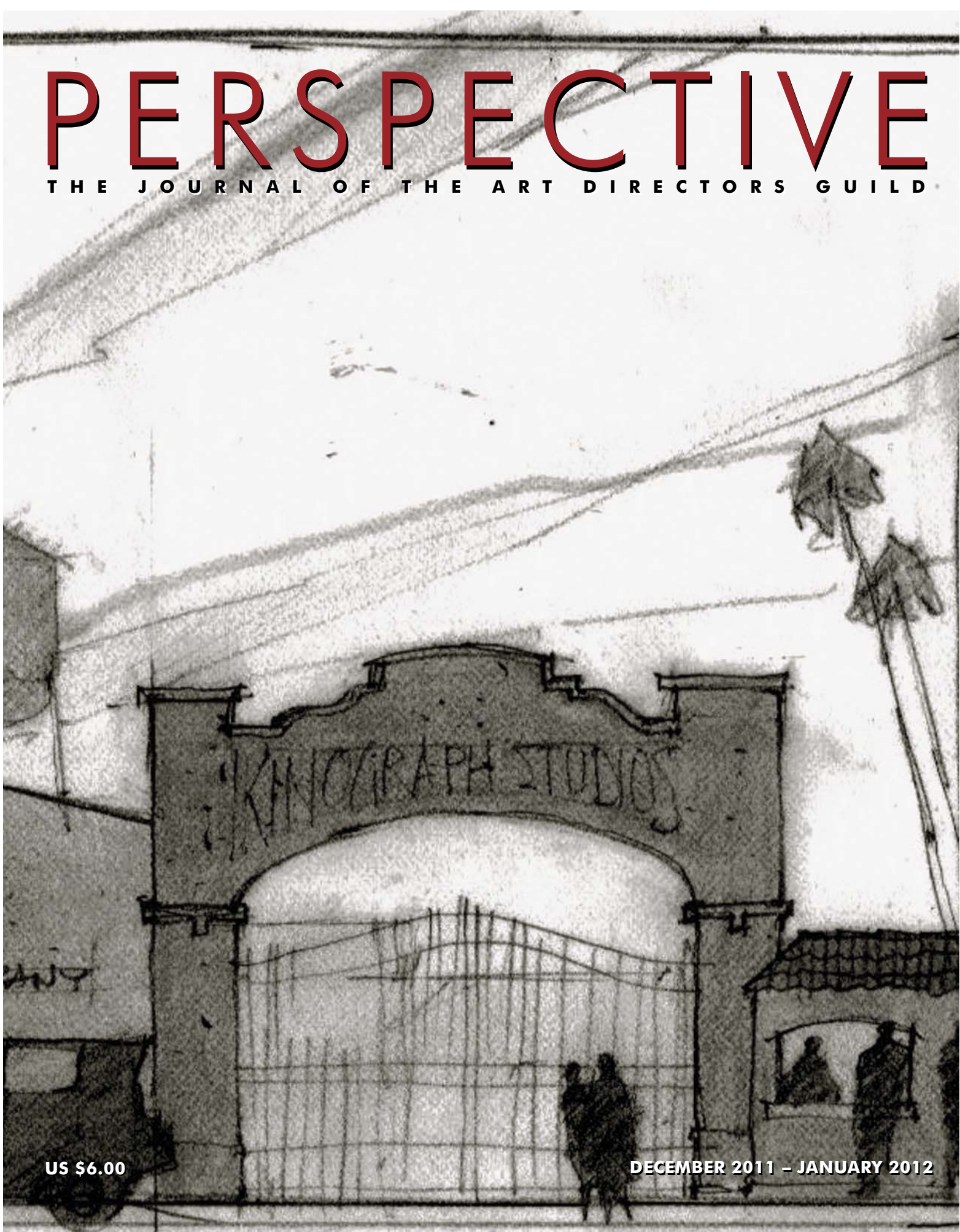


# PERSPECTIVE

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Above: A concept rendering by John Kretschmer of a motel room near Baltimore, executed in Google SketchUp 8 and made more photo-realistic with IDX Renditioner, a SketchUp plugin from IMSI Design in Novato, CA. Right: Terrorist suspects, Raqim Faisel (played by Omid Abtahi) and Aileen Morgan (Marin Ireland) holed up in the motel room, built on stage in Charlotte, NC, where the series is produced. The knotty pine paneling was custom-milled for the set.



