

A MODULAR HOME



Photos Benny Chan (www.fotoworks.cc), **Architects** Hagy Belzberg and Barry Garten (www.belzbergarchitects.com), **Building Contractor** DEM Construction, **Distributor** Stone Source (www.stonesource.com), **Ceramic surfaces** Floor Gres (www.floorgres.it)

In Hawaii, on the slopes of the volcano Hualalai looking out over the boundless expanse of the ocean, Hagy Belzberg and his practice created a stunning holiday villa with a citadel structure, winner of the Ceramics of Italy Design Award 2011

by Riccardo Bianchi

What is the connection between the creator of Mickey Mouse and a super-villa that won the Ceramics of Italy Design Award 2011? This fascinating tale of architecture begins at the Patina restaurant in the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, where Hagy Belzberg, head of the eponymous practice that designed the restaurant, was approached by a couple. They were keen to discover his secrets and asked him to design their holiday home. At that time it wasn't possible, but a few months later the couple again approached Belzberg with an offer that he couldn't refuse: an acre-sized plot of land suspended above the ocean, set amongst the solidified lava fields of the volcano Hualalai on Hawaii's Big Island. The landscape is breathtakingly spectacular. To do it justice required a stroke of genius. Belzberg responded with a uniquely original solution on a micro-urban rather than a merely architectural scale, a compositional *tour de force* in which the built and natural landscapes merge while both remaining clearly recognisable. Instead of a single, solid structure, it is a kind of linear citadel made up of a series of organic-rationalist



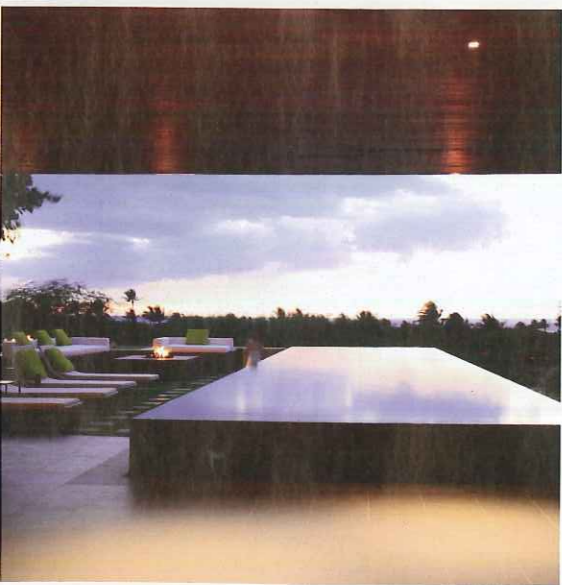
buildings (a total of 750 m²) interconnected by a covered walkway, a kind of "main street" that dictates the orientation of the buildings and enables users to fully enjoy the view of the sea to the west and the mountain to the east. Each pavilion has a different function and is independent in terms of living requirements: one for the couple's children and for guests on the side facing the volcano, another for clients on the side facing the ocean, and in the centre, as aggregating factors for family life, a multimedia room and the enormous living room, the *pièce de résistance* of the entire project. The living area consists of a large glass-panelled space that abuts onto a panoramic terrace organised around a raised infinity-edge swimming pool looking out over the green horizon of the mountainside, merging in the distance with the intense blue of the Pacific and its skies.

Here the furnished space - which features a modular sofa by Antonio Citterio and a rug by Andrée Putman - appears to be magically and seamlessly immersed in a liquid, watery dimension, an impression that is further accentuated by a reflecting channel that runs along a side window.

This decorative illusion/allusion owes much to the contribution of interior designer Meg Joannides, who is on exactly the same wavelength as Belzberg in terms of ideas and style (they even work in the same building in Santa Monica!). Meg's touch can be appreciated above all in the composition of the furnishings, where every designer-made or customised item stands independently but is also an integral part of a harmonious whole. A significant contribution to this sensation of continuity comes from the choice of using a single floor - not just for

Facing page, the entrance to Kona Residence on Big Island in the Hawaii archipelago features a kind of arch inspired by the shapes of baskets used by the island's inhabitants to offer gifts. Designed in 3D and consisting of 600 elements, it rests on a lava rock plinth surrounded by water and a series of benches.

Top right, the covered walkway that provides access to the various functional areas of the complex.



Above, the kitchen was supplied by Boffi. The floor covering consists of Ecolabel porcelain tiles as part of an architectural project based on eco-sustainability criteria. Walnut furnishings, stainless steel and crystal glass countertops.

Left, the living room and the swimming pool are separated by a thin glass membrane. The sense of continuity between interior and exterior is emphasised by the materials, especially concrete and wood. The infinity-edge swimming pool is raised relative to floor level. The furnishings are by Laola Lenti, the table by B&B Italia.

Below, one of the bathrooms.



Clockwise from top, the covered walkway that leads to the functional areas of the complex viewed from south-west: the foreground end features a small reflecting pool that the living room windows face onto; the powder room; view of covered walkway from north-east towards the south; the living room with large windows like those of ships. Groundpièce sofas by Antonio Citterio for Flexform.

the living space but for the entire building - consisting of stone-effect textured tiles produced by Floor Gres, one of the many tributes to Italian style that are to be found in this extraordinary villa.

Having reached the end of this exhilarating *promenade architecturale*, we return to the entrance because it is here that Belzberg has placed his real *coup de théâtre*. A structure that combines modernity and a tribute to the island's traditions, it resembles the traditional baskets used by Hawaiians to offer gifts but expanded to an architectural scale. Described by some as a folly, others as "the gazebo", it is a 5 metre high arch with a tapered profile

consisting of 600 plywood ribs and strips constructed in Los Angeles and assembled here on a plinth of lava stone surrounded by water. "I had originally intended it to create a wow factor", Belzberg says. "But now that it's in use, it has surprisingly become one of the favourite meeting and conversation points for the owners and their friends. We have even added some chairs." Take a seat!

Riccardo Bianchi, AD

Technical details

Ceramic surfaces: Floor Gres, Architech/ series (Ecolabel certified)

Main type and sizes: Forest colour porcelain tile, 40x80 cm and 60x120 cm sizes, natural finish

Main technical specifications:

Water absorption (ISO 10545-3): ≤ 0.1%

Chemical resistance (ISO 10545-13): UA ULA UHA

Deep abrasion resistance (ISO 10545-6): ≤150 mm³

Stain resistance (ISO 10545-14): class 4

Frost resistance (ISO 10545-12): compliant

Modulus of rupture and breaking strength (ISO 10545-4): ≥ 1700 N/mm²

Slip resistance (DIN 51130): R9

Thermal shock resistance (ISO 10545-9): compliant