

# Studios By The Sea

LIFE IS A WORK OF ART FOR CHRISTIAN RIESE LASSEN  
IN HIS THREE SPECTACULAR OCEANFRONT RESIDENCES



The entrance features a baby grand piano. The coffee tables were originally in Mike Kreiss's house and Lassen saw and liked them...so they went into his Diamond Head home.





The main plan was to draw the eye into the great hall and beyond to the outside view. Furniture was arranged to be conducive to flow the view to the beach.



Architecture by/ Jeff Long and Associates  
 Interior Design by/ Carla Flood, ASID and Michael Kreiss  
 Text by/ Marcus Webb  
 Photography by/ Olivier Koning and Ron Dahlquist



LEFT: The master bedroom features a canopy bed with mosquito netting. Bedroom furnishings feature chairs with woven leather, bed with cushioned woven rattan in headboard and footboard, and stylized thick rattan poles as posts for the canopy;

nightstands also feature cushioned and pole rattan. A mirrored ceiling suggests a stylized skylight.

ABOVE: The guest bedrooms are decorated in a neutral palette to complement the colorful artwork of Lassen.

“THE WORLD IS MY PALETTE,” DECLARES HAWAII-RAISED artist Christian Riese Lassen. The connection between life and art is indeed a global nexus for this extraordinarily successful Hawaiian painter, surfer, and environmentalist. Lassen owns several homes around the world, including on the U.S. mainland, overseas, and, naturally, on Hawai‘i itself (two homes on Maui, one on O‘ahu). His Island homes, in particular, are intimate yet grand-scale expressions of his vision...touchstones of a globe-trotting lifestyle that centers on art, sun, surf, and sea.

When Lassen is not supervising a premier at one of his several galleries from Guam to Florida, he may perhaps be found producing his cable TV show...promoting ocean conservation...or perhaps hop-scotching from home to home, following

the surf around the world, and living in whichever house is closest to the best breakers of any given season.

As backdrops to this high-energy lifestyle, Lassen’s trio of Hawaiian homes serve as his live-in painting studios, home art galleries, and multi-million-dollar surf shacks. In addition, when he’s not in any particular residence, they serve as lucrative rental properties.

Lassen’s homes, like his art, provide a striking reflection of the man himself. Lassen is an idealist in his quest to preserve the world’s natural beauty. He’s a well-traveled lover of the cultural diversity that makes up today’s Hawai‘i. And he’s a many-faceted personality who enjoys—and succeeds in—sports, art, and business affairs, as well as social causes and media projects.

