



Contemporary furnishings, earthy textures and glass accessories impart a Global Zen feeling to the living room, in what had previously been an outdated condo hampered by too many walls that obscured the ocean view.

COVER STORY

GLOBAL ZEN

Two 1970s-era condos are thoroughly transformed by talented design team

When Colorado resident Brice Karsh purchased an oceanfront condo on Ali'i Drive "sight unseen" in 2014, little did he know he would be reduced to tears just a month later when he actually saw the condo in person.

"It was a dump," admits Brice, who along with his partner, Marie-Rose Phan-Lê, had been looking for a family residence by the ocean

and found the condo online, listed for sale. "The condition was shocking," he added. "We couldn't figure out how the previous owners got away with running it as a vacation rental. But we decided to make a go of it. We really believed in the location."

Deciding to gut the entire premises and start anew, the couple interviewed several local contractors before hiring Greg Putman

Construction of Kailua-Kona. An accomplished residential design/build construction team, Greg and his wife, Nancy, had built their own dream home in Keauhou in 2004 and have since helped many others in Kona with custom builds, remodels and renovations.

Encouraging client participation throughout every step of the building/remodeling process, Greg and Nancy were the perfect choice to work on the creative couple's condo. In the spirit of teamwork,



Paintings and pillows bring a splash of color to the beach-chic look of this '70s-era oceanfront condo, one of two units renovated by Greg Putman Construction. Greg and his wife Nancy worked closely with the owners to achieve a mutual vision.

it wasn't long before the four became fast friends, collaborating together seamlessly on every detail of the remodel project.

"This is the most fun we've ever had on a project," said Greg. "We love this work. The stuff we did as a team was incredible."

In fact, things went so well on the remodel that Brice and Marie-Rose decided to add a second project to the mix when the condo next door came

up for sale. It too, had been in horrible shape, hung up in litigation for seven years and in need of a complete renovation and redesign, recounts Brice, who welcomed the challenge.

"The place next door was a cockroach-ridden property," he said. "As soon as we found out it was distressed, we wanted it, just as a project. In six months, we were able to accomplish a smooth transaction with the purchase. We nicknamed the condo Shipwreck Alley.

Built in 1979, both two-story, 2,400-square-foot condominiums are among eight total units that comprise the Hale Kai O'Kona condo complex located in Kailua-Kona near Royal Poinciana. Shaped like long rectangular boxes, the original floor plans were hampered by too many walls that created an awkward, cramped living space despite the large square footage.

Natural ventilation was near non-existent, while much of the ocean view had been



Porcelain tile from Tile Warehouse resembles weatherworn wooden planks. Cambria quartz countertop came from Ali Natural Stone in Kailua-Kona.



PHOTO: JOERN ROHDE

The two-story 2,400-square-foot condo overlooks an ocean reef on Ali'i Drive in Kailua-Kona.

obscured by poorly placed walls. “You couldn’t see the ocean from the entrance of the master bedroom upstairs,” recalled Marie-Rose. “There were so many obstacles to the flow, we couldn’t even get a breeze through the house.”

No matter the ideas for the renovation, Greg was able to make it happen. Whether removing walls, adding sliding panel doors, reconfiguring the kitchens, installing custom tile planks on the floors or mounting faux-coral tile on the stairwells, Greg left no stone unturned when it came to attention to detail.

With the addition of new skylights out of the question, Greg installed solar tubes to bring in more light. AC vents were custom cut to blend with the contemporary look. From the Japanese soaking tub in the bathroom, to the infrared sauna in the master bedroom spa and the beautiful faux-coral wall with candle cubbies above the master bathtub, Greg figured out the complicated design logistics to achieve a beautiful result.

A designer in her own right, Nancy dealt with all the tile, finishes, fixtures, backsplashes, countertops, cabinets and accessories. Collaborating with Brice’s sister, Fran Karsh, an interior designer in Vail, Colorado, Nancy supervised the shipment and installation of custom-ordered furnishings and more.

“The Putmans are true design/builders in every sense of the word,” said Marie-Rose. “Nancy is the bonus. She is the



Previously, this condo had several walls in the kitchen that obstructed flow of movement. Now open to the living room, the newly renovated kitchen showcases cabinets from HPM and backsplash from Tile Warehouse. The steel beam is concealed by a hollowed-out wooden beam.



Greg and Nancy Putmnan (right) collaborated closely with owners Brice Karsh and Marie-Rose Phan-Lê (left) on every detail of the condo remodels.

talented designer we were looking for who understood both the global zen concept of the first condo, as well as the beach chic vision for the second one. Every room has some sort of custom detail that visually anchors each theme.”

Owner of a Honaunau coffee farm since 2007, Marie-Rose is an author and director of the award-winning *Talking Story* documentary and book about wise elders of the world including on Hawai’i Island. CEO of a visual media firm in Colorado specializing in animations, illustrations and videos for litigation clients, Brice has spent much time on the Big Island through the years at his parents’ home on the Kohala Coast.

Brice met Marie-Rose through her services as a healing practitioner. With a background in tech and film media, she was able to bring a culture change to Brice’s business to reduce stress and encourage a more balanced lifestyle in the workplace.

With up to 48 employees at the company, Brice makes the Shipwreck Alley condo available to employees for wellness getaways. Their own condo stays in the family as a residential retreat.

Although Brice found out the hard way some of the perils of buying a place sight unseen, the end result turned out to be a win-win for everyone involved.

“We have become great friends with Nancy and Greg,” said Brice. “Greg understands the fundamentals and both he and Nancy share in the vision. What’s fun is that you come up with a crazy idea and they make it happen.” ■



The upstairs master bathroom features a wooden soaking tub set atop a pebble tile floor. Cabinets came from HPM.

PHOTO: JOERN ROHDE



Woven barstools bring texture to the sleek kitchen, which features subway tile from Daltile in Honolulu, and appliances from Hakoda’s in Kailua-Kona. Cabinets from HPM.



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