

# West Coast Modern

Architecture, Interiors & Design



Zahid Sardar

Photographs by Matthew Millman



## Waimea House, Hawaii

WALKER WARNER ARCHITECTS



The long, shed-roofed home that Greg Warner designed for a resort developer and his family in Hawaii draws as much inspiration from its upland cattle ranch setting beside a rain forest preserve near Waimea as it does from the nature-inspired modernism of the late Russian-American architect Vladimir Ossipoff, who lived and worked in Honolulu.

“My client had always been impressed by Ossipoff’s sensibility, and when he learned that I had studied at Ossipoff’s mid-century Hawaii Preparatory Academy we immediately clicked,” Warner, a founder of the San Francisco firm

LEFT: A rear view of architect Greg Warner’s Ossipoff-inspired ranch house near the Kona coast. Its sloped roofs and vertical wood siding reflect vernacular farm sheds.

ABOVE: It sits on an ecotone between dry and very rainy zones, so the path to the front door is also sheltered.

Walker Warner, said. "I consider Ossipoff's Davies Memorial Chapel on that campus the foundation of my own architectural direction."

With a corrugated tin roof, board-formed walls made of cement and lava rock, and indigenous Hawaiian wood posts, Ossipoff's 1966 chapel is powerfully simple and timeless.

"That's what more Hawaii architecture could be like," Warner said, lamenting the fact that the island's tropical, mid-Pacific climate more readily attracts overblown Balinese lanais and enormous California-style ranch houses.



ABOVE: A misty tableau of Mauna Kea, seen from the den on the drier side of the property, is ever changing.

RIGHT: A palette of hardwoods includes ipe for lanai decks and a solid ohia tree trunk post. Wood and glass doors slide back for alfresco living. Arts and Crafts-style kitchen cabinets visible inside echo Japanese tansus.





The developer and his wife did not want to dominate the hill or the view with a large, showy house, so their one-room-deep home made of wood and glass sitting on 20 acres is just 2,800 square feet and a single story high. It sits neatly on a ridge between two distinct microclimates, with native ohia myrtle trees and streams on one side and expansive, treeless stretches on the relatively dry side facing snow-capped Mauna Kea.

“It is also positioned for the weather,” Warner said. Built on an east-west axis, the narrow building is impervious to strong winds that frequently blow in that direction.

TOP: Wood-framed glass windows and stone foundations live the rear section of the house facing former grazing land.

RIGHT: When the central living room doors are slid back, the rear decks become a part of the living room. Doors to the partially visible forested front garden allow cross-ventilation.





ABOVE: Master bedroom windows facing east catch the first light and have unobstructed valley and mountain views.  
 FACING: A custom concrete tub in the master bathroom is fashioned like Japanese ofuro soaking tubs made of wood.

More such practicality abounds. Doors and windows are positioned to maximize cross-ventilation and eliminate the need for air conditioning or heating. A flat, standing seam steel shed roof, which slopes toward the natural watershed and streams in front of the house, is like others in the area.

“A pitched roof would have stood out too much. Sloped corrugated roofs are common for the amount of precipitation we get here,” the developer said, adding, “we’ve even got a cedar ceiling to muffle the sound of rain.”

Most of the time, the balmy weather encourages outdoor living. A large living and dining area with wall-size barn doors opens to a lanai sheltered by projecting bays on each side in the rear. This central space is flanked by a master suite on the east side and, at the opposite end, rooms for the owners’ two children, who enjoy being close by.



“We wanted one big area in the middle to dine together every night,” the developer said. “I grew up in a house in Southern California with a formal dining room but we never used it very much.”

To further mesh the house with its landscape, most of its materials were selected to acquire a gradual patina. Inside, the red cedar will turn gray, and a naturally fluted, bark-covered ohia wood post outside—a clear nod to Ossipoff—will take on a charred, weathered sheen over time.

“It is well camouflaged in this context,” Warner said.

From the carport, a covered walkway that goes past lush landscaping to a simple façade and a narrow front door adds another veil before you enter the house.

“It is a trick to reveal the view gradually,” the developer said. Inside, three tall bay windows in back open to dramatic vistas of pastureland and the distant volcano.

“When you step inside you can see that the roof cants up, and you get a full view of the valley,” the owner said. “When there is a tropical rainstorm and the sun comes out at the same time, it all looks simply extraordinary.” □