All of these eclectic elements can be found in Lassen’s

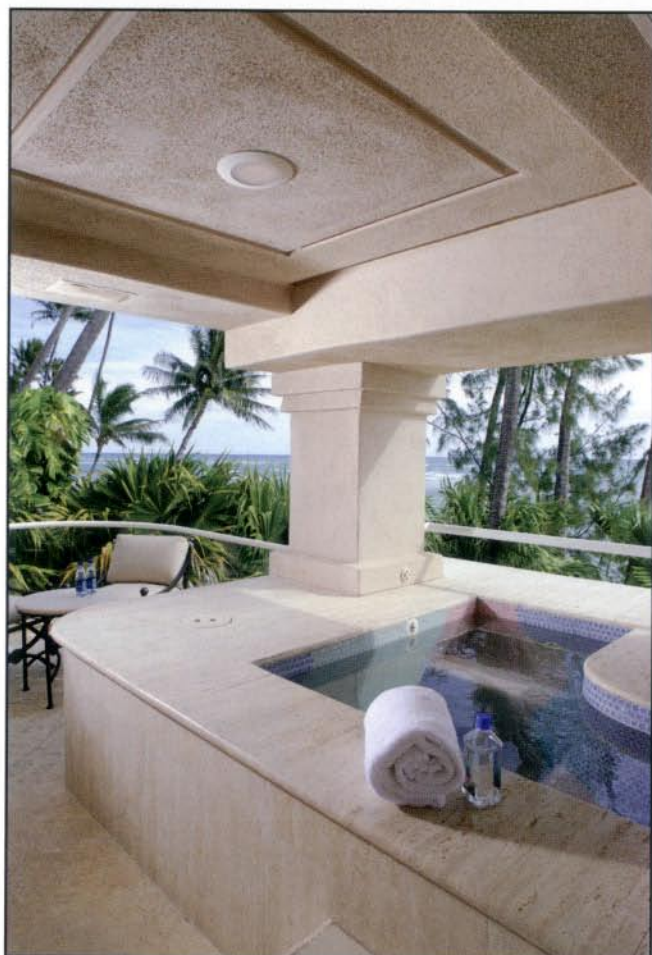


paintings. His trademark canvases feature fantasy-drenched imagery of idealized, almost naïve romanticism. Yet his oeuvre also covers a diverse range of additional styles from classically impressionistic to ultra-modern photo-realistic. His work expresses his environmentalism with its passionate evocation of natural beauty. Yet his art also testifies to his considerable business savvy (especially when licensed Lassen images turn up on endless items of personal apparel and in the entry foyers of world-class corporations).

The same mix of qualities is expressed in Lassen's homes, turning these spectacular luxury residences into distinctive statements of the artist-activist's personality. Architecture of his Hawai'i structures ranges from Mediterranean, to Moroccan, to modernist international in style. Interior designs offer sumptuous material richness, yet also fresh, youthful energy and openness.

Without question, the most spectacular of the artist's properties is a residence sometimes called the Golden Conch. This is Lassen's 9,000 sq. ft. home on Maui, situated on Kapalua's secluded Oneloa Beach. The two-story living room and mezzanine features 40-ft. tall, retractable glass walls facing the ocean. Honolulu-based architect Jeffery Long of Long & Associates, Inc. says—with a bit of chuckle—that these walls are almost the size of those found in aircraft hangars.

The two corner walls roll back to allow Hawai'i itself to dominate one's view and one's consciousness. The home, for all its size and spectacle, becomes nothing more than a charming backdrop to sand, sea, and sky. From the living room's 30-foot plush wrap-around couch, one looks past the infinity pool and cobalt-blue Jacuzzi to the white beach, the dazzling Pacific, and out to the neighboring island of Moloka'i under that expansive Hawai'i blue dome.



"We didn't want to be too matronly or maudlin, which could happen with French-inspired classical architecture," says Kreiss. "We went

with simpler, straighter lines to give it a younger feel. Christian wanted drama and a little unexpectedness."



LEFT: A second floor patio and Jacuzzi offer a private area for relaxation and entertaining.

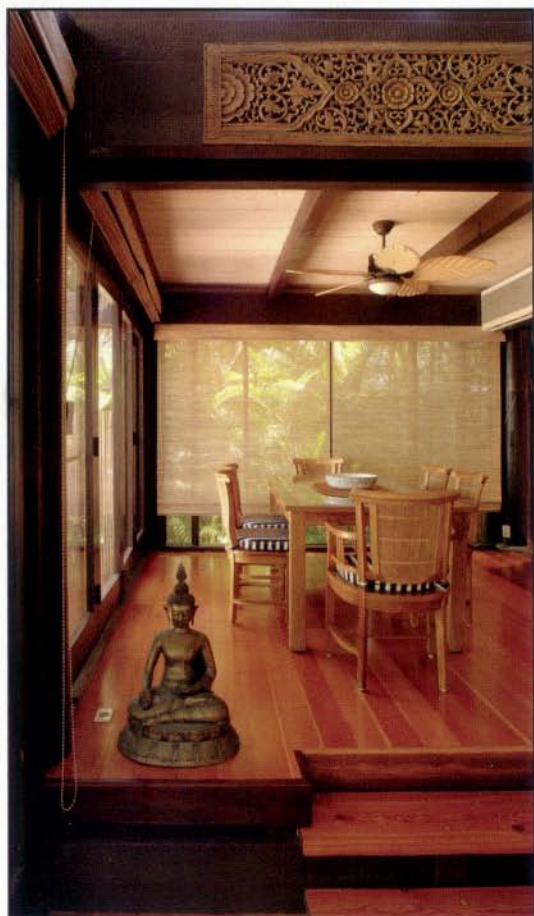
ABOVE: Artist Lassen in his home studio.







