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kahala cantilever

By Aimee Harris • Photos by Macario • Featured Developer: Donald T. Eovino



The interior's clean lines and simple colors are intentional. The monochromatic ivory color palette increases contrast between the room and its more colorful and textured objects. Even neutral browns, such as the flat-front maple cabinetry, lava rock art wall and antique Chinese art, pop from the single-color hue room.

This postmodern revival, with its austere structure and clean lines, brings back the best of the 1950s.

The husband, a real estate investor, and the wife, an actress-producer from Hong Kong, wanted a condo, with a private, penthouse feel. The only problem was ... they bought a house.

The house is a 1952 modern structure designed in a Frank Lloyd Wright fashion. The original engineer/owner designed the house to cantilever over the property's lava-flow foundation. From its rocky perch, the house offers a 180-degree Koolau mountain and Kahala skyline view. However, the house and its property suffered from not-so-benign neglect. The enormous 14,000-square-foot plot, which is rare for an off-beach Kahala residence, needed a major remodel.

The husband remembers, "Looking past all the ugliness, the architecture was intriguing. But, its panoramic views are what sold me. The house just needed a bath and scrub down ... it had so much potential."

The couple invited their friend and developer, Donald T. Eovino, to assess the house. "I develop new high-end houses in Kahala, so I don't normally handle remodels. This project was a labor of love befitting a long-time friendship and it demanded quality attention," he says.

With Eovino's support, the couple planned their remodel with two main objectives: first, make the house look and feel like a high-rise penthouse. Secondly, stay true to the house's modern architecture.

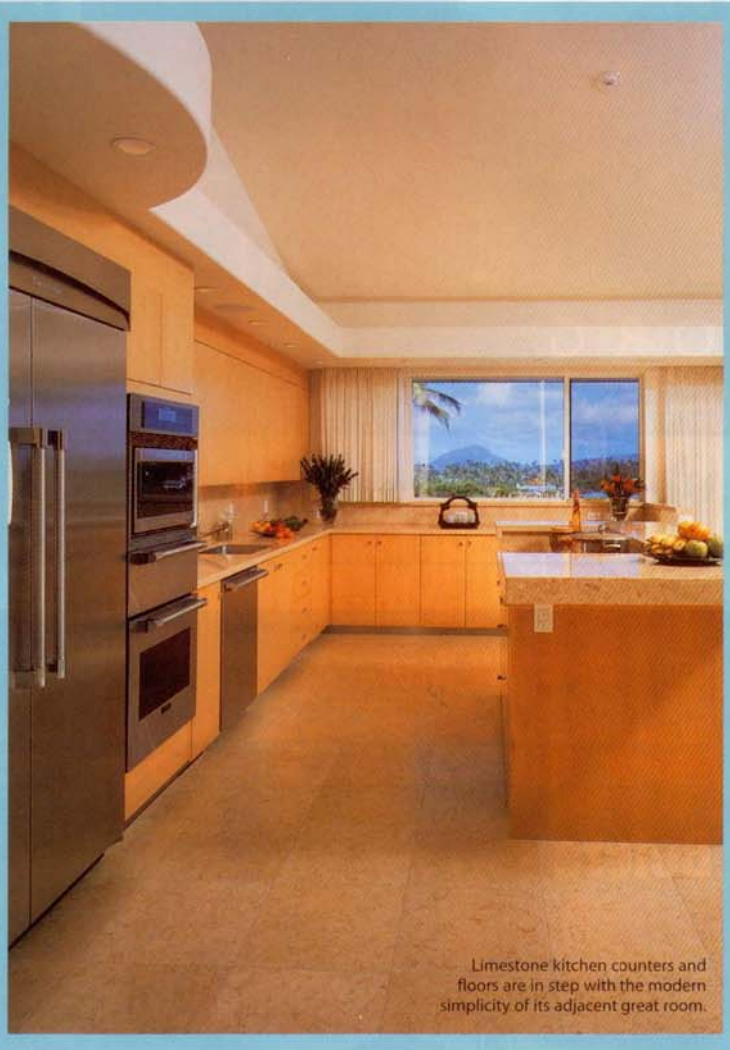
The husband states, "No matter what it took, we wanted to keep the structural design and the lines as they were. It turned into a real headache at some points, but no, no, no ... we were going to stay true to the original design."

So, how do you revive a mid-century house?