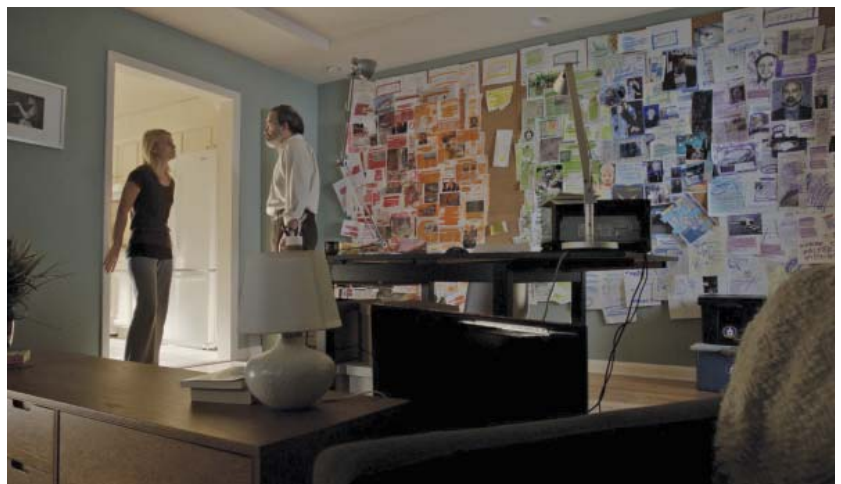
Photographs Showtime Networks

# It Was a GAS STATION Just Yesterday

by John Kretschmer, Production Designer

Shooting a television pilot is like sailing a brand-new ship into uncharted waters where, in very short order, a newly assembled crew must join together and learn the vessel's ropes so they may navigate the perils of the sea. The script and shooting schedule serve as navigation charts while the crew of the pilot sail toward their destination—the elusive series pickup. Taking a successful pilot to series is much like boarding that same vessel for her second voyage. After a restful stay at port, some of the original

Above: The Brody house built on stage in Charlotte, NC, is the home of Nicholas Brody (played by Damian Lewis), a U.S. Marine gunnery sergeant who was rescued by Delta Force after being held by Al-Qaeda as a prisoner of war for eight years, and his wife Jessica Brody (Morena Baccarin). The hard ceilings over the set open in clamshell fashion when not in use for fire safety. Glass-front cabinets and updated pulls were added to give the kitchen a fresher look. Below, left: Another SketchUp concept rendering by John Kretschmer, this time of the rainbow wall in Carrie's apartment. Below, right: The finished set, also built on stage in Charlotte. Carrie Mathison's (Claire Danes) research and color coding reveals a pattern that is solved by her mentor, Saul Berenson (Mandy Patinkin).





**Top:** Kretschmer's SketchUp study for one of the CIA's operations rooms at Langley, VA. **Opposite page, top:** The dressing in the finished set is purposefully less than state-of-the-art to suggest budget cuts and bureaucratic repression. **Above:** Producer Michael Klick initiated a clever switch so we could utilize the unfinished fourteenth floor of the NASCAR Headquarters building in Charlotte, originally scouted for a CIA surveillance post, for this long interrogation scene. The move introduced a visually interesting setting that promoted the dramatic tension.

crew, along with many new hands, provision the ship for a much longer journey. Their collective duty is to keep the established course, plot new directions when obstacles appear, and further test the ship, and the waters, as it sails over the horizon.

Joining *Homeland* as its new Production Designer, my job was to keep the ship performing as she had been, while bringing my own skills and ideas to the longer journey. For the pilot, filmed like the series in Charlotte, North Carolina, Production Designer Patti Podesta and her team did a marvelous job establishing the look of the project. Six months later, when I began to prepare for the series, we faced conditions that would seriously challenge maintaining Patti's look. The pilot shot in the dead of winter; the series would start production in the high heat of summer (with a significant number of pilot reshoots required, snow included). Several interior locations from the pilot had to be adapted as stage sets and one signature location was no longer available. And, perhaps most challenging for the series, the pilot had filmed its Middle Eastern sequences in the Middle East! Yes, the bar had been sufficiently raised, and my challenge was to hold onto the identity of the pilot, while forging ahead into a significantly different production environment.



#### INT./EXT. BRODY HOUSE

The Brody house location, chosen for the pilot, is a circa 1960 sprawling ranch house with clean, modern lines, an open floor plan and low ceilings. When the house was redesigned for the stage, the already long site lines could be extended. While increasing the visual depth of the space, the prominence of the eight-foot ceilings were increased as well. Indeed, this particular dimension is probably the most grounding in terms of making the set feel like the pilot location.

