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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2007

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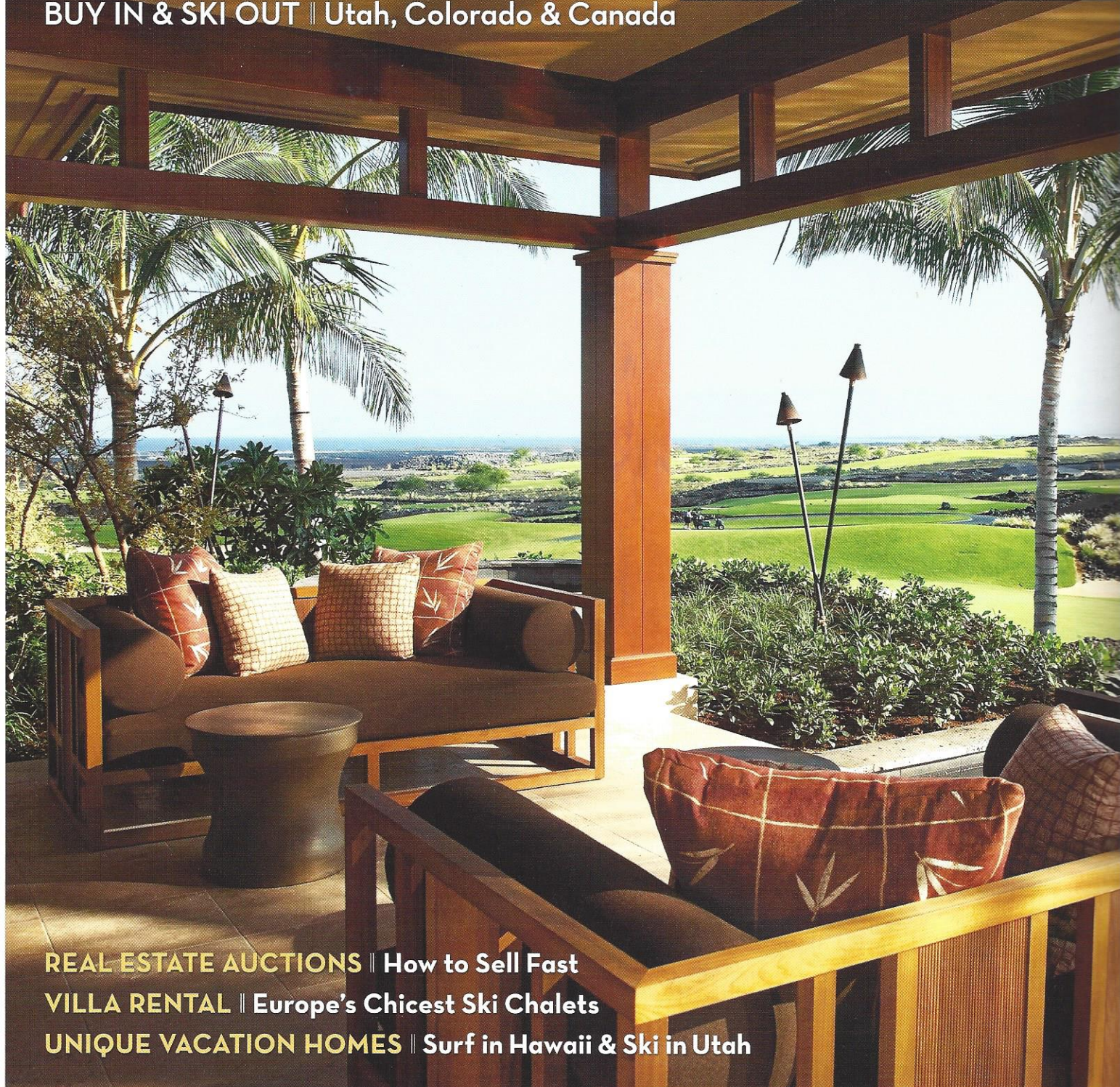
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# *Hawaiian* RHAPSODY

A SPECIAL PLACE AT THE BIG ISLAND'S HUALALAI RESORT



BY JANE GIFFORD ■ PHOTOS BY LINNY MORRIS CUNNINGHAM



Previous pages: The entrance and open-air pathways of Kui Kawa, the home of K.C. and Toni Knudson, at the Hualalai resort on Hawaii's Big Island. Landscape architect Loriann Gordon incorporated Hawaiian plantings to complement the architecture.