The wife says, "When we first started out, Eovino had so many great ideas on how to expand out, build a second story, but we wanted it to be smaller, like a condo. That's how we came up with the project's catch phrase, 'penthouse on the rock.' It became our theme."

With the help of architect Kristan Eiserloh, the team decided to keep the original footprint and re-brace the cantilever house to its foundation. Eiserloh explains that the house has a structural steel frame, incorporating post-tension steel cables similar to those on the Golden Gate Bridge. "The original engineering is so unique that in today's design, it's simply not done. This was not going to be an easy remodel job, but I instantly connected with the vision of the owners."

Since the house had no rain gutters, 50-plus years worth of rain poured off the roof, hit the deck and then dripped into all the steel. Much of the steel was rusted. A crew of engineers determined what was salvageable. "To save the cantilever look, we ended up doing some major bracing under the house and in the carport," Eovino says.



Limestone kitchen counters and floors are in step with the modern simplicity of its adjacent great room.

However, despite the major work on the house's exterior, Eovino contends that this project was more of an interior design job. "We started off with just some minor cosmetic changes, but this house is almost 55 years old ... how do you do a little bit of renovation?"

After replacing the walls, along with the ceiling joists, drywall, windows, plumbing and electrical—the two main things that remain of the original house are the shingles on the roof and the slab on the floor.

To maximize the penthouse-like view, Eovino installed a new Fleetwood door system of disappearing eight-foot, floor-to-ceiling sliders that pocket into the walls. "It's a nice way to capture the view and keep the cantilever's vanishing corners."

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All those windows make the wife happy, but for a different reason. “When we draw all the curtains together, this house feels like a condo, where you can just sit, be comfortable and watch TV.”

To extend that condo feel throughout the house, she designed the interior with restraint. She chants her modern design mantra, “Simple, simple, simple ... take away, take away.”

However, she was design challenged by the house’s tented ceiling. The tent-ceiling effect is caused by two necessary remnants of the original design—a pair of support beams that buttress the great room, which comprises about 1,200 square feet of the house. That begs the question, “How do you make a great room feel intimate and comfortable, like a condo? Heeding to the tent-shape, the wife coated the great room



BEFORE



AFTER

These exterior “before and after” shots illustrate how the owners stayed true the house’s original 1950 modern architecture. Beyond its cosmetic transformation, one of the most noticeable changes is the carport, which is now enclosed with a garage door.

in a monochromatic ivory palette. “The ceiling and walls are all one color, and I added lots of neutral fabrics,” she says. “The fabrics make the room cozy.”

In the process of modernizing the house, an existing 14-foot-high interior lava rock wall became a point of contention.

The wife says, “We thought it was old and ugly. I wanted to tear the wall down.”

Eovino argued differently.

He insisted that the wall was an essential part in restoring the balance of the post-modern feel of the interior, and that it would project an elegant simplicity. Eovino says, “The wall was the one thing I fought with them on. I told them that they couldn’t take it down. It’s the ying and yang ... the Zen of the house. If nothing else, that’s a \$10,000 wall right there.”

In the end, the wall won out. Now the couple recognizes the rock wall’s simple beauty and its juxtaposition between the old and the new. Currently showcased with a skylight by day and art lights by night, the wall symbolizes all that is this postmodern revival.

Suppliers >>

Developer: Donald T. Eovino

Architect: Kristan Eiserloh, AIA, of KE Design Unlimited

Air Conditioning System: AC system crafted into soffits by Aldrin Villahermosa, of AMV Air Conditioning Inc.

Cabinetry: Light maple cabinets, from Steve Yuen, of Newport Pacific Cabinets

Electrical: Ruben V. Tuzon, of Island Wide Electrical Service & Maintenance Inc.

Doors: Fleetwood pocket door system

Fencing: GMB Vinyl Inc.

Furniture (chairs, etc.): Chinese antiques from Shanghai and Inner Mongolia; other furniture from various stores in West Hollywood, Los Angeles

Home Theater: TV, built-in stereo, TV camera and security, by Home Automation Hawaii

Kitchen appliances: Thermador appliances, from Servco Pacific

Kitchen floors: Egyptian Gold limestone, from Marblehaus Hawaii

Kitchen counters and island: Egyptian Gold limestone, from Selective Stone

Painters: JD Painting Inc. & Island Finishes

Plumber: Chuck Cullison, of C.D. Cullison Plumbing Inc. ✪