Planning such low ceilings on stage caused a bit of chin scratching in my initial meetings with gaffer Tommy Sullivan and key grip Eric Jones. The open floor plan dictated that the ceiling cover the entire set, which in turn, drew the attention of the sound crew and the local fire marshal. In order to appease the latter, Art Director Matthew Jacobs and construction coordinator Roger Scruggs devised a clam-shell system which opened up the ceilings (to expose the stage's sprinklers) when they were not in use. Eric Jones and his crew supplied the rigging and operation for the ceiling system.

This mighty effort succeeded in that we are able to preserve the cinematographic restraints from the



pilot, which the director of photography, Nelson Cragg, embraced whole-heartedly. Practical lighting and low camera angles provide a seamless transition between the pilot and the series, and help set the look for the series. Ironically, my sailing analogy is not lost when the Brody house interior set is not in use. With all of the ceiling flats hoisted into their upright position, the whole contraption resembles a Chinese junk.

**Above: Kretschmer's wonderfully detailed SketchUp rendering of the entrance to the 1978 Mecklenburg County Courthouse, dressed as the Department of State in Washington, DC. This concept rendering shows the scripted metal detectors, dimensional signage and a 10' x 30' WPA-era mural that would plug a large window at the opposite end of the lobby. Illustrator Helen Ward provided an original painting for the mural which was blown up and digitally printed.**

Right: A concept rendering by Kretschmer, again executed with SketchUp and IDX Renditioner, of a library in an Iraqi mountain villa. Existing windows were replaced with French doors. Moorish corbels, carved from styrofoam and grained to match the beams, gusset the archways. while the existing curved window in the gas station's office played nicely for its conversion into a bathroom. Inset: A location photograph of the vacant gas station in Charlotte that was converted to the villa. Far right: A plan view of the villa was generated from the same SketchUp model shown at right. Opposite page, bottom: Two production photographs of the villa interior, showing the library and the bath. Brody re-lives his time in captivity under the care of Abul Nazir (played by Navid Negahban).



#### INT./EXT. CIA HEADQUARTERS

To depict the CIA Headquarters, Patti Podesta and director Michael Cuesta chose a building designed by Marcel Breuer, the defunct Philip Morris, USA factory in Concord, North Carolina. This excellent choice is very similar to the brutalist architecture and sprawling acreage of the CIA's Original Headquarters Building (OHB) built in 1956 in Langley, Virginia. Providing a signature look for the pilot, the voluminous Philip Morris plant also showed promise for hosting the series and providing its soundstages.

