



A PLACE OF

joy

Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina renews the legacy of Oahu's leeward coast

BY BRETT ALEXANDER-ESTES

In 2015, speculation swirled around the renovation—reported at \$250 million—of the former JW Marriott Ihilani by Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts on Oahu's leeward coast.

Would the existing site be demolished? Was there a market for a luxury hotel way, way past Waikiki? And most important, could a west side property live up to Four Seasons' world-class reputation?

The world's *cognoscenti* apparently thought so. Bookings for the new hotel began months in advance and, in June, the new five-star Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina opened to international acclaim.

De Reus Architects (Hawaii and Sun Valley), G70 (architects/designers, Hawaii and internationally), Philpotts & Associates Inc. (interior designers, Honolulu) and MZA Luxury Hospitality (manufacturers' representative, Los Angeles) collaborated on Ko Olina's refreshment.

As with all projects of this magnitude, all parties had to be on the same page—and meet the lofty standards of the client, The Resort Group.

Four Seasons offers one-of-a-kind experiences to the global luxury market, and at the new resort, says Sanjiv Hulugalle, Four Seasons Ko Olina's general manager, “our goal and our vision has been to create an authentic sense of place.”



Sanjiv Hulugalle

Ko olina translates as “a place of joy,” says Hulugalle, adding that its rugged coastline and sheltered coves were Queen Kaahumanu's favorite retreat, and that the area is still home to “all the cultural storytellers and some of Hawaii's most fascinating living legends—from watermen to kupuna to artisans.

“There's a profound spirituality that

connects the mountains to the ocean here. We're recreating the natural landscape that connects the past to the present and reflects some of the sacredness of the place.” The resort's iconic building, he adds, also has “this incredible *mana*.”

Part of the building's power derives from the international renown of its architect, Edward Killingsworth, who used the structure's strong horizontal framework to create a sense of serenity and ease.

On such a fabled site, Hulugalle says, Four Seasons' guiding principle was to build “a legacy for the future. And architecturally, this was our intent: to honor the classical work of Edward Killingsworth.”

De Reus Architects, charged with preserving that legacy, aimed to “enhance the Hawaiian sense of aloha” throughout the property, and to “achieve a gracious atmosphere with the elegance of simplicity and quiet restraint,” says Mark de Reus, partner and project manager.

While work included expanding the lobby, adding 55 luxury guestrooms, two new pools and new landscaping that enhanced the original muliwai (streambeds) meandering through the grounds,

“very little demolition and reconstruction had to be done,” de Reus says.



Mark de Reus

Says G70 Principal-In-Charge Francis Oda:

“First impressions are often critical to guest experience. Thus the transformation began with opening up the existing lobby to the scenic ocean views that draw you to the new 2,250-square-foot Kohola deck.”



Francis Oda

Furnishings and major decorative elements, which evoked the area’s traditional materials (e.g., sisal weavings) and motifs (e.g., guardian statues, tapas) were chosen and often custom-made by Philpotts and MZA.

Mary Philpotts’ tapa pattern artwork was used as a custom bathroom wall covering and in the guestroom corridors, says Marion Philpotts-Miller, the firm’s principal interior designer. Guestroom mini-bars and nightstands,



Marion Philpotts-Miller

Philpotts-Miller says, “were custom-designed by Philpotts based on a vintage Martin & MacArthur model.”

By most accounts, Ko Olina’s most striking new feature is the restored “Adult Pool,” a 123-foot-long infinity pool with cabanas and spectacular sunset views.

“It’s quite magical,” Hulugalle says of the new Four Seasons Ko Olina. “Rather than overdesign, we enhanced the architecture and interiors with an authentic sense of aloha.

“I’ve had many guests walk in and say, ‘I feel like I’m in an oasis.’”



PHOTOS COURTESY CHRISTIAN HORAN/FOUR SEASONS RESORTS AND HOTELS



Next Design redecorated the Sheraton Waikiki Leahi Club Lounge.

PHOTO COURTESY SHERATON WAIKIKI

project’s personality—as Next Design has done at hospitality properties including the Sheraton Waikiki and the Royal Hawaiian Mailani Tower.

Sakamoto’s first decorating choice for an Island project is usually an Island artisan.

“We always recommend using local artists for our projects,” Sakamoto says. “Why would you hire an artist in New York for a property in Hawaii? Local artists, designers, materials, energy, history—everything should work together in harmony.”



Karen Sakamoto

Occasionally a project needs some offshore expertise, and in those situations, Sakamoto says, “Next Design works with product representatives such as MZA who assist designers by providing extensive product selections.” If, like MZA, the product rep is highly sensitive to Island design considerations, Sakamoto and the rep collaborate by discussing products that reflect the culture, lifestyle, weather and needs of the project.

“Luxury is exemplified by simplicity,” Sakamoto says. “Quiet elegance should speak volumes without being ‘loud.’”

Designing Local

When a project calls for high-end Hawaiiana, the technical chops and sharp eyes of Hawaii’s local designers deliver spot-on authenticity.

Karen Sakamoto, principal-in-charge at Next Design LLC, offers some tips on successful Island luxury décor.

“There’s always a key element that is part of what makes up the property’s personality,” says Sakamoto, adding that general managers can define that key element based on the property’s owner, customers and location. The result, she says, allows her to customize décor, select art and create spaces that reflect the