



Aesthetic Prowess

FROM MENTORING TO MEET-AND-GREETINGS, INTERIOR DESIGNER AVERY SOLMSEN RAVES ABOUT HER MULTI-FACETED ROLE AT PHILPOTTS INTERIORS.

words **NICOLE KATO**

A SENSE OF GOOD DESIGN, SAYS AVERY SOLMSEN, IS INNATE.

Though one can learn the technical aspects of the craft, an eye for what looks good is inherent. And, it's pretty evident that Solmssen's got a knack for sterling schemes.

Right now, she's paving the way as an associate senior designer, a new position with interior design studio Philpotts Interiors.

For Solmssen, her fascination with interior design started when she was a young girl. She spent her formative years abroad with her mother, an artist, and father, an international investment banker. She was born in Tokyo and moved to Seoul shortly thereafter. She and her family then moved to the East Coast and eventually to California. Though much of her life was spent traveling the globe, Solmssen's roots in the island are fully engrained. Her grandmother, a Native Hawaiian, was born and raised on the Big Island, and Solmssen's husband is from Kaua'i.

Though her interest in the field started early on, Solmssen ended up pursuing



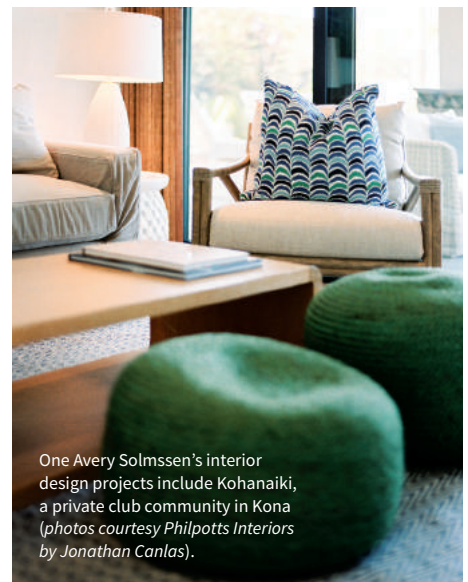
a career path as a teacher. Education degree in hand, she moved to Hawai'i and was introduced to Mary Philpotts McGrath through a mutual friend. The rest, Solmssen says, was history.

"I ended up working with Mary on the weekends and teaching during the week," Solmssen recalls. "She changed the trajectory of my life."

In spending time with the founding designer of Philpotts, Solmssen revived her love of interior design and made the decision to go back to school and earn her degree in the field in 1998. Soon after, she obtained her NCIDQ certification.

With creative juices constantly flowing, it's easy to wonder where Solmssen pulls ideas and stimuli on a regular basis. The answer, though, is quite easy, to hear her tell it.

"Hawai'i is full of inspiration," she says. "We are so tied to our culture and the arts. You never know where you're going to find it."



One Avery Solmssen's interior design projects include Kohanaiki, a private club community in Kona (photos courtesy Philpotts Interiors by Jonathan Canlas).

Solmssen recalls another Hawai'i Island job, a Kona home that needed a unique color scheme. She opted for black and green—an unlikely combination—that pulled from the area's natural beauty in its green foliage and black lava.

"They were skeptical, but when they saw it, everyone loved it," she remembers.

In fact, the biggest responsibility Solmssen and the rest of Philpotts Interiors staff is to gather information.

"It's my job to take an idea and make it work, to make it beautiful," she explains. "I deliver that design to them in a respectful way." ■