Right: The view from the main pool to the 6th hole of the Jack Nicklaus-designed Hualalai Golf Course and the Kona-Kohala coast beyond. Because pavilion-style living is central to the island, Toni Knudson and Gina Willman, partners at W Interiors, articulated outdoor seating areas throughout the compound.

Opposite above: The entertainment pavilion's entry foyer, with daybeds and side tables from JRM International Art Properties.

Opposite below: The entertainment pavilion, which leads via a bridge to the main living pavilions, features sofas and ottomans from Janus et Cie. "This is my favorite room in the house," says Toni.







*Kui Kawa* means “special place” in the Hawaiian language. So it comes as no surprise that this was the name real estate developer K.C. Knudson chose for the spectacular property he built for himself and his wife on Hawaii’s Big Island.











Located high on a hillside in the exclusive Hualalai residential resort community, the home has dramatic views over black lava rocks and green fairways to the Kona-Kohala coastline and beyond. From the golf course below, the house—with its surrounding landscape of koi ponds, streams and a lush infinity-edge pool—appears to float on water. The illusion has apparently distracted many golfers from their game.

Knudson and his wife, Toni, know a thing or two about vacation homes. He is the driving force behind Knudson Luxury Housing, a real estate development company that specializes in building idyllic escapes in Hawaii and elsewhere in the United States. She runs Hawaii-based W Interiors with designer Gina Willman, and has created sophisticated decors for several of his projects. With Kui Kawa, however, the Knudsons may have outdone themselves.

“The views are spectacular,” says Toni. In fact, her husband was so taken with the location that he acquired all four lots on the street and has three other houses currently under construction there. For their vacation home, the couple knew they wanted “to create a place conducive to entertaining,” she says. “The

challenge was how to position the structure on the lot so that the house would have an expansive feel and maximize the views from the most number of rooms.” Architectural firm H & S International resolved this dilemma by designing a compound of six detached buildings, each with a different function.

“The unique shape of the lot presented the opportunity to have a pavilion for outdoor events that’s separate from the main house,” says Zon Sullenberger, the project architect and co-principal, with architect Bing Hu, of the Hawaii-based firm. The open-sided entertainment pavilion accommodates 100 and is equipped with a catering kitchen, bar and powder rooms. Comfortable woven-resin lounge furniture provides intimate seating areas inside the vast space and a Steinway grand piano is the center of attraction at classical music recitals the couple often hosts.

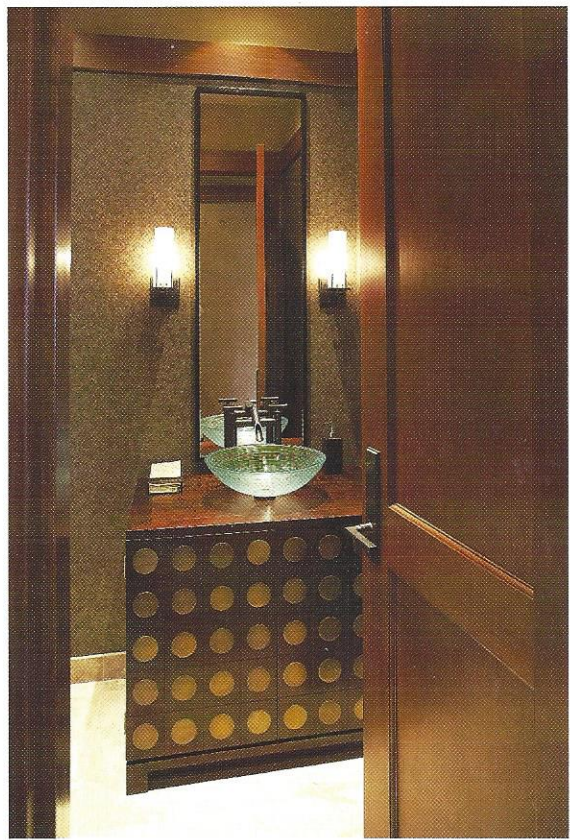
A bridge links the entertainment pavilion to the living quarters. “We blurred the division between indoors and outdoors by separating the components of the house into detached pods and linking them with outdoor passages,” explains Sullenberger. The main “pod” incorporates a great room, dining room, kitchen,



