

# Behind the Scenes



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## Transformers

Proof that change is good.

**EARLIER THIS SUMMER**, I visited a beautiful place in Hawaii. There's no shortage of those, of course, but this particular spot, Lumeria Maui, was not always a stunning and peaceful retreat surrounded by lush tropical gardens. In fact, only 13 months before, it was a termite-infested, dry-rotted, semiabandoned former retirement home, virtually a ruin. Still, the structure sat on some spectacular land overlooking Maui's north shore, and I'm sure developers were eyeing the property as a potential site for a clutch of luxury homes or condos. We've all seen that movie before.

Instead, something magical happened. The decrepit building, known as the Fred C. Baldwin Memorial Home, caught Xorin Balbes's eye one day as he surfed real estate listings on the Internet. Balbes, a noted designer, had previously restored other historic buildings to their former grandeur—and beyond. When Balbes looked at the Baldwin Home, he didn't think

"teardown." He sensed its former loveliness, and even a hint of its gracious soul. "All I could see was possibility," Balbes says. "I saw what it was, and what it could be reborn as. I could visualize the entire transformation in my mind."

The result of Balbes's vision was unveiled last spring—a spiritual, educational, and health retreat that transforms the people who spend time there: Guests come away feeling deeply restored themselves. Looking at Balbes's before and after photos as we closed this issue made me think about the enduring power of transformation in our lives. "It's about honoring the past and the history that's there, but bringing in the present in a seamless way," Balbes says.

Transformation might mean something as simple as adding a fresh coat of eco-friendly lavender paint to your bedroom walls (page 82) or adopting a new attitude (page 164). For eleven. (continued on page 30)

1. A derelict former retirement home overlooking Maui's north shore, 2009.
2. The same structure today, lovingly restored and reimagined as the spiritual retreat Lumeria Maui.
3. David Colbert, MD (right), who volunteered his services in Haiti after the earthquake, with one of his patients.



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FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MARY SLOAN PHOTOGRAPHY (2); E. CANE.

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O staffers, it meant letting creative director Adam Glassman and his team bring out their inner best selves. "When someone feels transformed, I can instantly see it in their eyes," Glassman says. "They come alive." Helping Glassman with this lovely task was a deep bench of experts including hairstylist Ken Paves, eyelash specialist Soul Lee, and dermatologist David Colbert, MD.

"Transformation, to me, means working from the inside out," says Colbert, who cleared up staffers' skin problems, from lackluster complexions to rosacea. Colbert also embodies the power of transformation in another way entirely. Volunteering his medical services after Haiti's 2010 earthquake, he was overwhelmed by

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the number of amputations that had to be performed, especially on children. So he set out to make sure that anyone in Haiti who needed a prosthetic limb could get one. Raising money for prosthetics through his New York Dermatology Group Foundation, Colbert helped transform hundreds of lives.

Large or small, transformation means renewal. Bringing forth the essence—and full potential—of someone (or something) is doing a great big favor to the world. Lights that shine brighter illuminate us all.

If one of the pleasures of *O* magazine is in learning about the dreamers and visionaries who bring positive change to our lives, you, the reader, deserve much of the credit. Every month when we look at your letters and e-mails, we're reminded of your optimism and curiosity—your desire to be enlightened and challenged. That, in turn, drives us to continue to evolve the magazine and present a wide range of inspiring content. Last May, at the ASMEs (our industry's Oscars), we were thrilled to receive a National Magazine Award for General Excellence: recognition for the work we love doing each month, and also for you, the best readers that any editor could hope for. Thank you.

—SUSAN CASEY, EDITOR IN CHIEF



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1. Makeup artist Leanne Hirsch works her magic on bookings editor Alicia L. Bridgewater.
2. Lash specialist Soul Lee applies the fringe to Michelle Shih, director of digital editions and lifestyle.
3. Team *O* at the National Magazine Awards (from left): Gayle King, Lucy Kaylin, Susan Casey, Ellen Levine, Deborah Way, Adam Glassman.
4. Our prize: the "Ellie," designed by sculptor Alexander Calder.