



WIMBERLY ALLISON TONG & GOO

Left: American Savings Bank, remodeled its main branch downtown in a way it hopes will signal its local ownership. Below: Eighteen foot-high mosaics of ki and kalo by artist Lani Yamasaki punctuate the remodel.

Her “hero” shot of a cluster of kalo leaves was the basis for the bank’s new logo. “But kalo can also be found throughout the world, in Okinawa, China, Africa.” This was important as ASB didn’t want to exclude any cultures while it reached for a Native Hawaiian feel. The artist helped the bank, its ad agency, Starr Seigle Communications, and WAT&G figure out such cultural shadings.

The \$3-million remodel is meant to speak to more than customers. Its designers clearly intend it as an architectural response to First

Hawaiian Bank’s lean, international tower across the street. Guequierre is counting on visitors noticing a contrast between that tower’s steel, glass and stone and ASB’s hale, mosaics, white wooden lattice work and rough-hewn blue-green slate flooring. “We wanted our space to be touchable, approachable, almost the opposite of the First Hawaiian Bank tower.”

And for decades there’s been a quest for an authentic Hawaiian “sense of

place” in local architecture, which has given us plenty of stucco walls and green tile Dickey roofs. That’s a formula Guequierre mercifully avoided. “Instead of that older architectural look, we were more inspired by Hawai’i Regional Cuisine, the way we mix cultures in that very contemporary way,” says Guequierre. Wander in and get a taste. **American Savings Bank Main Branch, 1001 Bishop Street.**

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## Banking on “Local”

**HAWAII IS THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE WE COUNT** how many generations our families have been in the Islands. Local pedigrees seem to matter as much to institutions as they do to individuals. Especially banks. You’ll remember this year’s squabble among City Bank, Central Pacific Bank and First Hawaiian Bank over proper local department. The same spirit seems to have seized American Savings Bank. The bank recently shed its red, white and blue logo in favor of a green taro leaf to emphasize that, despite its Mainland-sounding name, it really is locally owned, part of Hawaiian Electric Industries’s holdings. Now, ASB has just remodeled its main branch downtown in hopes customers will get that locally owned message just by walking in.

“We wanted to create a space that would only make sense in Hawai’i,” explains Jim Guequierre, senior designer at Honolulu-based Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo. ASB’s new lobby features a building-within-a-building. Or maybe a village-with-a-building. Along its mauka wall are what look like six traditional Hawaiian hale, clad entirely in ‘ōhi’a panels. “‘Ōhi’a only grows in Hawai’i,” says Guequierre. “Even the circular windows in the peaks of the roofs come from an etching of an old hale we found.” Each hale contains a small, private room with a soaring high ceiling. One is a conference room, another holds the booths where customers can privately open their safe deposit boxes.

Each end of the bank features a stunning, 18-foot high Italian glass tile mosaic, based on photos of kalo and kī (ti leaves) taken by Native Hawaiian artist Lani Yamasaki. “Kalo is the staff of life, especially for Hawaiians,” explains Yamasaki.

