

*Photographs by Linny Morris
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With Jeanjean Bower*

the
HAWAIIAN
HOUSE
now





The large wood pocket doors use a floor tracking system in which the space between each track is tiled. The threshold between indoor and outside is unnoticeable.

THE HOUSE AT HUALĀLAI

“We built this home so that it would almost disappear,” says design/build contractor Gregg Todd of the Big Island residence of Toni and KC Knudson. “We tried to minimize the building to subtly blend with its surroundings. The home became a backdrop for the planting rather than a bold architectural statement.”

With mammoth pocket doors that allow walls to slide away and a courtyard entrance that draws the eye straight through the pavilion-style living room out to the ocean, Todd’s design succeeds in bringing the visitor past the structure, letting them focus instead on the tremendous views and art collection of the home.

Both the home’s setting and its historic Hawaiian art reflect the Knudsons’ taste for classic Hawai’i. Museum-quality pieces by major Island artists Lionel Walden, David Howard Hitchcock, Hubert Vos, and Joseph Sharp hang in every room of their otherwise low-key interiors.

“Living in Hawai’i, I try to avoid being overdone or too formal,” says Toni Knudson, who began collecting Hawaiian regional art with her husband KC while they were in construction with their first home in the Islands. “I think it’s important to represent local artists and reflect the culture in your home.”



Walden's 1908 *Crashing Waves* is the focal point of a living room which Toni and interior design partner Gina Willman finished in neutral tones to allow the art to stand out. The actual ocean scene beyond the room's invisible walls was given similar consideration by Gregg Todd. "We framed the home's view of the ocean by positioning the pool so that your eye would move from the grass of the lawn over the break of water and then down the green of the resort out to the ocean," says Todd. "That layering of color gives the ocean an even greater impact."

Another strategic treatment of exterior space lies outside the master bedroom. "Outdoor showering has become almost a pre-requisite in resort communities here," says Willman. "We really did not have the exterior space to incorporate the outdoor shower, so we placed the shower and bath adjacent to the sliding doors. When the doors slide away you have the sense of being outdoors."

In the living room, a heart-stopping sight for any Hawai'i regional art collector, Lionel Walden's 1908 *Crashing Waves*. Walden has been called the finest seascape painter to work in Hawai'i. The Knudsons use this room and the exterior spaces it opens onto for private piano concerts in their home.

In the office, KC Knudson's personal collection of Joseph Sharp's Windward O'ahu landscapes. Toni Knudson and Gina Willman kept the room's finishes and furniture dark so that "the paintings' colors would just pop off the wall."

In one of the guest bedrooms, Cornelia Foley etchings hang above a bed with an Asian flavor in sumptuous fabrics by Clarence House. The walls were given a striae faux finish by Joe Eby to give this elegant room additional texture.







Todd notes that an outdoor shower also requires a lot of hardscape: the stepping stones to reach it and the shower pad. By bringing the shower back indoors, the garden became more lush.

“The whole bathroom is very subtle,” says Willman. “We curved the shower wall to give the psychological feeling of it being a bit more enclosed.” The addition of a custom-built six-foot-long molded concrete bathtub finishes the space with a sculptural touch. “The overall effect is simple but sensual,” adds Willman.

In the entry courtyard, another romantic touch was established through the purchase of an Archie Held sculpture titled *Lovers*.

“Once the Knudsons chose the sculpture, the idea of lovers became our underlying theme for the area,” says Willman. “So we commissioned a stone carving in the same vein, as well as a bronze bench for a couple to enjoy the sculptures.”

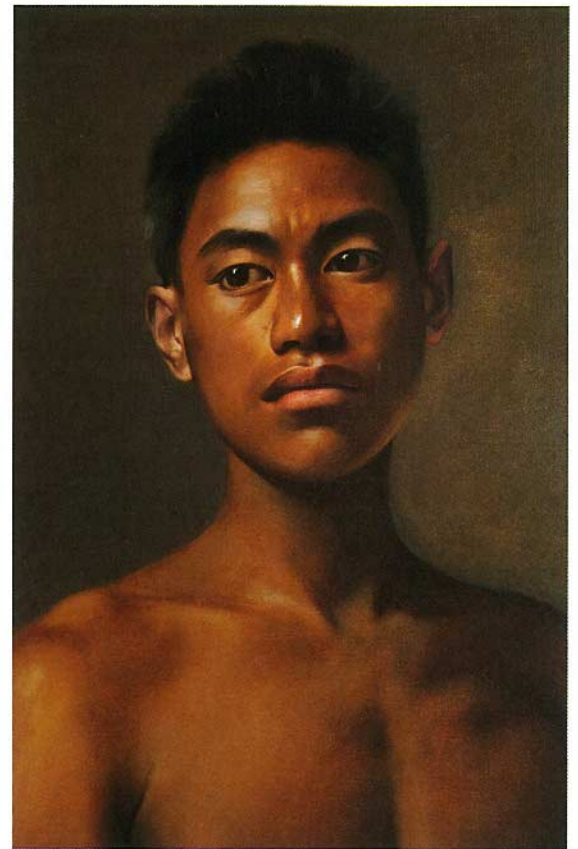
“That courtyard is like having a living room outdoors,” says Todd, who notes that the Knudsons chose stucco for the exterior walls specifically as a neutral backdrop to the surrounding sculptures and landscape. “It’s a ‘room’ you want to linger in, and it’s like the house. You start to forget whether you’re inside or out.”

The panoramic pool was angled on the lot to draw the eye to the best ocean view.





In the dining room, an 1898 portrait by Hubert Vos titled *lokepa, Hawaiian Fisher Boy*. The Dutch-born Vos ventured to Hawai'i after meeting the beautiful, part-Hawaiian Eleanor Graham, who was traveling in the United States as a companion to Hawaii's Queen Lili'uokalani. The dining and living room rugs were commissioned by New Mexico-artist Joan Weissman.





The master bath opens out to a bamboo and river rock garden with a lava rock backdrop. The concrete bathtub's porous material necessitates a six-month maintenance schedule of beeswax finishing. A travertine-clad pillar conceals the plumbing intricacies and allows the water to spill in a sheet, filling the sculptural bathtub.