



# Hale Ho'omaluu

A PLACE OF REFUGE AND DREAMS

Architecture by / Jim Antony, Antony Design & Construction

Interior Design by / Andrea Lecusay, Lakshmi Interiors

Text by / Jon Letman

Photography by / David Duncan Livingston

**LEFT:** Hale Ho'omaluu is a custom-crafted home which designer-builder Jim Antony describes as "Thai craftsman." Most of the house is constructed with teak, koa and ipe and built as a heritage home to last for generations. The house has been undergoing major renovations and enhancements for three years.

**ABOVE:** Designed to accommodate the owner's taste for antique Hawaiiana, limited edition out-of-print books are displayed in custom-built koa cabinetry flanked by an early 20th century Handel floor lamp and a Victrola phonograph. Vintage postcards, shells, gourds and Hawaiian wooden board games give the room a fun, cozy atmosphere.

**O**N KAUA'I'S NORTH SHORE A NARROW ROAD RUNS PAST A FIELD where horses and goats nibble pockets of wild lantana. Pretty but unspectacular, the setting belies what is one of Kaua'i's most spectacular custom-built homes: Hale Ho'omaluu.

Hidden from view and perched on a bluff, the structure offers superb structural detail, choice of materials, furnishings, placement, landscaping and design elements. It was designed and built by Antony Design & Construction in 1994. The house's second owners have embarked on an evolution of sorts, working with builder and custom home designer Jim Antony

and Andrea Lecusay of Lakshmi Interiors to take an already remarkable home to the next level.

In the age of McMansions, when all too often size trumps good taste, Hale Ho'omaluu offers a modest 3,400 square feet of interior living space but feels expansive on its immaculately landscaped 2.5 acre lot. Cozy and comfortable, rather than sprawling, the floor plan features a central fireplace that is visible from most rooms. Liberal use of tropical hardwoods, a wealth of shapes, textures and forms, and a handsome collection of Asian and Hawaiian crafts, art pieces, tapestries, carvings and curios create a home that is classy, engaging and unpretentious.



**ABOVE:** Plantation harvested teak and reclaimed woods were used to minimize the cutting of forest trees. With liberal use of koa, mango, ipe and other tropical hardwoods throughout, the house has warmth that extends to kitchen appliances like the refrigerator, which has a curly koa and curly maple front panel. The kitchen overlooks a jungle-covered valley and the ocean beyond.



**LEFT:** A sunken dining area extends across a green Vermont slate floor where a rustic hand-crafted monkey pod table with laser cut ebony plug accents stands. The rattan Palecek dining chairs were selected by Lakshmi Interiors to best tie in the rustic table with the craftsman style. The steel candle chandelier has custom ironwork and structural details reminiscent of craftsman pieces.



**ABOVE:** Teak floors with koa inlaid accents drop down to a bright living room that looks onto a lawn bordered by narrow plant-filled waterways. Tropical cane chairs make for a pleasant spot to talk-story. Interior designer Andrea Lecusay travelled across Hawai'i and Bali searching for furnishing and art like the Hawaiian drum above.

The Hawaiian name *Hale* (house) *Ho'omalū* (place of refuge) was chosen by owners Laura Century and Lee Unkrich to reflect the kind of home they wanted for their family. When the couple first saw the house in 2006, Laura told her husband she felt like she'd found the house she had been dreaming of all her life. "After we saw the house, neither of us could stop thinking about it," recalled Unkrich.

Two weeks later they made an offer.

What began as a partial makeover of the home's interior has grown into a major restoration of landscaping, exterior and interior furnishings and poolside structures. Three years into the project, the home's new look is defined collaboratively by Antony and Lecusay. The two were paired by Unkrich, who met Lecusay during a chance visit to her furniture studio on Kaua'i. He was interested in the Balinese furniture she had on display,

some of which was chosen for Hale Ho'omalū.

"Once Laura and Lee saw we could execute their vision as a team, and the more we enhanced the home, the more they wanted to continue," said Lecusay.

As they took on greater design tasks, Lecusay and Antony were inspired by their client's meticulous eye for detail—hardly surprising for Unkrich, who is an editor and director at Pixar Animation Studios.

Because Antony has been the designer and builder from the home's inception, Hale Ho'omalū maintains much of its original look and still feels new. Antony describes the home as "Thai craftsman," meaning it is a mix of Greene and Greene craftsman-style based on Chinese and Japanese joinery with a lava moss rock perimeter, teak and ipe exterior, and Thai roofing that employs curving gables and prominent fascias.

Hale Ho'omalulu has elements of Japanese joinery, using ebony plugs instead of screws, and has a steep pitch curved Thai-style roof. From the fireplace den at the center of the house, most other rooms can be seen, maintaining an intimate family atmosphere. Koa winding stairs with teak inlays ascend to a children's loft on the second floor.



The old world lava rock fireplace has a clip roll lock red brick mantle cut on Kaua'i and features labels made from 200-year-old Indonesian temple carvings pressed in concrete templates. VOC-free fabrics throughout the house were selected by Lakshmi Interiors in an effort to make a greener, healthier home.





ABOVE: Along with the owner's favorite Victrola phonograph in the den which he uses to play old Hawaiian 78s, the house's vintage telephone, antique furnishings, books, prints and push-button light switches, give the house the feel of another era.

