

## Dodd Mitchell LA interior designer

Sally Lohan, WGSN 06.04.05

Dodd Mitchell, dubbed LA's "Crown Prince of restaurant design" by *LA Magazine*, spoke to WGSN about his inspirations and the future of design in Los Angeles.

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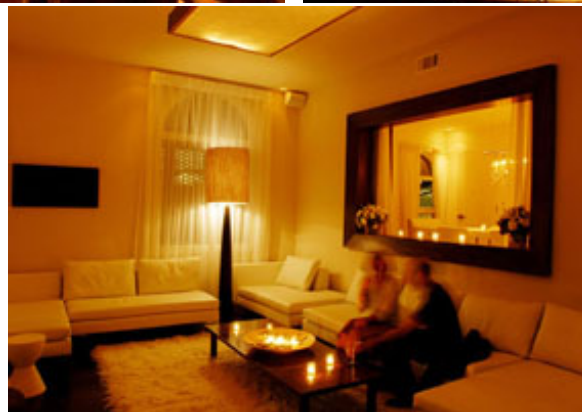
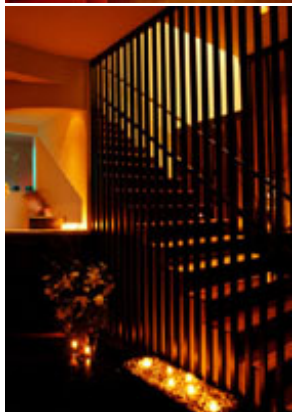
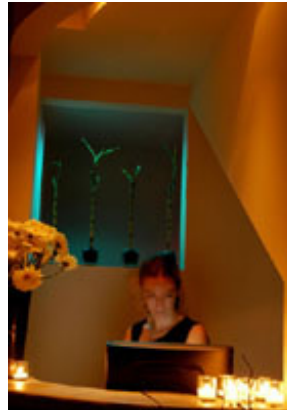
[www.doddmitchell.com](http://www.doddmitchell.com)



Dodd Mitchell is one of LA's most in-demand designers. His **earthy, textured style** provides the backdrop for many of the city's hottest clubs, hippest hotels and celebrity-owned nightspots, such as Ashton Kutcher's Melrose Avenue restaurant Dolce, as well as Chi, an Asian-style eaterie on Sunset Boulevard owned by Justin Timberlake, Jennifer Tilly and Damon Dash.

The designer is currently **working on hotels in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and New York**. His redesign of the **Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel** was filmed as a reality show for the Style Network and he is **launching an apparel line called Sleep**. His

**company, Dodd Mitchell Design, is booked up for the next six years.**



**Cinch Restaurant and the Crescent Hotel**

Mitchell **started out as a set designer in the advertising and entertainment industry**. He has no formal training but he knows how to get the lighting right, which fabrics to use, what to hide and what to reveal in order to create an ambience that makes even ordinary Tinseltowners feel like celebrities. At the same time, the way he divides his spaces caters to the real VIPs' simultaneous need for privacy and desire to be noticed.

"It's like lingerie," Mitchell tells WGSN. "You need to make sure there's always something between you and them, but so they can still be seen."

## Existing Developments

- **BOA Steakhouse**

8462 Sunset Blvd  
West Hollywood  
CA 90069

Website: [www.balboaprime.com](http://www.balboaprime.com)

- **Body & Soul Workout**

8599 Santa Monica Blvd  
West Hollywood  
CA 90069

Website: [www.bodyandsoulworkout.net](http://www.bodyandsoulworkout.net)

- **Chi**

8401 Sunset Blvd  
West Hollywood  
CA 90069

Website: [www.chionsunset.com](http://www.chionsunset.com)

- **Cinch**

1519 Wilshire Blvd  
Santa Monica  
CA 90403

Website: [www.cinchrestaurant.com](http://www.cinchrestaurant.com)

- **Crescent Hotel**

403 North Crescent Drive  
Beverly Hills  
CA 90210

Website: [www.crescentbh.com](http://www.crescentbh.com)

- **Dolce Enoteca**

8284 Melrose Avenue  
West Hollywood  
CA 90046

Website: [www.dolceenoteca.com](http://www.dolceenoteca.com)

- **Falcon**

7213 Sunset Blvd  
Hollywood  
CA 90046

- **Hotel Valencia Riverwalk**

150 East Houston Street



Crescent Hotel



He carries that same philosophy through to his interiors as a whole.

"If you give away every feature, overlight it because you're showing it off, people get sick of it and you're remodelling in a year-and-a-half or two years. But if you can give customers little things to catch every single time they come, the place grows," he says.

"People are looking for interiors that don't compete with them," he told WGSN. "I'm hired to build a stage, and I don't want to upstage my clients."

He describes his style as "Four Seasons with an edge". It's all about **comfort: high thread count and quality**. He believes one of the things consumers are looking for is time and he wants to create an atmosphere that will provide them with a "**mini break from life**", surrounding them with "Mother Nature and natural materials".