Left: A diptych by Mark Kadota hangs in the great room, which is brightened with splashes of red. “To create continuity in the house, we took a few select elements and carried them throughout,” says Toni. “One was the color red, from red bamboo to red furnishings.” At left is a monk sculpture from Niermann Weeks. The sofas are from Randolph and Hein, the Environmental Language ottomans were found at Sloan Miyasato and the table is from Bolier. Above: Sofas from A. Rudin add comfort to the media room.

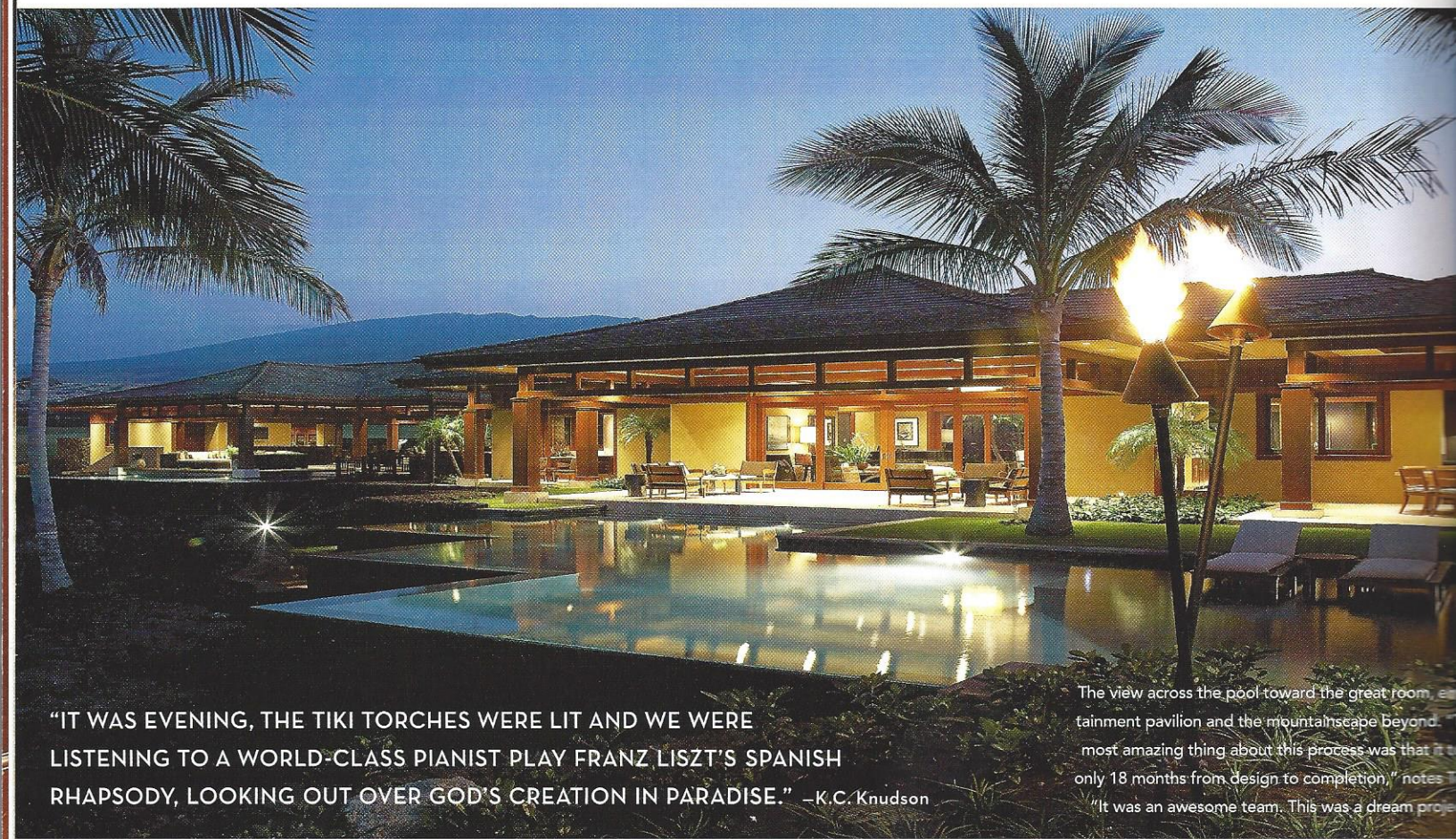


## HAWAIIAN RHAPSODY



"All the powder rooms in the house are dressed up like jewelry boxes with a piece of furniture, an interesting vessel, great lighting and fabulous wallcovering," says Toni. Clockwise from below: One includes a Vitraform sink and Holly Hunt sconces; the master's has a tub from Get Real and accent stone from Ann Sacks; another features mosaic tile from Bella Pietra and a Catalano basin.

Opposite: The entertainment pavilion bar, with sculptures by Nick Bleeker. Sub-Zero wine storage units; Sutherland Furniture barstools and bench. "It's unique to have an open pavilion of this scale in Hawaii," notes Toni. "Typically, this kind of structure would have floor-to-ceiling doors."



"IT WAS EVENING, THE TIKI TORCHES WERE LIT AND WE WERE LISTENING TO A WORLD-CLASS PIANIST PLAY FRANZ LISZT'S SPANISH RHAPSODY, LOOKING OUT OVER GOD'S CREATION IN PARADISE." —K.C. Knudson

The view across the pool toward the great room, entertainment pavilion and the mountainscape beyond. "The most amazing thing about this process was that it was only 18 months from design to completion," notes Toni. "It was an awesome team. This was a dream project."