As an example of form following function, overlapping fish scale copper fascia was hand-peened on site to prevent water intrusion. In typical Thai style, the ridge of the gable end has a carved flame-pattern incorporated into the roof as counter flashing which has kept the roof undamaged for more than 15 years, an impressive record on rainy Kaua'i.

Because Hale Ho'omalulu is built of tropical hardwoods such as teak or ebony (exterior windows and doors), ipe (siding), and curly koa, mango, fir and curly redwood (stairs, handrails and furniture), a portable mill was constructed on site. This allowed Antony's craftsman to carve, chisel and cut intricate profiles including handcrafted moldings, "clouds," frames and alcoves found throughout the house.

Typical of Antony and Lecusay's creative chemistry is a rustic dining table made of a solid slab of monkey pod wood with inlaid laser-cut ebony plugs, based on *kapa* (Hawaiian bark cloth) stamps Lecusay found at the Bishop Museum. "I wanted the design to talk story of Hawaiian culture through the works we created," Lecusay said.

Other pieces, like a decorative wall plow, were fashioned from driftwood and metal discovered on Kaua'i's beaches. Still others, like a poi pounder and board, Lecusay commissioned to Hawaiian artisan Vince Dodge who agreed to craft the pieces only after he was assured they would be used in a respectful manner consistent with Hawaiian culture.

As evidence of the owner's attention to minutia, almost all



ABOVE: A children's loft has hand-carved curly koa trundle beds built below a pūne'e. An additional sofa has more storage space below. The loft floor is a custom milled vertical grain fir that lightens the room and serves as the ceiling of the room below.

interior plaster was removed to relocate light switches on walls for enhanced aesthetics. "We probably relocated half the switches in the house," said Antony.

Hale Ho'omalulu's whimsical touches include a suar burl table carved with monkey faces on a small lanai off a loft designed for the family's children. The second floor loft is accessed by winding koa and teak stairs, at the bottom of which hangs a 1927 Paramount Pictures Clara Bow "Hula" poster purchased from a private collection.

The poster is a rare signature piece, one of many examples of hard-to-find vintage Hawaiiana which Lecusay has collected for Lee, who has a deep affinity for early 20th century Hawaiian antiques and vintage items. Other rare finds include three antique swirl, stained glass, palm tree motif lamps by Handel; Hawaiian drums carved at the Merry Monarch festival; and antique color-tinted photos by Edith Butler. "I wanted the house to be as low-tech as possible so that it would feel as though it

belonged to another time," Unkrich said.

With so much to enjoy indoors, visitors might never step outside, but if not they would be missing the beauty of the building itself in a setting of flawlessly maintained exotic tropical plants, a "lava flow" lanai, waterways, miniature falls, and a secluded outdoor rock hot spa and shower that peer into a jungle-filled valley.

On a small lawn behind the house, Lecusay has assembled weathered teak reclining chairs, a handsomely battered "primitive" table and bench, and a hammock strung between a coconut palm and a six-foot high tiki (correctly called ki'i in Hawaiian) hand-carved on site into a coconut palm trunk.

Like dinosaur footprints, giant flat lava stone steps lead away from the house along a slope to a 100-foot long narrow ipe catwalk running along the ridgeline with a north shore vista of striking beauty even by Hawaiian standards. The boardwalk ends at a grassy path that passes a primitive teak bench and petrified



LEFT: A teak partition encloses a bathtub in the master bath. Jim Antony and Andrea Lecusay collaborated to design the bathroom's stained glass window, which mirrors the pattern in the front door. Other detailed elements in the wood, tile, metal and glass have been handcrafted, refined and enhanced by Antony's many artisans. "The carving of the wood and chiseling of stone was done on Kaua'i, much of it on property," notes Lecusay. "There wasn't a single design that I could conceptualize that Jim Antony and his craftsman weren't able to complete."

ABOVE: The master bedroom is decorated with early 20th century stained glass Handel table lamps, antique Indonesian woven ikat, a teak sarong holder and Hawaiian collectables. The custom bed and master furnishings were designed and imported from Bali.

BELOW: Framing and base molding was designed by Antony Design & Construction to support the Balinese carved teak bathtub partition.



**"I merged southeast Asian influence with Hawaiiana. It is a true merger of those cultures which is Hawai'i's tradition," says Lecusay.**



wood table overlooking an uninterrupted stretch of golden sand near the Kilauea lighthouse. At the end of the trail, Antony's craftsman have built a small teak deck where a six-sided table and chairs, fashioned from 100-year old boat siding, offer an unobstructed bird's eye view of the aquamarine waters below.

Lecusay called Lee and Laura the "dream clients of dream clients" as she and Antony were given much more freedom to design beyond the normal scope of a designer or builder. That freedom extended to multiple trips to Bali to search for, commission and import antique furnishings and eight-foot-tall tiki statues that stand guard over the pool entrance.

Antony also reflected on what builder satisfaction means for him. "It's the dream that has come true for this family and to see their delight when they arrive. And for someone like Lee, with his eye for detail and appreciation of craftsmanship, to own this home, that's all I could hope for in a lifetime as a builder. For me, that's as good as it gets." 🌿

ABOVE: The swimming pool has three Balinese balé—the small one on the right for reclining, the "barbeque balé" in the middle for cooking and a dining pavilion on the left which can accommodate several dozen guests for poolside entertaining. Inside the pool, underwater barstools provide a cool spot for a drink.