



# PAUL FORTUNE DESIGN

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# LOS ANGELES



For an amusing yet caustic overview of L.A. design, one couldn't do better than to sit down to chat with Paul Fortune. Fortune arrived in California from London in 1978, and his dry wit remains intact. "There's always been an L.A. look: First it was Michael Taylor, now it's Michael Smith. So I guess the L.A. look has to be the Michael look," says Fortune, whose clients include EMI chief Ken Berry and Condé Nast editorial director James Truman, who drafted Fortune to work for *House & Garden*, where he is now West Coast editor.

"When I came here, there was nothing. There wasn't one decent restaurant or chef. It was fabulous; I loved it." He says this, mind you, sitting in a banquette of his own design at Les Deux Cafés, in which he is an investor.

"In the '80s, around the time Morton's opened, all hell broke loose. One thing I want to go down on record about is this: [As a restaurant designer] Barbara Lazaroff is single-handedly destroying this town. Somebody stop her. I'm going to lose it."

Lazaroff (who designs her husband Wolfgang Puck's restaurants) isn't the only object of Fortune's disdain. In general, he bemoans Hollywood's compulsion to have everything done overnight.

"When you decorate for movie people, it's about 'Do it now.' They think it's like building a set. Their attitude is, 'I'll be in my trailer—call me when you're done.' It's still Tinseltown. Doing a house takes time. My house is a record of all the books I've read

and all the places I've been. And nobody in this town has the guts to make a decision himself. They have to be told by six people that something is okay before they can do it."

At least we've moved past the '80s, a particularly sorry period for interior design in Fortune's view. "Everybody bought lots of really bad paintings and got burned. Now they've got that stuff hidden away—it's an embarrassment." Fortune also lambastes the "epidemic of comfort" that swept town in the form of the so-called shabby-chic look, manifested by huge, overstuffed sofas and chairs.