**ABOVE:** The main living area features floor to ceiling windows fitted with translucent Roman (pleated) reed woven shades with valences. This allows people to see thru to the outside but gives a modicum of privacy while providing a natural textured element to the entire home.



**LEFT:** The dining room is filled with Balinese pieces purchased from Indolotus Imports (on Maui) including the Buddha, dining chairs and tables.

Long's architecture for the Kapalua residence is contemporary Hawaiian with its sloping, overhanging roof, cantilevered planes, and open plan. Yet a subtle Moroccan flavor derives from elements such as the sinuous curves of a staircase that connects the ground floor to the upstairs mezzanine, as well as the marble and stone finishes on the floors and pavilion-style columns.

Somehow the total effect is not Hawaiian alone, nor strictly North African, nor merely contemporary. Above all, the home somehow suggests a lavish playpen—the ideal palace for a perpetually young spirit to refresh himself and find new inspiration for new artistic creations.

Recent interior design work for the Kapalua residence was completed by Carla Flood, ASID, of Interiors Pacific (Wailea, Maui). Lassen asked her to convert the large upstairs studio space into a six-bedroom area...while leaving it easily convertible back into a studio when he was in residence. Flood's solution was to furnish the zone with pieces on casters that can be





The blue color theme ranged from varied shades of aqua to deep ocean blues, used for everything from bed coverings to accent pillows, and dining chair seats. The reddish end of the spectrum was invoked as a counterpoint in the wood flooring.





LEFT: The master suite includes space that can double as an office suite or quickly convert to the artist's studio.



ABOVE: The master bath offers two bowl sinks and an outdoor shower. Balinese wood carvings accent the beams through the room.

rolled aside in a jiffy, leaving two-thirds of the area free for paints and easels, light and air.

A lavish media room features state-of-the-art electronics and a theater-sized, drop-down movie screen. The upstairs master bedroom suite offers 180-degree views of the beach through three glass walls. Like all of Lassen's homes, the Kapalua house also functions prominently as a gallery of his own art. The upper level features several giclées—limited-edition, digital reproduction prints on canvas that feature a gallery-style wrap around the frame.

