

Maui resort goes tankless

Seven outdoor tankless units efficiently supply hot water at a new educational retreat

BY JULIE REYNOLDS

Creating peace, harmony and beauty has been the mainstay of the architectural conservator Xorin Balbes' long design career. His work has transformed fading historic properties and restored architectural treasures. Being entrusted with such impressive tasks is something Balbes takes very seriously.

Balbes has selected Noritz tankless

undertook his latest project: transforming an historic compound on Maui's north shore into a lush retreat located on a private, six-acre sanctuary in Paia.

The result is Lumeria Maui, a destination with 24 guest rooms, perhaps best described as an educational travel, or "edventure," experience. With it, Balbes has created a luxurious and healing space

ambitious restoration with a complete interior redesign and surrounding landscaping project.

Throughout the process, Balbes sought to achieve a genuine "soul space" for his guests — a healing home-away-from-home, focused on achieving the aspirations of peace, harmony and beauty. And as he has done with his other historically important restorations, he remained vigilant about preserving the architectural authenticity of the building and surrounding it with a culturally and geographically appropriate setting.

Ample hot water

Installing the compact Noritz water heaters was integral to that goal, Balbes says. While Lumeria Maui guests will certainly notice the art, cultural reflections and botany that contribute to the opulent sensory experience, they will also appreciate another amenity that is equally important to their restful stay: ample hot water in their guest rooms.

Not wanting guests to even think about hot water, Balbes insisted on Noritz state-of-the-art tankless water heaters for the entire retreat. "When it's invisible, that's a sign that it's doing a good job," he says.

TempleHome plumbing installer Gal Cohen planned the project and installed the water heaters. Taking into account the fixtures, applications and anticipated peak demand, Cohen sized the project with a single unit for the building that houses the kitchen and dining room, as well as two water



Listed in the National Registry of Historic Places, the Lumeria Maui property previously served as a convalescent center and as World War II housing.

water heaters for all his renovations. "I've used [them] in my development projects exclusively over the last eight to 10 years," he says. "I'm very committed to Noritz because of the quality of the product."

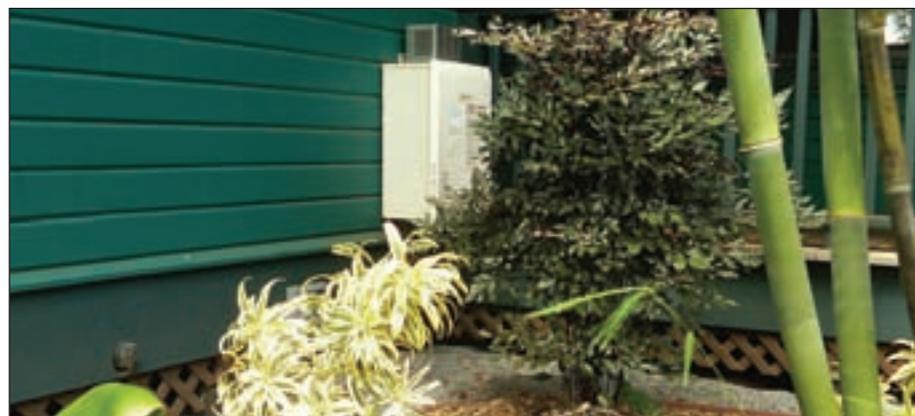
With tankless water heaters, there is no need to store heated water, as with conventional tank-type heaters. The medicine-cabinet size of tankless units belies a powerful design that heats water only as needed for immediate delivery to the outlet or appliance. That's not just a valuable convenience for the properties Balbes restores; it is also an important, cost-efficiency benefit, he says. With tankless technology, energy is never wasted storing a limited supply of hot water.

Six-acre sanctuary

Balbes, co-developer of the architectural design firm TempleHome, recently opened a new office in Hawaii from which he

without sacrificing the simple, island charm of the original buildings.

Listed in the National Registry of Historic Places, the property was built as a turn-of-the-century convalescent center for aging plantation workers. It later served as World War II housing and more recently as dormitory housing. TempleHome acquired the property in 2011, undertaking the



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heaters for each of the three, eight-room buildings, or seven units total for the entire facility.

“A single Noritz unit could have supplied all eight bathrooms at the same time without a problem,” Cohen says. “But I opted to add a second unit to each guest building so that the distance between the water heater and the bathrooms would be shorter. As a result, each tankless unit serves four guest rooms.”

The energy savings provided by on-demand, tankless water heating technology was not its only attraction for the design-conscious Balbes. Equally important was their compact size, delivering high performance without taking up valuable space. As Balbes notes, conventional tank-type water heaters would have been trouble for his retreat.

“Because of the nature of the buildings, there was no room inside for a tank-type water heater,” he explains. “I would have had to install tanks outside and build a closet to conceal them. That would have taken away from the architecture.”

But because it requires no storage, a tankless water heater can be effectively installed outdoors in a tropical climate, such as Hawaii’s. Balbes had all seven of the Noritz units installed on outer walls and — in keeping with his devotion to architectural beauty — used plants and flowering shrubs to camouflage the water heaters.

“I wanted to make

sure the units were as subtle as possible,” he says. “People walk by them all the time, and I’m hoping they don’t really notice them. They work seamlessly with the architecture.”

Cohen had not installed Noritz tankless water heaters before, but his experience with the Lumeria Maui

project sold him on the brand. “This is a much better product,” he says, comparing it to the brand he’d previously used. “I’m very pleased with Noritz and I’ll absolutely use it again.” ●

Photography courtesy of Lumeria Maui



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