



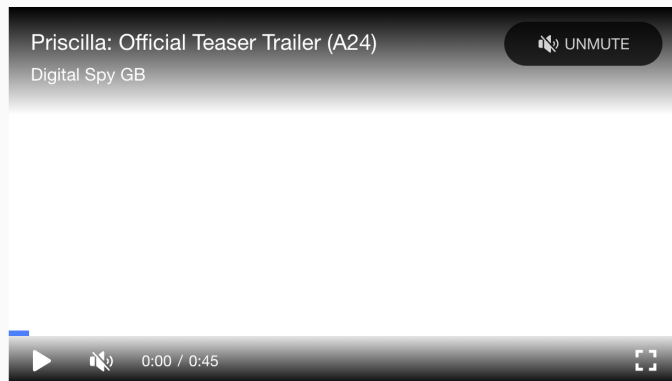
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How Sofia Coppola's *Priscilla* Reimagined Graceland

Production designer Tamara Deverell breaks down how the sets were designed with an impressionistic approach.

BY KELLY ALLEN | PUBLISHED: NOV 04, 2023 7:00 AM EDT

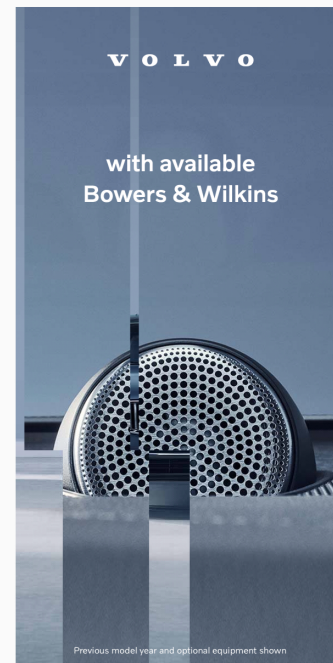
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"Tantalizing," a commercial for vanilla cake declares as a young **Priscilla Presley** paints her toenails on the living room floor at **Graceland** during a scene in writer-director Sofia Coppola's *Priscilla*. The moment in the A24 film—based on Priscilla's 1985 memoir, *Elvis and Me*—captures her entrance into **Elvis Presley's** fairy-tale world that melts into an unexpected existence. Meant to feel like stepping into memories, the movie takes a highly impressionistic approach to the visuals rather than a hyper-accurate one. But since Graceland is such a well-recognized home, Coppola and production designer Tamara Deverell knew it needed to be rooted in reality.

Shooting in Toronto meant building a mini **Graceland** on soundstages. With access to the architectural plans for Graceland, Deverell and her team recreated the basic layout. A few changes were made, including higher ceilings to accommodate the height of actor Jacob Elordi, who plays Elvis. "The furnishings and decor were really what Graceland was in literally three photos, I think, we found of the actual time of Priscilla's earliest days there," Deverell tells *House Beautiful*.

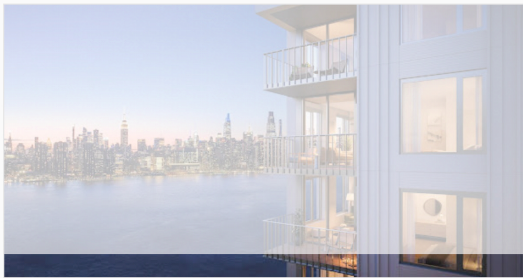




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The sun-dappled main floor is reminiscent of a vintage wedding cake thanks to buttercream-painted walls and delicate drapery in gold and blue. Many set pieces were custom-made—from the basics, like the polished living room sofa, to special items, like Elvis's famous white piano with gold accents. "We sort of took the elements of Graceland that spoke to us—that felt right for us, that felt right for Priscilla's story—and kind of magnified those in a sense," Deverell says.

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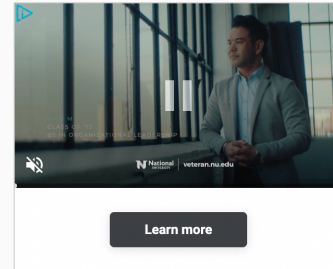
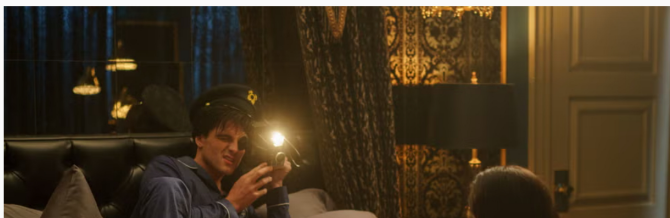
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For Elvis's bedroom, a lack of reference photos from the 1960s led the team to envision a dark man cave drenched in blues, blacks, and golds that reflected his personal style. Padded leather doors (which did exist in Graceland at one point) and thick velvet drapery keep the world out. A mirror over the headboard allows for reflection, while a Jesus statue resembles one the King of Rock 'n' Roll actually had in his room.



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The exterior was shot at a home just outside Toronto that Deverell became familiar with while working on the 2001 film *The Feast of All Saints*. "I remembered it looked like Graceland, and Graceland is kind of that Southern-style mansion," the designer explains. "We did a massive amount of work on the front facade, and VFX [visual effects] did the second floor and the roof."




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A24

Basically, the team created a facade in front of the home's real facade to boost the resemblance to its real-life counterpart. They selected light green for the shutters, which Deverell notes have been many different colors in the past based on research. "It's not exactly the same, but it was close enough," she says. "And really, we're not making a documentary, so we allowed our poetic vision of Priscilla's memories to be the guiding principle of the movie."



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A24

The rest of the property was shot at a separate location, where the team recreated the home's famous music gates and filmed other outdoor scenes.

Apart from Graceland, *Priscilla* features other locations the Presleys were known to frequent. Their Palm Springs home was represented by a midcentury home located in Burlington, Canada, which was designed by a California architect. Giving it a Palm Springs feel required bringing in heaps of palm trees, cacti, and plants for outside and around the pool. Another important set is Elvis's hotel suite in Las Vegas, which at one point in the movie feels like a beating heart due to red flashing lights.

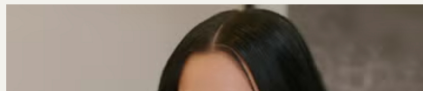
While the backdrops certainly enhance every moment in the film, they're not commanding. "It's a very intimate movie about [Priscilla] and not necessarily about the space around her so much," Deverell says.

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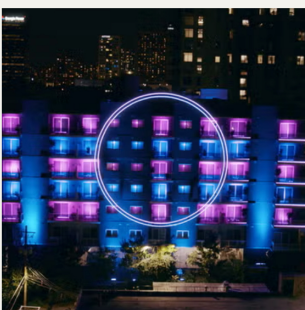
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