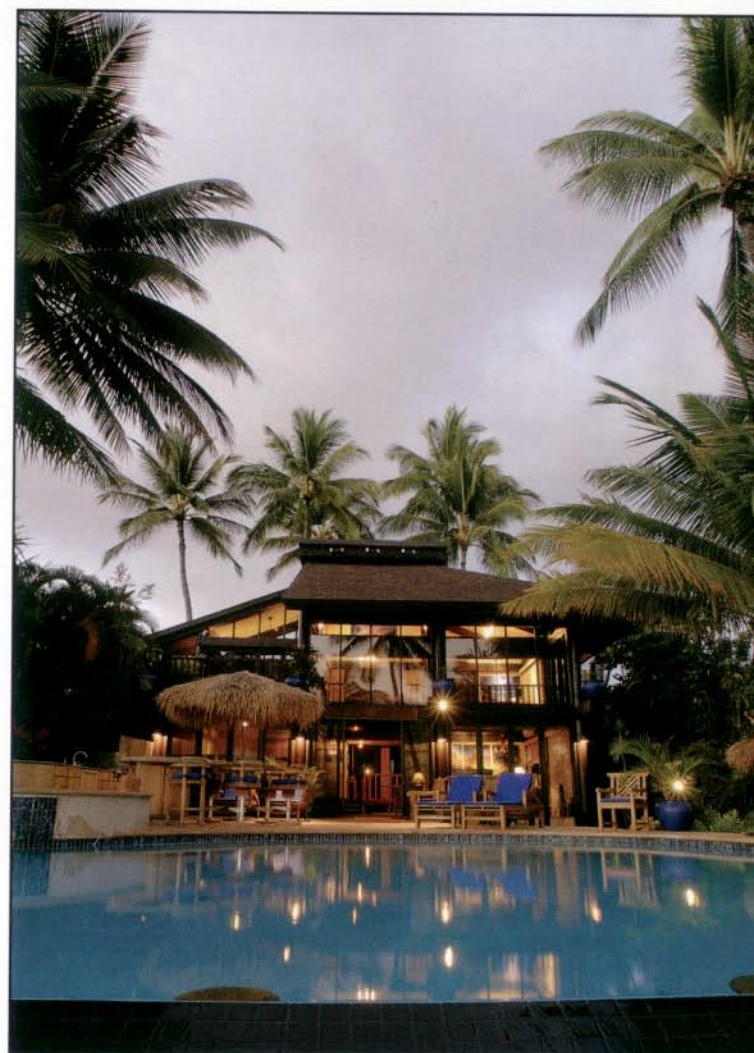
Flood also provided interior design on a recent total remake of Lassen's second Maui home. Known as the Seaside Galleria, it's located on Front Street in the old port town of Lahaina. The locale has a special place in Lassen's story for it was in Lahaina that, as a boy, he learned to surf...and to paint. The modernistic home was built in the so-called "pole house" style, popular in the 1970s and '80s, which features massive, vertical rounded wood columns (poles) and horizontal wood

beams. Open display of the beams helps provide some rough natural elements in an otherwise aggressively contemporary architectural statement that features sharp angles, boxy rooms, and vast expanses of glass.

Flood's approach was to showcase the dramatic angles and the wood with a rich, dark coffee-brown paint finish that highlighted the building's basic structure—meaning all window trims, door frames, baseboard, rafters, and all support columns (indoors and out). Floors were left in an eclectic mix of gleaming wood finishes, and the home was appointed with extensive stonework such as the black granite kitchen counters, as well as the twin, freestanding sink bowls and floor tiles in the master bath.

Next, Flood softened this potentially stark statement with an abundance of large plants and flora, mixed with imported Indonesian furnishings that featured flowing lines with natural fibers and textures. "Strategic placement of curvilinear furnishings, natural tropical foliage, and curved pots and planters





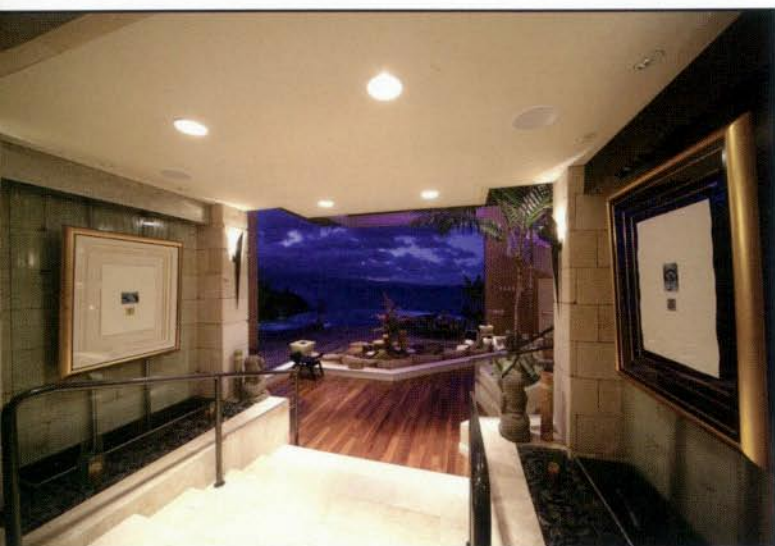
TOP & ABOVE: Carla Flood added wood decking up that leads to textured concrete pool and Balinese teak chaise lounges, chairs. She also installed thatched roof over the outdoor dining table which seats six. Outdoor koa kitchen with granite tops.

