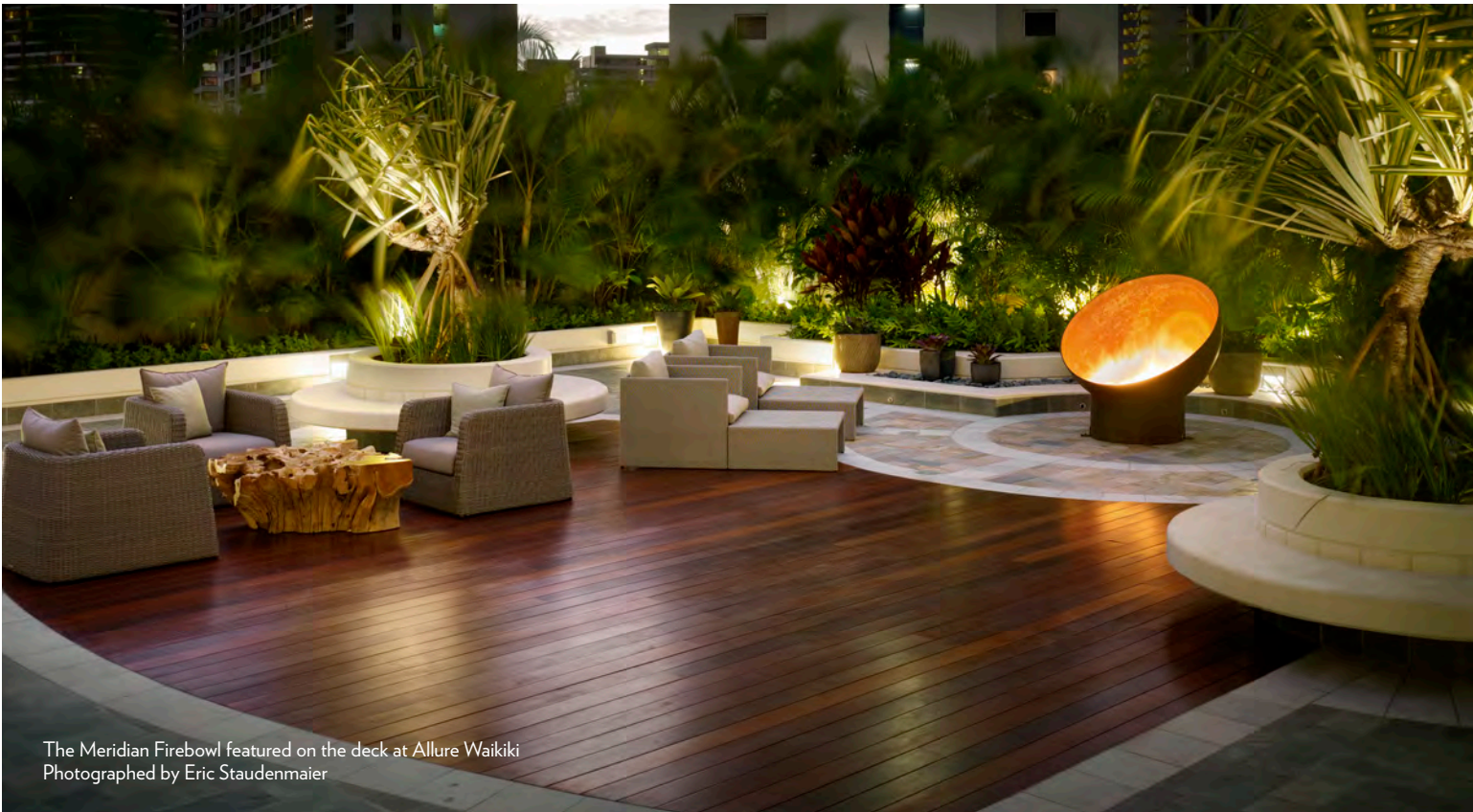


# COOL AND HOT

"THE POWER OF FIRE AND THE STRENGTH OF STEEL FUSED IN ELEMENTAL ELEGANCE TO CREATE SCULPTURAL FINE ART REBORN FROM THE ASHES OF INDUSTRY." - John T. Unger



John T. Unger working on his Fire Bowl  
Photo Credit: Jesse Turnquist



The Meridian Firebowl featured on the deck at Allure Waikiki  
Photographed by Eric Staudenmaier

What is it about fire? Ever since Homo Erectus saw the first spark, inhabitants of earth have been mesmerized by flames. It is primal and beautiful. We all love looking at it and gathering around it. The glow from a fire place, a fire bowl, or fire pit attracts us like moths to a... well, flame. We have come a long way from those early infernos. Today, there are countless options and artful designs available to satisfy the most discriminating tastes.

Fireplaces, for heat and ambience, are de rigeur in houses above the Mason Dixon line. In Southwest Florida, we have natural heat and usually plenty of it. So why then, are fireplaces so popular? In fact, the desire for fireplaces is really heating up! Why then do we want fireplaces so much when they are clearly unnecessary in our tropical climate? Let's set aside, in agreement, that there are a few nights in our Florida winter where we appreciate the warming influence of a fire, but is it worth it to spend the time and money to develop, build, fuel, and maintain fireplaces?

Let's start with: why fire? Is it because it is alive? Fire crackles in our family rooms, blazes in our fire pits, and dances in our poolside fire bowls. We want them not so much for heat, most would have to admit, but for the show. It is a lively background, with a glow that warms your hands and your heart.

So how does one make it happen? In single family homes, it is relatively

simple to add a fireplace. Masonry fireplaces, in which one can burn wood or gas, are the most expensive, difficult, and time consuming. However, the natural flame and scent of a "real" fire cannot be duplicated. More commonly, pre-fabricated gas fire box units are used. They seem to be the choice of homebuilders and are even provided in some condominium building residences. If a wood or a gas burning fireplace is not an option due to cost or building restrictions, another good option is an ethanol burner. These vessels can be located nearly anywhere, require no connections, and are quite economical. Ethanol is poured into the container (which can be recessed into a multitude of surfaces) and lit. The flames are not that high and there is little heat, but the ambience is very nice without the worry of gas or open wood flames. Finally, there is the option of the electric fireplace which mimics a real fire by using logs with lights in them to simulate the glow of fire or in some cases, just a video. These fireplaces typically offer infrared heat, too. Professional opinion: Just don't.

Material selections for fireplace surroundings and surfaces are vast - organic or man-made, marble, stone, concrete or metals, such as bronze, copper, steel and stainless steel - and inside the fire box or vessel everything from classic wood, wood look-alike inserts, pebbles, stone, glass, and on and on. >>



From wood burning to gas, ethanol or electric, and from the classic square look with a mantel from which to hang Christmas stockings to elongated low and very modern fireplaces, to outdoor sculptural sensually shaped fire bowls, there is a design and function for any situation with loads of choices.

Whether your home is up North or in sunny Southwest Florida, fireplaces can be works of art, providing your home with glowing light and warmth, and are a gorgeous enhancement to any space. Fireplaces in Florida: instead of “why?”, let’s say “why not?!” ■