If people don't notice all the design features the first time, then so much the better. "That means that I have longevity in my designs," he says. Any brilliant architect or designer, he adds, should be "**building for the future**".



Dolce

Mitchell is unimpressed with the prevailing retro trends in interiors.

"People are starting to pick 70s looks, which I'm sick of already," he tells WGSN. "The 70s, 80s and 90s are over."

San Antonio  
Texas 78205

Website: [www.hotelvalencia.com](http://www.hotelvalencia.com)

● **Hotel Valencia Santana Row**

355 Santana Row  
San Jose  
CA 95128

Website: [www.hotelvalencia.com](http://www.hotelvalencia.com)

● **Javier's Cantina & Grill**

71 Fortune Drive  
Irvine  
CA 92618

Website: [www.javier-cantina.com](http://www.javier-cantina.com)

● **Katana**

8439 Sunset Blvd  
West Hollywood  
CA 90069

Website: [www.katanarobata.com](http://www.katanarobata.com)

● **Le Dome**

8720 Sunset Blvd  
West Hollywood  
CA 90069

Website: [www.ledomerestaurant.com](http://www.ledomerestaurant.com)

● **Lounge 217**

217 Broadway  
Santa Monica  
CA 90401

● **Luce**

301 North Canon Drive  
Beverly Hills  
CA 90210

● **Nonya**

61 North Raymond Ave  
Pasadena  
CA 91103

Website: [www.nonyarestaurant.com](http://www.nonyarestaurant.com)

● **Oliver**

"Borrowing a couple of things from the past for inspiration is one thing - but a lot of people take it way too literally and you end up with something that's very 'been there, done that'."

Although Mitchell admits that "**everything in design is recycled**", he adds: "We are all on the same earth, we all have the same materials at our fingertips; it's finding a creative and different way of using those materials."



Dolce



For an example, try the wall he covered in railroad spikes at **Katana Restaurant**, which was inspired by the movie *Hellraiser* and a Japanese pachinko (gambling) machine.

Or the rubber that he saw lining the monkey cages at a zoo, which has never been used in any commercial application before but will shortly line the hallways of the high-end, \$400-a-night hotel that he's currently designing in Las Vegas.

"I just thought, 'That's a beautiful texture.' And the good thing about it," he adds, "is that it's all **recycled rubber** and they'll never have to replace it: it will never wear out. At the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, we have to shampoo the carpets every other week in the hallways. Using the rubber cuts all that maintenance out."



Falcon

Natural materials are key to Mitchell's designs. Wood, stone and fire are often prominent in his work. He is also using a **variety of skins and leathers** in

9601 Wilshire Blvd  
Beverly Hills  
CA 90210

Website: [www.olivercafe.com](http://www.olivercafe.com)

● Pearl Dragon  
15229 West Sunset Blvd  
Pacific Palisades  
CA 90272

● Roosevelt Hotel  
7000 Hollywood Blvd  
Los Angeles  
CA 90028

● Spencer's  
701 West Baristo  
Palm Springs  
CA 92262

Website: [www.spencersrestaurant.com](http://www.spencersrestaurant.com)

● Sushi Roku, Hollywood  
8445 W 3rd Street  
Los Angeles  
CA 90048

Website: [www.sushiroku.com](http://www.sushiroku.com)

● Sushi Roku, Las Vegas  
3500 La Vegas Blvd  
Las Vegas  
NV 89109

Website: [www.sushiroku.com](http://www.sushiroku.com)

● Sushi Roku, Pasadena  
33 Miller Alley  
Pasadena  
CA 91103

Website: [www.sushiroku.com](http://www.sushiroku.com)

● Sushi Roku, Santa Monica  
1401 Ocean Ave  
Santa Monica  
CA 90401

Website: [www.sushiroku.com](http://www.sushiroku.com)

future projects, such as **alligator, ostrich and stingray fabrics**.

The designer says he gets his inspiration from all sorts of different sources. The chandeliers at Katana were inspired by Tinker Toys; the staircase at Zen Grill came from the underside of a cocktail umbrella.

Mitchell custom-designs all the furnishings in his interiors and has plans to launch his own interiors line.

Key colours that he is using in future projects include **chocolate, tan, orchid white and primer greys**. The hotel he's designing in Vegas right now will be painted an amber colour that he discovered while examining a fallen palm frond he found lying outside his LA office on Third Street.



**Falcon**



The movement of a watch was the inspiration for a grand staircase/escalator system he is designing at the Hotel Elle. The workings will be exposed, **turning the piece into an artwork** and adding a curiosity that he hopes will entice people up to the next level.

"Weird things can influence me," he says. "The way moss grows on a tree can inspire something in me. The way a leaf is laying in the gutter could influence me."

Movies, music and fashion are also the root of many of Mitchell's ideas.



