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Getting Back to Basics on Maui

Native Materials And Reconfigured Spaces Transform Oceanfront Rooms

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He's a successful software entrepreneur; she's an accomplished educator. They're both busy, involved philanthropists whose addresses range from the cliffs of La Jolla, California (see *Architectural Digest*, December 1995)—their primary residence—to an apartment overlooking San Francisco Bay. But it's their Hawaiian outpost, an apartment in Kapalua, on the windward side of Maui, that the couple, who have a grown son, consider "the one constant in our family." The islands represent deliverance from their frenzied lives.

Until recently, however, the retreat remained somewhat neglected. Even as their quarters in California were systematically revived and refreshed, the apartment grew cramped and dated. "It was tired," the wife says plainly. To breathe new life into it, they turned, naturally enough, to Mimi London and Mark D. Boone, the design partners who had invigorated the family's other habitats. "It was a no-brainer," insists the husband. "Mimi and Mark listen. They accommodate our needs rather than telling us what we're supposed to like."

In this project their needs centered around the site and taking full advantage of its exceptional panoramas—of a legendary golf fairway, the dramatic coasts of Maui and Molokai and Technicolor blue sweeps of sea and sky. The apartment suffered from "a sort of vertical, tunnelvisioned viewpoint," according to Boone. "We wanted to open it up toward the water and give the whole space a much more broad or horizontal gesture."

He and London held brainstorming sessions with architectural designer Ken Ronchetti and hit on the idea of stepping the ceiling for maximum height. When they started the construction, though, they realized the place held brighter prospects. "We saw we could push the steel up higher than we thought," says Boone.

Over the course of many site visits, with updates in the form of digital photographs e-mailed from the contractors, Boone proceeded to stretch the space in other ways. Interior walls came down, and the living room's awkward steps were either removed or widened. Obtrusive columns in the living room and dining area were eliminated, and small sliding-glass doors were replaced with much larger ones. All in exchange for, as London puts it, "that broad-shouldered feeling— having the rush of the view from the moment you set foot in the place."

Architectural details reinforce the seaward urge. Boone stepped the cabinets in the kitchen and dining area and installed teak floorboards diagonally. The cabinets were made of wire-brushed fir and look as dry as driftwood—a practical as well as an aesthetic decision (the tropical conditions wreak havoc on wood finishes). Throughout the residence, the partners stuck to a few natural materials— teak, fir, granite and, on the walls, straw cloth.

London's penchant for the organic found expression in low tables molded from solid walnut and in a dining table composed of granite and the trunk of a western red cedar. The large-scale pieces suit the clients. "I'm six-four," says the husband. "We all went over to Maui before the project started, and Mimi studied my moods, my habits. She'd say, You probably want a nice big chair right here, don't you?" "One of the most important things was to make it feel like you're in Hawaii," London points out. "It's not unusual to go to a vacation spot and not know if you're in Switzerland or Spain or wherever. So we used what native materials and items we could." She fashioned Tongan tapa cloths into dynamic wall sculptures and used fabrics with tapa designs on sofas and pillows. The wife fancied a Hawaiian quilt in the master bedroom. The couple's accumulation of old island maps graces the dining area, and London rounded out the collection with

seashells and other "really good corny stuff that you can find in Hawaii."

Asian and African antiques pop up here and there, but they're primitive, unfussy pieces. In general, London and Boone were careful to maintain a quiet palette. "A retreat should be a very easy place to go to," says Boone. "You want to bring your toothbrush and sunscreen and be set."

The clients head across the Pacific "every chance we get." "I'm wearing a Hawaiian shirt even before we get off the plane," confesses the husband. "The colors, the music, the food—it's just a total change of rhythm ." Their own island tempo is unhurried, whether they're reading, taking walks on the beach or sampling one of Maui's better restaurants. Or simply drinking in the views.

"They have the sunsets, of course," Mimi London says with a sigh. "And the whales come out and play between Kapalua and Molokai. It's picture-postcard perfect and absolutely wonderful. The clients have a romantic attitude toward the islands, and I think their home now reflects that. It feels truly Hawaiian."











