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DESIGNER PROFILE

Paolo Moschino

Regular visitors to Nicholas Haslam, the decorative antiques and furniture store in Chelsea, will be familiar with its tall, dark owner Paolo Moschino (above, with Ty) and his distinctive Italian drawl. Although a year ago he opened offices and a second trade showroom across the river in Battersea, he's frequently at the Chelsea shop because he enjoys the buzz of people walking in off the street. What customers may not know is that Paolo also decorates whole houses, turning out sophisticated yet supremely comfortable interiors which bear the unique visual stamp of the shop.

As a decorator, he is relaxed and hands-on. 'I don't believe in mood boards – I like to try things out,' he declares, and will think nothing of sending a van stuffed with chairs and chandeliers to a client's house to see what suits it. While he enjoys the experimental mood of his mainly young, often American, clients – he has current projects in Holland Park, Knightsbridge and Verbier – he adds that a good relationship with his clients is vital. 'Decorating is something I want to enjoy – if we get on, it works,' he laughs. Another important factor is to discuss budget at the outset. With the practicalities sorted out, clients can expect Paolo's signature

mix of pretty, decorative antiques with slick lighting, natural linens layered with moleskin and chenille, all in a neutral palette to which he may add warmer tones of aubergine and red.

Paolo didn't train in design. After studying political science in his native Italy and planning a management career with Alitalia, he made an abrupt change of direction and came to London instead. That was fourteen years ago. A chance meeting with Nicholas Haslam led to his appointment as manager at the designer's shop, and, bitten by the design bug, Paolo launched a fabric and furniture collection from scratch. Six years ago he bought the business and these days the shop's silks and printed linens, modern lighting and furniture – all designed by him – are in demand worldwide.

What marks Paolo out as a decorator and designer is his constant desire to interpret things in a fresh way – a design philosophy he credits to Nicky Haslam. So whether that means reinventing the silhouette of a pretty antique table with straight instead of cabriole legs, or adapting an existing fabric motif, scaled up and painted freehand on to a dining-room wall, Paolo will experiment. His enthusiasm is also his clients' gain. 'I enjoy what I do,' he says. 'By Sunday afternoon, I can't wait to start again'. **JUDITH WILSON**
Paolo Moschino at Nicholas Haslam, 12–14 Holbein Place, SW1 (tel: 020-7730 8623) >

PHOTOGRAPH HUGO BURNAND