

KAUAI
BUSINESS
Round
table



Lighting Up Kauai With Style

Susan Irie
Owner, Kilohana Lighting

Please tell us about your business. We are a lighting showroom, a lighting service center, a lighting design center, a lighting educator, and we are a proponent for great quality lighting and really wonderful energy choices. Kilohana Lighting in Puhi is a distribution-based business, but we are really so much more than just what we sell. We can cater to all markets. We have the knowledge and the design abilities to really help people at any stage of their project. The business will be 21 years old in February.

What is your key to longevity? Determination. I think it's the fact that we stay relevant and current within our industry. We stay very poised and aware of our market and the market needs, and we try to marry the two.

Why did you start this business? I got here the day before Hurricane Iniki

and started an electrical contracting business. However, I couldn't get anybody to supply me. The electrical company needed a lot of products and I had to go shopping for lighting, and I didn't have anybody who would really work with me. I also fell in love with lighting. It's creative and it's technical. It's a very concrete yet subjective



Irie shows off a lamp

type of medium to work in, and it's constantly evolving with a growing technology that keeps it very current and real and engaging.

What is the typical product style that you carry?

We capture all styles. But we have identified four or five styles for our market, and one of them is tropical — brown, earthy and natural materials that are elegant. We also have an Asian-inspired style, as well as contemporary lines and contemporary sharp lines like glass, metals and stones. We can be modern or more traditional. We also carry the plantation style, which finds its roots in old colonial, which you see at Kukuiula, for example.

What's the most rewarding aspect of this business?

The staff. For me, right now, the most rewarding thing is that I have these really wonderful friends who share a common interest of trying to build a business and being interested in lighting. Some of us are strong on one side and others are stronger in other areas, and it's created a very fun team



Susan Irie at her showroom in Puhi | Coco Zickos photos

environment.

What sets your business apart from others?

Our knowledge of lighting and our ability to think creatively. We have a refined design perspective of what is popular and the style genres that work in Hawaii. We also have product lines that are made to withstand this environment.

What makes you get up every day and go to work?

Again, the staff. Also, through this challenging four or five years we've been through, I have never wavered in my enthusiasm for the potential of how this business could grow. As we went into this bad financial situation, LEDs and energy efficiency became this huge thing, and we're the biggest part of that. It led to us learning new parts of the business and creating new ways to help customers and devel-

oping new avenues to build this business in a different direction. I am enormously grateful I got this opportunity.

Open Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and by appointment

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Kilohana Lighting features both indoor and outdoor lighting



Fixtures are designed for Hawaii's climate



Lighting comes in many styles, from modern to plantation