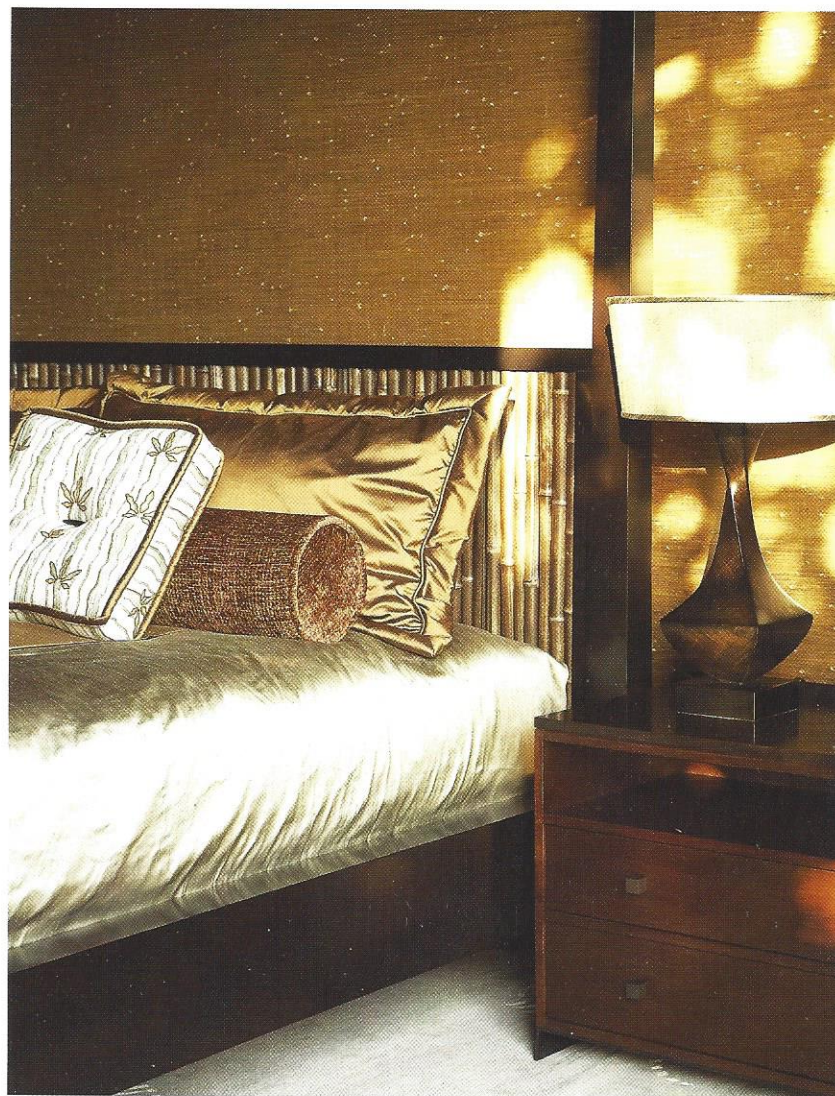
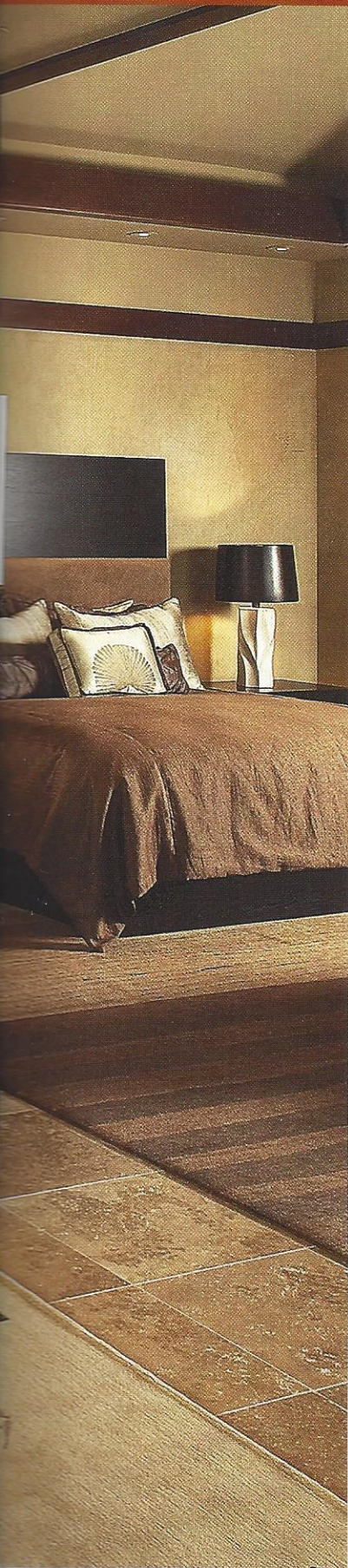






In the master bedroom foyer, an alabaster monk rests on a console table, both from Charles Jacobsen. A four-panel screen by Yoshi Hayashi is flanked by Holly Hunt sconces. Indich Collection rug. Near the bed, by Kelly Hoppen for Century Furniture, is a lamp from Baker. Right: A guest bedroom includes lush bedding from Beacon-Hill Silks and a table by Ted Boerner, available through Thomas Lavin.






office, two powder rooms and a laundry area. Pathways and tropical gardens, designed by landscape architect Loriann Gordon, lead to the other pods, which contain a large, luxurious master suite; a state-of-the-art media room with an adjacent bedroom suite; and a well-appointed guesthouse with two bedroom suites and a living room. There is, of course, a garage for cars as well as golf carts—the preferred mode of transport around the resort. Spacious lanais offer alternate areas for eating and lounging throughout the property.

“We combine comfort, luxury and elegance,” says Toni of her firm’s approach. “Our design is clean and contemporary with an Asian aesthetic, reflecting the blend of cultures that make up Hawaii.” For the furnishings, the designers commissioned local artists and crafts-

men for most of the pieces. “Many of the decorative objects are Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan,” adds Willman, who supplemented the local finds with a Chinese altar table and other antiques on a trip to Los Angeles.

One evening not so long ago, pianist Stanislav Ioudenitch performed in the entertainment pavilion. “That was a special moment,” K.C. remembers. “It was evening, the tiki torches were lit and we were listening to a world-class pianist play Franz Liszt’s Spanish Rhapsody, looking out over God’s creation in paradise.” At Kui Kawa, it seems, the Knudsons have created their very own paradise in Hawaii. 

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