

# CULTURE TYPE

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### SHONDA RHIMES HAS TWO HUGHIE LEE-SMITH PAINTINGS IN STUDY OF HER L.A. HOME

by Victoria L. Valentine



In her home study, Shonda Rhimes talks about Hughie Lee-Smith's 1988 painting "Counterpoise"

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST publishes photos of spectacular, light-filled homes. The magazine's latest feature focuses on the Los Angeles residence of Shonda Rhimes, an Italianate villa she recently renovated where paintings by Hughie Lee-Smith (1915-1999) hang in the study and living room. "His surreal paintings are an obsession of mine," she says.

Rhimes has created, produced, and written multiple award-winning series for ABC ("Grey's Anatomy," "Scandal," "How to Get Away with Murder") and has owned the network's Thursday night lineup for more than a decade. In August 2017, she signed a multiyear deal with Netflix worth more than \$100 million and has eight projects in the works with the streaming service.

The magazine fittingly describes her as a "TV impresario." Rhimes obviously knows how to tell a good story, so there was no need to hire another writer. She penned the feature herself, writing about the transformation she undertook on her Hancock Park home with architect Bill Baldwin and interior designer Michael Smith (who personalized the White House residence for the Obamas).

Built in 1923, the 8,400 square foot home was designed by Elmer Grey (the architect of the Beverly Hill Hotel) and has a historic designation. In the first-person text, Rhimes explains that the goal was "restoring the house to its original glory." The result is a traditional home with personal appeal.

Lined with shelves where her awards are displayed among her books, the study is her favorite space. The fireplace is always lit and she spends an inordinate amount

of time in the room writing scripts. Rhimes filmed a video tour of the study and proudly showed off her paintings.

“When I bought the house. It was kind of a hot mess. It didn’t look anything like it does right now, except for this room,” she says. “This is one of the rooms we kept a little bit almost the way it was and it is my favorite room in the house.”

Two paintings by Lee-Smith hang in the study: “Untitled (Man in a Slum)” (1960) and “Counterpoise” (1988). Lee Smith’s surrealist scenes often situate sole figures in bleak landscapes or in spare theatrical settings. When he depicts more than one subject, they tend to be isolated from one another.

Rhimes notes that there are many cherished items in her home reflect her love of art and history:

It is important to me that objects in my home are meaningful treasures. ... Now my home has the feel of a carefully curated journey through highlights of my love of art, my history, and my education. For instance, I’ve been collecting works by the artist Hughie Lee-Smith for years. His surreal paintings are an obsession of mine. The walls of my living room and library are now dedicated to showcasing his extraordinary work. There is a Phoebe Beasley painting that once belonged to Maya Angelou hanging in my front hall. I keep it there to remind me that there is always a way to be a better writer and a better woman. Some of my favorite books are tucked all over the house-I’m a big believer in books. You can never have too many. Apparently, Rhimes has more than two Lee-Smith paintings. She says the artist’s work hangs in her study and the living room and in the video she declares, “I have a ton of his paintings.”

She adds: “They’re just these very interesting paintings and they all have this very interesting sense of melancholy to them. I just think they’re gorgeous.”