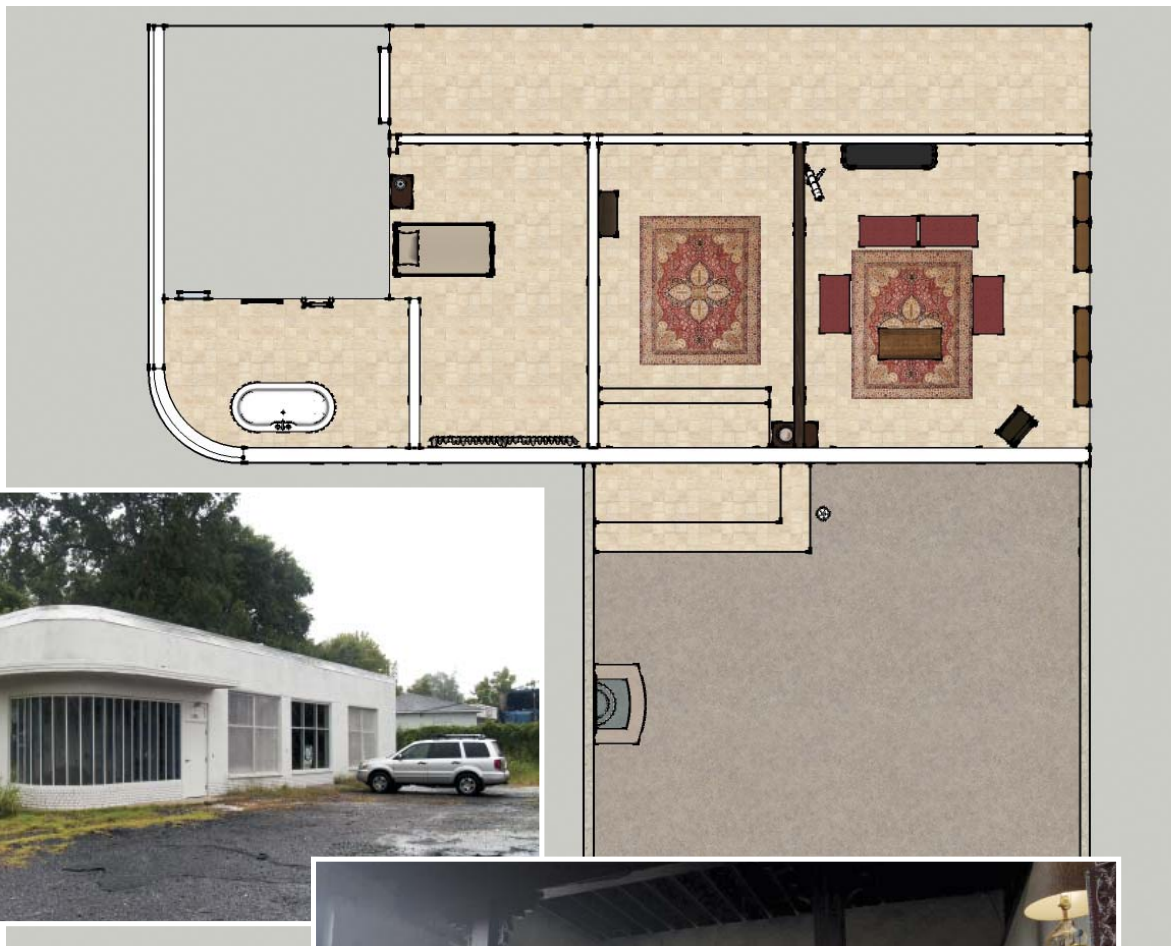
As soon as I was hired for *Homeland*, however, I learned that the Philip Morris complex had been leased to another production and was no longer available to us. I had begun my research on the CIA in order to determine how best to present the organization, and I hired my daughter, Olivia, as a research assistant with the commission to find everything she could about a super-secret organization. She took the bait.

In 1991, a massive addition to Langley, the New Headquarters Building (NHB), tripled the size of the

campus (now known as the George Bush Center for Intelligence) with a modern, glass and steel building that fully connects to the OHB. The NHB features a sky-lit lobby and vaulted glass atria. Multiple art galleries and a collection of thematic sculptures, such as artist Jim Sanborn's famously unsolved Kryptos, work in concert to define the CIA as a truly modern institution.

After taking a comprehensive look at the past and current state of the CIA, series creator Michael Cuesta and I decided to gravitate toward the newer look. We scouted for a location that resembles the NHB, and found a satisfying match in Charlotte's University Research Park. Surrounded by forest, the glass, steel and concrete building features a variety of interior spaces, from windowless conference rooms and long sterile hallways, to vaulted atria that are intersected by flying sidewalks. This variety of environments would serve the show well, enabling matched reshoots for the pilot, while providing a new look.

The CIA's executive fifth-floor offices were constructed on stage, with windows and steel



