

# EATER

## SAN DIEGO

### Paul Basile, The Man Behind Restaurant Design

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*An interview with BASILE Studio principal Paul Basile.*

Welcome to Eater San Diego's new Ask the Restaurant Architect series, kicking off with Paul Basile. His San Diego-based firm **BASILE Studio** just turned 20, and since teaming up with **CH Projects** in 2008, the studio has served up a vast menu of fresh and funky restaurant spaces in San Diego (more recently, a deep sea adventure at Little Italy's **Ironsides**). Below, Basile breaks down his design process and explains why he subscribes to zero interior design magazines.

**1. To date, which of your local restaurant projects has been most extensive/exhaustive and why?**

**Polite Provisions.** We went through every inch of that place and did not stop until some sort of detail was attributed to every piece. The project was really difficult because we were working with a really old structure. It's one thing to remodel, but it was dilapidating while we were trying to rebuild from the inside. The challenge was there were so many linear design details. I felt like there was never a second to breathe and we were constantly challenged with a dilemma.

**2. If you look at each of your projects, there is a fluidity and cohesiveness--similar to a runway collection. How did you attain this aesthetic?**

All our projects have a thread going through. I call it a craftsman touch. We have amazing artisans here, not just "wood" guys. We have craftsmen who specialize in leather, structural steel, decorative steel, CNC operators, glazing, painters, machinist, upholstery. There are so many people that contribute to all of our projects. We try to utilize simple materials but in interesting ways.

### **3. What restaurants around the world have inspired you?**

**Public** in NYC is a classic. Great design and it's held the test of time. There is more, just not many that pop into my head. I'm a bit hypercritical. Which I hope [other architects] are with our work as well. You can tell when someone pours their heart and soul into a project. I tend to find inspiration in larger markets like SF, NY and LA.

### **4. What's another restaurant in San Diego you didn't design but admire the style of?**

**The Patio on Goldfinch** in Mission Hills. They did a good job in the backyard and paid close attention to detail. **Sycamore Den** and **Starlite** are other favorites.

### **5. Anything in the design books you've got cooking?**

A 100-room boutique hotel in Phoenix, **The Found:RE**. We are designing all the interiors of the retail space, patios and rooms. **Juice Saves for CH Projects** should be open in the next week or two. We are finishing retrofitted shipping containers for **Quartyard**, **which is opening in the coming week**.

### **6. At **Fairweather** you've got a beachy vibe with turquoise tiling. Are you constantly finding ways to integrate the SoCal lifestyle into your designs?**

Because we live in Southern California the connection to the outdoors is crucial. We have the most amazing weather here so we can do big signature doors that flip or pivot open. **Ironside** is a more recent example of those.

### **7. How do you and CH Projects' Aرسالun Tafazoli collaborate? What's your process when you approach a new project?**

We've been collaborating almost eight years. The eclectic aspect of **Craft & Commerce** launched all our projects. It's a very different type of collaboration, with weekly meetings. We kind of come up with things to introduce in a space and he comes up with an idea of where he wants to go with it. It depends on what food and drink program it will have and how service will operate then we work through each one individually. It's a fun process.

### **8. How much of the original design concept actually makes it to the finished restaurant?**

I can't tell you how many design elements we don't even use. We go off on a tangent and have five times more than we need. We don't re-use those ideas often, or what we call recycling. We try to be creative and new. We don't Google research. It's a purist approach. We know we are being influenced every day but it's more through our memory bank versus a visual montage. He will come in and have an idea of something he wants to do or shows me a magazine picture of something. I'll say, "OK, let's take this to another level, I will take the color or texture from the idea and work it into something original." Aرسالun is an Ebay junkie--I am too. He buys really cool stuff and is always redressing his spots a bit. I highly respect and love that he does that. People like to come in and see something new and different and like to keep places fresh.

### **9. What design elements are trending here in San Diego, and what's next?**

I don't pay attention to trends. I couldn't tell you. I keep my nose out of magazines and I don't have any subscriptions.

**10. Have you had a design element "fail" or something you wish you designed differently?**

I'm kind of perfectionist in the sense that I don't ever think it's right. It's hard to pick one thing and say it really failed; I think we all find certain things we might have done differently. I look forward to the next project and don't have time to go back and say I could have done this better.

**11. Sounds like you don't hang out at restaurants you design, much like an actor that doesn't watch their own movies.**

I try to go back but I feel weird and I'll pick it apart--especially if I start drinking!

*Hear more from Basile and Tafazoli during a sit-down **design series** kicking off January 22 at Polite Provisions.*