

Utilitarian Chic

BY REBECCA
GOLDBERG

Thomas Schoos Designs a L.A. Restaurant that Makes a Statement

With Citizen Smith, Thomas Schoos, lead designer and co-owner of Thomas Schoos Design, has created a restaurant for just about everyone in L.A. — or at least he's encouraging every man to attend. With its long dining tables meant for sharing, and indoor-outdoor feel, Citizen Smith is a classically modern design that's meant to draw the community in, one individual at a time.

"We opened it to be the restaurant for everybody's man," he said of the urban bistro in the heart of Hollywood, California.

"It seems like it's been there forever but it has a very new twist to it. It's elegant to contemporary to romantic in one conjunction. We call it curbside living."



Schoos incorporated a garden into the design of the restaurant, bridging an indoor-outdoor feel.

"It was the back alley where the trash cans were, and we made it into an urban garden. You really feel that urban texture, brick walls, exposed conduits, big booths and a huge planted tree. I didn't want to make a prissy garden out of it. I wanted it to be handsome," he said.

"The indoor outdoor feel is one of my big fortes. We've opened it up so you still feel a part of the city," he said. "You see the Hollywood sign, blinking lights from cheap delis; I wanted to be a part of that."

There is no distinct sign outside of Citizen Smith. "The only indication is that there is

Top: Thomas Schoos; Left: Long sharing tables at Citizen Smith



a valet," said Schoos. "When you stand in front of it there's all transparent glass, so you can see inside of it. It's an interesting place to walk into and in every corner you see something new. I wanted to bring the old Hollywood glam from the 20s or 30s but make it modern 2006."

The old Hollywood feel is captured through the use of six old French chandeliers, housed beneath square acrylic boxes that are decorated with 24 different images from around L.A. "When you walk in people from Hollywood are with you right away through transparencies," he said.

According to Schoos, it looks like an old bar from New Orleans, 35 feet long, with a mirrored back and a sterling bar where they rebuilt an old carved bar and sterling silver plated it.

"It's a 1932 concrete caste building. It's really urban, very loft like. Everything is exposed," said Schoos.

Nearly everything in the space is custom-design by Schoos and his team with the goal of creating a chunky, yet whimsical environment.

"We have the most amazing floor to ceiling cow hide booths. The back of the booth is this 8 foot tall brindle. The sharing tables are old wood slab tables with marble tops and leather chairs. There are

22 person tables with two turn of the century barn doors as tops as well."

Schoos describes an environment with low-riding sofas, red wood tree trunk coffee tables and 250 candles — his signature design element.

"There are candles on the tables, behind the bars, throughout," he said. "It's a moving, living environment that I like to bring in. Usually it's water and fire."

Schoos stresses that his agenda as a designer is to not just create a design, but design a lifestyle property.

"That is what we do as a firm," he said. "We wanted to bring some authenticity back."

"The patrons of this restaurant are a complete mixture. It's not dedicated to have any age bracket there," he said stating that the crowd could be anywhere from 24-70. "The clientele is always changing."

"Last night I was there and there was such an eclectic crowd of people sharing tables. L.A. is very segregated. It was beautiful. Citizen Smith means for every man. We didn't want to segregate people," he said.

"You can be on your own or you can talk to your neighbor," he said of the sharing tables. "It has something to offer for every flavor. That's my drive as a designer, think-



ing out of the box and creating a new concept. You would not walk into Citizen Smith and say the same guy did O-Bar. They're all different hemispheres. I don't like to duplicate and life is too colorful to be beige. It's like eating spaghetti everyday."

Schoos is a managing partner of Citizen Smith. It is his dream to take the concept around the world. **BD**

Clockwise from top left: Smith's 35 foot long New Orleans style bar; Schoos chose slabs of red wood for his coffee tables; Bridging the indoor/outdoor gap with indoor potted trees; Smith's floor to ceiling cow hide booth