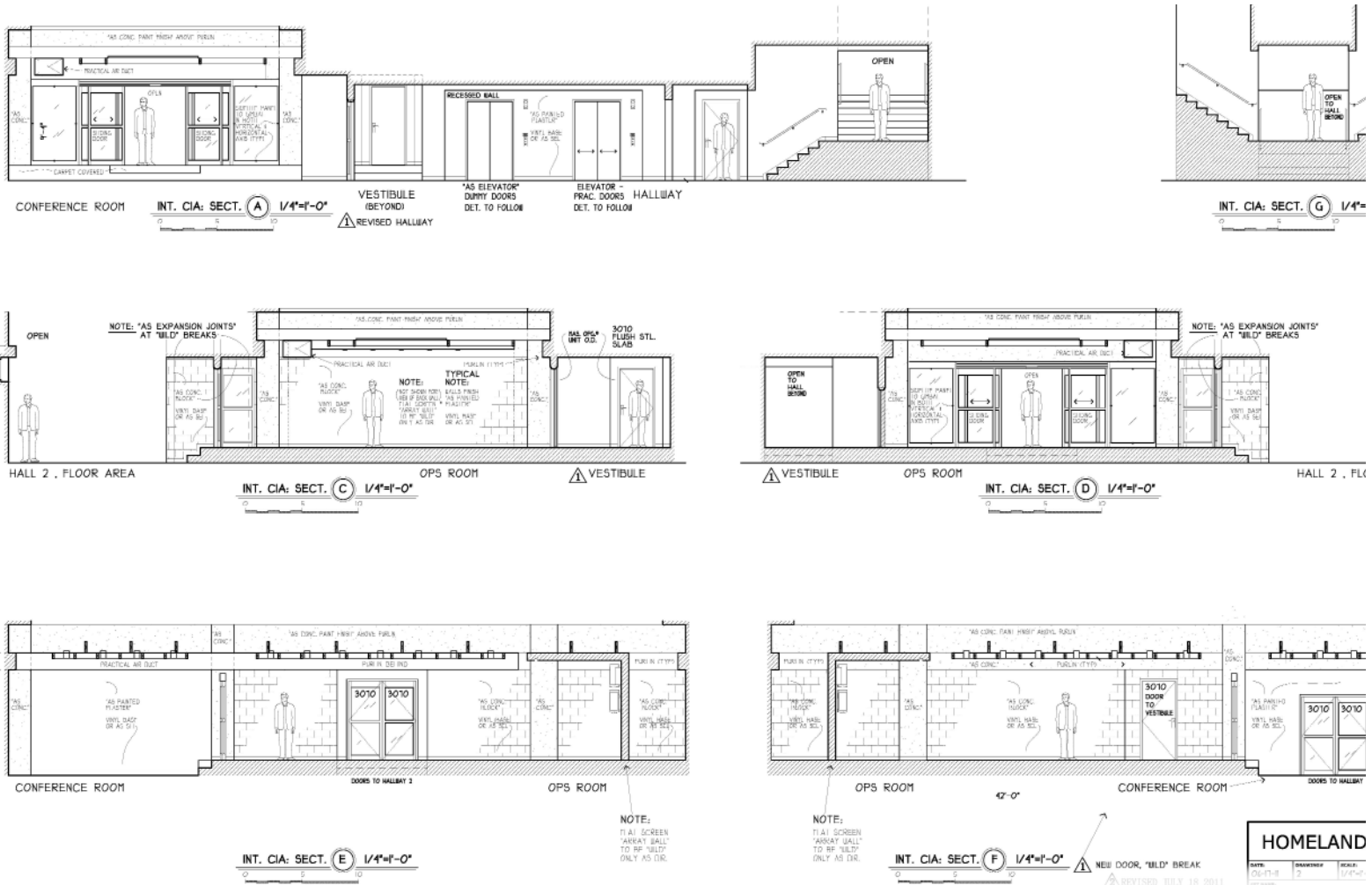
framing to match the new location. Matthew Jacobs created an 80' x 20' day/night photo backing, utilizing the location building itself as the image, thus providing a virtual book-matched building outside the windows on stage. Set decorator Summer Eubanks dressed each office to reflect its occupant, using detailed notes from Michael Cuesta and Mandy Patinkin, who plays Saul. In the common spaces, she installed artwork inspired by Kryptos and other modern works at Langley.



Far beneath the fifth floor, at the heart of *Homeland*, is the Operations room, one of dozens at Langley where much of the CIA's heavy lifting takes place. Executive producer Alex Gansa wanted the OPS room to reflect the long history of the CIA, one where the skeletal remains of the cold war are still evident. Michael Cuesta and I developed a windowless, subterranean space, a concrete-pillared room that's been rehabilitated from the ashes, and up-fit with the current digital technology.

On a previous job, I had visited the actual operations room for the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, where I was allowed to take notes but no photographs.





**Above: Assistant Art Director Geoffrey Grimsman used DataCadd 11 to create these digital working drawings for the CIA Operations room, which featured a raised computer floor and perforated metal ceiling panels to avoid the need to install fire sprinklers in the set. It is a windowless subterranean space, a relic of the cold war updated with newer technology.**

I utilized that experience to design the OPS room layout and details. To celebrate the old, I incorporated a raised computer floor, a relic from the last century, which offers both a change in the floor elevation and, in effect, a lowering of the ceiling. In celebration of the new, I incorporated a modular super-computer alongside a couple of analog electronic racks. My original concept also included an Air Force-operated drone pilot console in the room.