**Katana restaurant**

● **Voda**  
1449 2nd Street  
Santa Monica  
CA 90401

● **Zen Grill**  
1051 Broxton Avenue  
Los Angeles  
CA 90024

Website: [www.zengrillsakelounge.com](http://www.zengrillsakelounge.com)

#### **Future Developments**

- Allen Street Hotel, New York, New York
- Thompson Hotel, Beverly Hills
- Sagamore Hotel, Miami Beach
- Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas
- NYC Lounge, New York, New York
- The Lodge Steakhouse, Los Angeles

#### **Apparel**

- Sleep: Intimate Apparel  
[www.sleepforher.com](http://www.sleepforher.com)

"I read a lot of fashion magazines. I like to keep up and see what everybody's doing, see what's influencing the photographers."

"I love **Frank Lloyd Wright**," he adds. Mitchell also admires the architecture of **John Lautner**, whose quirky, modern buildings have become synonymous with LA style, despite the fact that the architect had a marked disdain for Los Angeles in general.

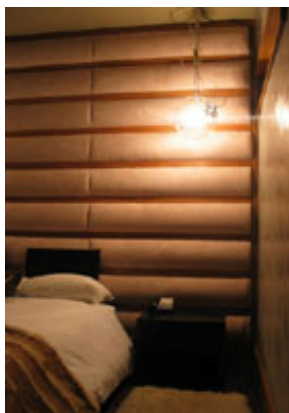


Oliver



"When I first got to Los Angeles," Lautner told documentary filmmaker Bette Jane Cohen, "architectural students would ask me how I liked it and what would I do. I said I would build giant concrete balls, take them to the top of Mulholland Drive and roll them down the hill. That would get rid of Hollywood and all the other junk that's there, and then maybe you could do something interesting."

Mitchell says he identifies with Lautner's sentiment wholeheartedly: "I agree with that attitude - we live in a town that's raped and pillaged. Everyone comes here for a dream. They come to act, they come to model, they come to suck the life out of the city. There are not too many people who give back. But that's the way I feel. I want to build beautiful buildings, build beautiful restaurants."



Roosevelt Hotel



Oliver

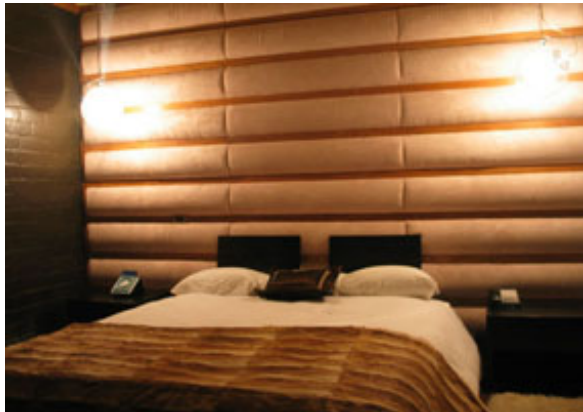
The designer has an irreverent approach to Los Angeles that gives him an edge, as well as a savvy knack for creating a brand. For Mitchell, it is **not just design, but branding** that is important.

When Chi first opened, the waiting staff had his restaurant logo temporarily tattooed on their skin. "The whole idea was based on the way everyone here in LA says, 'I'm a model' or 'I'm an actress'." Mitchell tells WGSN. "I branded everybody." One look at the tattoo would signal the truth: that they were actually waiting tables at Chi.

In fact, if you go to a Dodd Mitchell-designed restaurant or hotel, chances are that Dodd Mitchell will have had a hand in everything around you, right down to the sheets and even what you sleep in.

The designer is currently working on a **lingerie/nightwear apparel line, including cashmere pyjamas**, called Sleep, which he plans to launch in about six months.

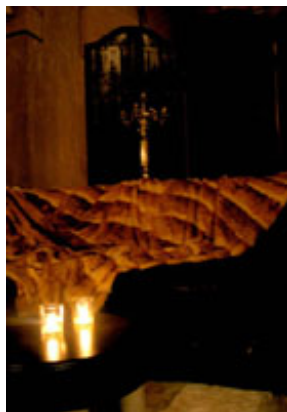
"What I have designed," he told WGSN, "is a line that you could even wear out in public."



Roosevelt Hotel

Mitchell has a desire to **manipulate his environments completely**: the lighting, the colour, the packaging, the menu, the music, even the smell.

"When you walk past a **Burke Williams spa**, you smell that smell," says Mitchell. "You know it's Burke Williams. It has its own scent. I want my hotels to have their own scent. In order to affect you the way I want, I have to be in control - of everything."





**Roosevelt Hotel**

At a coastal restaurant, Mitchell put up a wall over an existing window that looked out on the ocean. His idea is to block out the outside world and allow customers to enjoy their time with each other.

"The sunset only lasts 10 minutes - what about the rest of the night?" he says. "The ocean's black; you can't see anything. I wanted to refocus the view inside the restaurant, so I just blocked off the view."

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