

Dominating Hollywood

KRISTOFER KEITH PLANS TO REDESIGN EVERY SPACE IN TOWN

Drive around Hollywood and you're liable to see a litany of plywood painted black and branded with white "spacecraft" lettering, which is just how designer Kristofer Keith likes it. "I want people to be sick of seeing this sign," he says, "but they'll never get sick of my work, 'cause it's all different." The spacecraft founder relocated from Charlotte in 2001, secured a construction license and set out to dominate Hollywood's restaurant, bar and nightclub design. It's working.

Keith has designed restaurants as disparate as Ortolan (Christophe Émé's upscale French restaurant near the Beverly Center), La Grande Orange Café (a market-driven American restaurant in a former Pasadena train depot) and Osteria La Buca (an Italian restaurant with wine bottle chandeliers near Paramount Studios), but Hollywood is Keith's primary domain.

Last year, Keith molded Kitchen 24, a sleek 24/7 diner with utensil lamps that scored spacecraft a 2008 AIA/LA Restaurant Design Award. For years, Keith wanted to design an Art Deco project, and he finally got his chance by partnering with majority

owner Adolfo Suaya on Bar Delux, a Cahuenga restaurant and bar with a 45-foot-wide stained glass mural that depicts blimps, skyscrapers and mountains.

In February, another Keith design hit Hollywood. BoHo is a casual concept at the ArcLight from Suaya and chef Andre Guerrero. The mix-and-match vibe includes an open-air front room and a U-shaped bar crafted from old chairs. Further west, you'll soon find Essex, a modern Boston-style pub with a welded steel bar that Keith equates to an elevated train truss.

No matter the design, Keith ensures that every project looks different and that he limits waste whenever possible. "Why take everything out and throw it away if it will fit the design," says Keith. "We're not necessarily going after eco-friendly products, cause a lot of them are a scam, and most of them are more expensive."

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However, he is recycling materials whenever possible. At Public House, a new burgers and beer concept near his office, he's using cedar fencing to construct the walls and booths and beer bottles for chandeliers. At BoHo, every material was recycled, whether it came from a thrift store, garage sale or defunct restaurant.

Keith isn't shy about promoting himself, saying, "If I do something it's going to be busy, make money and be in business for years." As a result of that rep, he's become a go-to designer. In addition to Public House, Keith is working on a '70s-style bar and lounge in the former Forty Deuce space. Osaka Hollywood is another project for Suaya, an 8000-square-foot Peruvian-Japanese restaurant with a 40-foot ceviche bar and an open-air patio hosting red Japanese maple trees. To enter, you'll have to traverse a pond via stepping stones.

Keith will design more bars and clubs and hopes to score some hotel assignments. "Doing a resort might be fun," he says, "but I want to continue dominating Hollywood. I want to take over every space in Hollywood and re-do them all. That's my ultimate goal."

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