The sunken conference room, designed and painted to be similar to that seen in the pilot, is separated from the OPS arena by grocery store sliding glass doors. A suspended ceiling grid with custom light troughs spans the overhead space, connecting the two spaces. In order to satisfy the fire marshal, we used perforated metal drop-panels (pervious and fireproof) here and throughout the CIA complex on stage. After considering several options for the OPS room media wall, I settled upon a form that is slightly less high tech than what I saw at Fort Bragg. Instead of a large seamless video screen, I used an array of individual television monitors. I also

insisted that the video graphics designers limit themselves to a Windows XP look. The yesterday's technology media wall speaks to the bureaucratic weight and budget cuts that are bearing down on the institution. More importantly, less flashy computer graphics keep the story focused on our characters, the operators, who truly are the wizards behind the curtain in the CIA.

### INT./EXT. IRAQI VILLA

It was a gas station just yesterday. That is what a particular decorator would say, deadpan, when being complimented on some huge set dressing job. (If the set was actually a gas station, then she would say it was a church just yesterday.) In the case of *Homeland's* Iraqi villa, I can actually say it used to be a gas station and mean it.

Charlotte is filled with new architectural development, nestled beneath a beautiful canopy of hardwood trees. It is a worthy and fruitful location, but one lacking in the kind of third-world architecture, or any near Eastern or Mediterranean influence, that could help solve the Iraqi villa dilemma. Exterior requirements negated building

HOMELAND			
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<small>           ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN FEET AND INCHES. FRACTIONS ARE IN 16THS OF AN INCH. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, FINISHES ARE AS SHOWN. SEE NOTES FOR MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION DETAILS.         </small>			





a set on stage, so I initially asked for a house that could be deconstructed to a certain extent, and redressed to fit. However, after the initial scouting did not bare fruit, I had to rethink that approach.

Some years ago, Production Designer Alex McDowell said to me (as he was surrounded by a heavy, but portable, library of books), if you do your research well, eventually the set design will present itself to you. So I dug back into the research (albeit more Google image and Flickr, than tangible books) and discovered that a bare-bones masonry structure, cinder block or plaster, that could be up-fitted (as opposed to dressed down) would be the way to go.

The scenes written for the villa evoked its beautiful quality of light. I therefore wanted windows and a large room that could be divided up as needed. I also needed a smaller room with a bay window in order to present a relatively luxurious bathroom. Eventually, the Aha! Moment came: We need an old gas station! But a clean one, that's unoccupied... and not on a busy street. It was a needle-in-a-haystack kind of proposition. But then again, we only needed one.

The location scouts fanned out, and after a few days, as the deadline drew near, I joined in the search myself. Luckily, I doubled back on a street where I was previously distracted by a theater renovation on the opposite side. On the next lap I sighted it: a classic three-bay gas station from the 1950s, with a curved-window office on the corner and a real estate sign perched up front. I took a quick peek in the window, called the location manager, and hurried back to my desk to draw.

Episodic television forces you to develop speed and efficiencies throughout the entire design and building process. Because a large part of my time must be spent in the scouting van and in meetings, I have developed quick-draw skills using Google SketchUp Pro®. On occasion, I can take an extra step, adding light rendering to a model with IDX Renditioner®. Utilizing the latter, on a television schedule, requires a powerful computer and a bit of luck. Usually the first pass on Renditioner will tell you if it is worth pursuing or not. When it works well, the software lets you anticipate the gaffer's job and learn how light will interact with the set. When it does not work well (for example, I find fluorescent lights to be very tricky), you just have to go with the SketchUp output, embellishing it with Photoshop® as needed. When I have the time, and when it works well, rendering is an invaluable tool for the design process. In the case of the villa, the



rendered model spoke very well for what I intended to do within the gas station. The bay door portals allowed for relatively easy window and French door installations, bathing the model in natural light. This conceptualization helped me sell an expensive location build to producer Michael Klick and director Jeffery Nachmanoff. To help close the deal, I even employed Harold Michelson's quote, "My job is to look at nothing and see everything."

Ultimately, the villa's authentic nature seemed to transport the cast and crew to another place and time. When the shooting crew lost power during a thunderstorm, they ingeniously employed the oil lamps that Summer Eubanks had dressed in, and shot the scene by lamp light. A very fine effort by the entire crew...and just to think, it was a gas station just yesterday. **ADG**

**Top: Another concept rendering by Kretschmer, again executed with SketchUp and IDX Renditioner, this time of the bedroom in the Iraqi mountain villa. Above: A window plug with open arches is employed to take the audience half a world away from the vacant Charlotte gas station where this scene was shot.**

SHEET

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