



Meet the Minds Behind Restaurant Design – BASILE Studio

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San Diego-based design, build, and fabrication firm BASILE Studio has established itself as one of the most prolific crafters of Southern California restaurants, recently including Underbelly II, Bankers Hill Bar & Restaurant, Ironside Fish & Oyster, and Polite Provisions. Here, principal Paul Basile talks his architectural and construction inspirations, updates at the office, and beautifully functional spaces.

Did you always know you wanted to be a designer?

Yes, ever since a renowned architect moved in next door to my house when I was 10 years old. He was experimenting with modern design and solar panels –at the time very forward thinking. I was awe-inspired.

What are some of your first memories of design?

Visiting downtown Detroit's metropolitan atmosphere, where the Renaissance Center stood out along with some of the early steel structure buildings. I would later take some classes in college that allowed me to look into some of the more modern and postwar structures, the Chrysler Building included.

Did where or how you grew up influence your career path?



Photos: Recent Projects

I believe it was more of whom I grew up with. My father owned a construction company that built freeways, bridges, and underground utility placement (fiber optics). He was best known for building General Motors' proving grounds, which was only a few miles from where I lived. I was always going to jobsites, and eventually worked in the field with the concrete division.

Is there a challenging project of which you are especially proud?

Honestly, they are all difficult and continue to get more difficult. I never want to just do the same thing again, so the challenge comes from experimenting with new styles and materials. [San Diego's] Polite Provisions was exceptionally fulfilling, as it was a design style that I had not attempted before and each unique element was an opportunity for growth that we met head on.

What are you looking forward to at your office?

We are actually working on a project of our very own. We are busy with our clients—very busy. This is not a bad problem to have, but we need more space. I'm working on expanding BASILE Studio. My staff has been dealing with tight quarters for some time and they deserve it. It will be fun to design something that directly benefits us on a daily basis, plus it's always rewarding to create in a visually interesting space.

What do you find are the most challenging and exciting aspects of your job?

Most challenging is the management of many types of people, from clients to staff to vendors to subcontractors. Everyone has to be handled differently and uniquely. The design, that's the easy part.

Most exciting is taking a design idea and building it—seeing it come to life so quickly is very satisfying. Sometimes we will design something in the morning and have it built the next day. Nothing better to see than a concept become reality.

What is the most important thing to remember when designing a restaurant—both in terms of branding and interiors?

We like to consider everything from branding, service lanes and functions, and customer experience. I'm very meticulous. We think through every last detail because a space can't just look beautiful, it has to function beautifully too. Every aspect has to come together, and then the branding is the icing on the cake.

Is there an architect or designer you most admire? Why?

There are many of both. A few that come to mind: Richard Meier, Oscar Niemeyer, Tom Kundig, John Lautner, Richard Neutra, R.M. Schindler, and A. Quincy Jones. Most often, I find myself drawn to people who have the ability to thread unique vision throughout their careers. Taking a single idea and making it different every time takes creative genius. I admire their ability to convince clients to embrace their ideas and bring them to fruition, which isn't always an easy feat.

What would be your dream project and why?

A high-rise, hands down. I would like to change how they are perceived, mixing up the traditional model with new concepts of mixed use, and explore self-sustaining. It's a vision I have for my career.

If you could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, who would it be?

I have a big interest in energy and how it's exchanged and altered, so Nikola Tesla would be fun. As for designers, the list is way too long but I would start with John Lautner.

Where would you eat and what would you be having?

When you design restaurants, this question is almost impossible. Most likely a burger at Tyler's Burgers in Palm Springs. That way we would be close to lots of inspiration.

If you weren't a designer, what would you be?

A sculptor.

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