

On Par with Nature

Hawaii's Nanea Golf Club Embraces Big Island Traditions and a Dramatic Setting

Architecture by Francis S. Oda, FAIA/Interior Design by The Wiseman Group

Text by Christopher Hall/Photography by Matthew Millman

For the Nanea Golf Club on Hawaii's Kona Coast, architect Francis S. Oda designed clubhouse roofs that echo *pu'u*, naturally forming cinder cones. "In the late afternoon," he remarks, they both "have the same copperish glow."

EIGHT HUNDRED FEET above the turquoise-and-lapis waters of Hawaii's Kona Coast, on the flank of the volcano Hualalai, a solitary, gnarled ohia tree stands at the edge of an old lava flow. Its branches ablaze with red flowers, the tree shares an austere landscape of blackened rock and rustling grasses with what appears from a distance to be four *pu'u*, the natural cinder cones dotting this volcanic slope.

The cones, however, are not *pu'u* but the oxidized-copper roofs at a new, ultraprivate golf club literally hewn from lava fields created during an 1801 eruption. At the heart of the club, with a bird's-eye view of the palm-fringed shoreline below and the Pacific beyond, lies a remarkable clubhouse where island tradition has been thoughtfully reinterpreted with a modern sense of design.

Called Nanea—a Hawaiian word connoting, among other things, tranquillity, leisure and something of absorbing interest—the club was founded by



two eminent figures in finance and philanthropy with long-standing ties to the Big Island and a passion for golf.

They recruited Scotsman David McLay Kidd, one of the world's leading golf course architects, to design an 18-hole

course that spreads across one-third of the club's 1,000-acre parcel. Tons of lava rock were removed to make room for fairways planted with vibrant green Paspalum, a salt-tolerant and environmentally friendly turf. The course fol-

lows the contours of the land, with no artificial features and no landscaping other than the tufted fountain grass that occurs naturally in Hawaii's old lava flows. According to Kidd, it is a subtle, complex course

continued on page 102



ABOVE: Open-air dining and social areas offer expansive views of the coastline. The columns, made of ohia trunks, hark back to the ohia forest that stood on the site before the last lava flow, in 1801.

continued from page 100
for skilled golfers, not once-a-year duffers.

Originally envisioning the clubhouse as a kamaaina, or traditional Hawaiian-style, mansion, the members hired an architect, Francis S. Oda, of Honolulu's Group 70 International, who is known for his work in that idiom, and The Wiseman Group, of San Francisco, which has designed interiors for the two founding members' homes. "The original kamaaina houses are wonderful old structures with double-pitched roofs," explains Oda, "but as I stood on the slopes of Hualalai, with the lava field sweeping down to the sea, I felt strongly that the clubhouse needed to relate to that land and how it was formed. It needed to be more Hawai-



TOP RIGHT: A mural by Pua Van Dorpe, executed by Evans & Brown, is in the hallway joining the social areas. **ABOVE:** A lava-rock wall adds texture to the lounge. Paul Vincent Wiseman and Dara Rosenfeld designed the interiors to feel like a private house, with local references throughout. The chair carvings use a pattern found in Hawaiian bark cloth. Clarence House sofa pillow fabric. Stark sisal rug.

ian, more in tune with the cultural landscape of the islands."

From afar, the 24,000-square-foot clubhouse virtually disappears into the lava field. Sheltering the entrance and the open space comprising the dining room, lounge and lanai are the four cone-shaped roofs, whose proportions and varied heights were derived from measurements Oda took of actual *pu'u*. The kitchen, pro shop, locker rooms and offices are essentially underground, backed into the slope, covered with lava and fountain grass and bracketed by massive rock walls made with lava taken from the site.

Inside the social areas, rustic, honey-colored ohia trunks—echoing the gnarled tree next to the clubhouse—support the domes, whose interiors have been fitted with an ohia lattice lashed together in traditional Hawaiian fashion with braided coconut fiber. The

continued on page 106

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

NOVEMBER 2006

RIGHT: The residential atmosphere continues in the women's locker room lounge. The Wiseman Group custom-designed all of the furnishings in the clubhouse. Patterson, Flynn & Martin carpet.

continued from page 102

stone floor, made to measure in Italy, is pigmented and scored with lines to resemble an old lava flow. The entire space is open-sided to catch cooling trade winds, with bronze-framed glass doors, suspended from a ceiling track, providing protection on blustery days.

Paul Vincent Wiseman and his associate Dara Rosenfeld created relaxed groupings of custom wood furniture whose design incorporates many



Hawaiian references. "The butterfly joint is a recurring historical motif in Hawaii," says Wiseman, "and we used it in tables, lamps, sofas and chairs." Patterns from kapa, or Hawaiian bark cloth, appear as carved details on chairs, and the hammered-bronze Déco-feeling drink tables and high-back club chairs upholstered in pale beige are a nod to the era when grand ocean liners often called at Hawaiian ports.

Mounted on a serpentine rear wall of lava rock and illuminated from above by skylights is a long mural that bears a striking resemblance to a huge swath of actual kapa. Designed by famed kapa artist Pua Van Dorpe and executed by San Francisco muralists Evans & Brown, it depicts, in



ABOVE: The golf course, designed by David McLay Kidd, is set amid fountain grass and lava rock. **LEFT:** The lanai. Glass doors slide along a ceiling track, protecting open areas. The pillow fabric is from Summit; the cushion fabric is from Perennials.

visually compelling symbols, Hualalai rising from the ocean toward the swirling stars of the Milky Way.

Two and a half years after construction began, Nanea officially opened with a dedication ceremony. Of all the sentiments expressed that day, none were more appreciated by the attendees than those of the Hawaiian priest who had come to perform a blessing. "He told us that Nanea showed a deep respect for the land, and for Hawaiian tradition," recalls the club manager. "I can't tell you how much that meant to us." □