RIGHT: Vertical crossbeams cantilever out over the ocean decking; Flood drilled into rafter ends and set huge blue planters on top, filled planters with crotons, a hardy plant that withstands salt air, turns red for contrast when mature.





ABOVE: 40-foot sliding walls of glass border the great hall on two sides. The immense doors open with the touch of a button, allowing the luxurious interiors and the beauty of the outdoors to become one. Photo courtesy *Luxury Retreats Hawaii*.



ABOVE: The entrance to Lassen's Kapalua residence gives a glimpse of the grand hall and the view to come. Photo courtesy *Luxury Retreats Hawaii*.

blurred the sharp angles of the architecture," Flood explained. "It's a tricky balancing act: you point up the lines of the basic structure with the use of bold colors, then offset those same lines with the accents. But it works! The natural shapes and textures of foliage are crucial in setting the scene; they provide a comfortable screen through which you see the building. It's glimpses through a window, almost camouflage."

Flood's final touch was to accent the Seaside Galleria with vivid, ocean-blue touches of color throughout the residence. These eye-catching elements—pots, massive blue planters, statuary, and the like, carefully reflected and complemented the dominant palette of Lassen's typically blue-dominated marine paintings, which are found in special niches throughout the house. To guard against monochrome monotony, Flood performed another balancing act. She subtly appointed the home with some tones on the opposite of the color spectrum, too. For example, she made certain to include the near-orange of tropical wood.

Diamond Head, on O'ahu, is the site of Lassen's classically Mediterranean abode. With its off-white interiors, marble floors, columns, balustrades, and formal lines, the home could have seemed constricted and overly formal. To inject a lively, playful tone—yet one in harmony with the architecture—Lassen turned to interior designer and third-general Michael Kreiss of Kreiss Enterprises (San Diego, CA).

Kreiss understood that an important part of his assignment was to showcase Lassen's art, which—as in the two Maui homes—was displayed throughout the residence. He took his inspiration from the artist's own sensibility, which Kreiss describes as a "remarkable use of color and imagery."

For the off-white, two-story great hall, Kreiss's company designed and built contemporary chairs and a sofa with simple, straight lines and matching off-white fabric, dramatically yet elegantly offset by their ebony stained wood. The ebony provides





ABOVE: The grand hall offers a comfortable place to gaze at the Pacific ocean and pool areas from the 30-foot plush wrap-around sofa. The coffee table is custom made. *Photo courtesy Luxury Retreats Hawaii.*

RIGHT: The home features a custom LED lighting system in the ceiling, allowing guests to change the mood of the interiors at the press of a button. *Photo courtesy Luxury Retreats Hawaii.*

a visual echo of the foyer's baby grand piano. Yarn on the accent pillows for sofa and chairs was dyed to match the blue floor inlay.

These pieces, and the twin coffee tables (travertine with Chinese grate inlay), were laid out in a symmetrical arrangement that enhanced and "relaxed" the formal space of the great hall, without cluttering the dramatic view from the foyer. Upon entering the home through the Balinese doors, a visitor is rewarded with a sweeping vista past interior waterfalls to (and through) the great hall to the beach, ocean, and sky beyond.

"The final design statement is rather more contemporary and offers more contrasts than one might expect, given the traditionalism of the architectural setting," Kreiss says. "Similarly, the furnishings have a younger feeling than might be expected in a home dominated by a classical motif. This all provides a setting—playful yet elegant—for Christian's artwork and that marvelous view. He is very sensitive to having interiors with the colors of the sky, the sea, and the sand. The beautiful azure blues of his paintings reflect the true palette of Hawai'i."

And so do his homes. In the seaside studios of this Maui-based artist, the Island setting becomes living art...while artful architecture and interior design become part of the setting. If it's difficult to tell where nature ends and art begins, that's probably exactly how Christian Reise Lassen wants it. 🌺

