

YOGA STUDIO DESIGN

From the early '70s, when the pioneers of American yoga first established communities for students eager to practice, the design of yoga studios has evolved into a specialized building type all its own. "Back in the day," many of us shared space with a dance or martial arts school, a church community room or school cafeteria. Today, successful studios have developed an eclectic mix of ancillary enterprises feeding off the greater yoga industry.

A single yoga studio might offer a range of yoga styles, and gaps in the yoga class schedule are often filled with pilates, meditation, kirtan, martial arts, Nia and other dance-related classes (involving their own equipment). As the business of yoga looks to cross-market and become more profitable and attractive to a broader base of customers, centers include body therapies such as massage, chiropractic and acupuncture, organic cafés, tea and juice bars and retail shops offering a selection of appropriate merchandise, including magazines, DVDs, health and body-related products and accessories, retail clothing and yoga paraphernalia.

As sustainable building practices have gathered steam—driven by "sick building syndrome" and better educated clients—the greater availability of attractive and economical eco-friendly materials has encouraged yoga centers to create appropriate environments for an increasingly eco-sophisticated clientele. The yoga demographic, concerned with their personal and internal health, is now demanding more of the same from the spaces they live, practice and financially

support.

As an architect and yogi for the last 30 years, I've witnessed this progression. More recently, I've been fortunate to consult the design of seven eco-friendly studios and retreat centers around the United States and in Costa Rica. Three of the centers were my own, serving as "architectural laboratories" in which I could employ what I'd learned over the years through yoga and architecture.

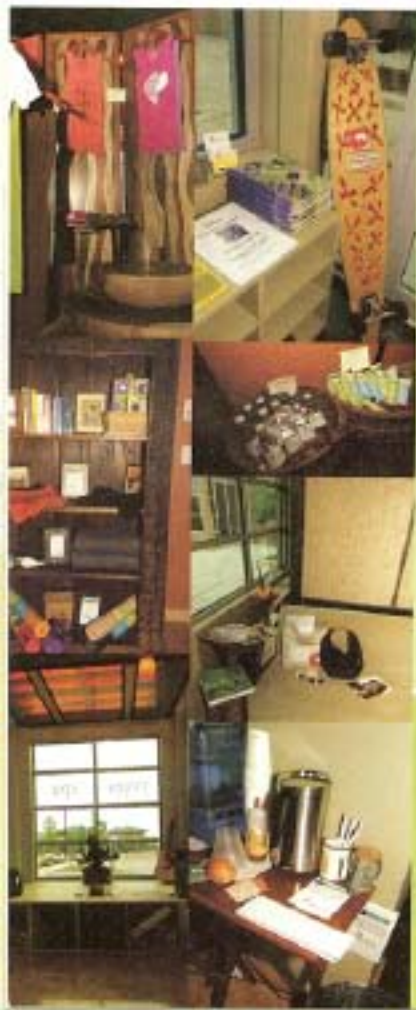
In my TRUYOGA studio in Santa Monica, the convergence of yoga studio and eco architecture has resulted in a space designed to integrate efficiency, functionality and eco-responsible materials. We employed eco-resin panels infused with bamboo reeds set into reclaimed doors and retail display lighting; salvaged stainless steel face panels and countertops made from pressed, recycled newspaper pulp integrated into the reception desk; recycled aluminum laminated retail display panels; recycled cellulose fiber acoustical ceiling panels, woven sea grass floor coverings for the massage areas; and a (reclaimed) diffuse glass wall partition. Other eco-materials: sustainable-harvest hardwood floors, low-V.O.C. emissions paint, recycled paper products, environmental cleaning products and certified, environmentally safe Manduka mats, sustainable cork blocks, recycled wool blankets and organic cotton straps. Encompassing 2,100 square feet of space (including the two massage rooms, a Pilates Reformer and Pilates mat space, shower and changing area and retail boutique), the studio uses natural daylighting with floor to ceiling, north-

GREEN STUDIO

elephant asked Michelle Backus' brand-new **Alaya Yoga Spa** to host our Summer "yoga@home" shoot. Why? Despite the stress of opening shop, Michelle employed an eco architect (bryanbowenarchitects.com) and craftspeople (among them, earthclayworks.com), creating an affordable, attractive, accessible space that itself encourages sustainable day-to-day operating practices. If yoga practice is about harmony, after all, our studios had better follow suit.

Eco Features: Sustainable flooring (cork and water-based concrete stain) >> Low-flow toilets with dual flush; low-flow shower fixtures >> Commercial composting (ecocycle.org) of plant material, paper towels, corn and potato-based (!) water and tea cups and cutlery (supplied by Eco Products) >> Recycled content office, toilet paper and paper towels >> American Clay Plaster walls and low VOC paint kirel board (post agricultural waste) >> Green laundering of spa linens using biodegradable agents and natural enzymes (courtesy Art's Cleaners) >> Exclusively biodegradable and non-toxic cleaning products (supplied by eco-products) >> External Signage uses low energy LED lights, internal lighting uses compact fluorescent bulbs >> Marketing materials printed on recycled paper. Internet is used whenever possible, to encourage paperless communication. >> Most boutique apparel is 100% organic, fair-labor cotton. >> Organic teas, fruits and power bars. >> All furnishings purchased through craigslist.org or consignment/antique stores. >> On demand hot H2O and appropriately-sized mechanical systems.

Left: Yoga Tribe & Culture mostly-eco, all-lovely apparel. Fountain is good fengshui, softening noise of outside world. Antique (re-used) bookshelf features eco mats, neti pots, little library and a great grassroots eco/yoga magazine. Screen wall and cubbies made of Kirel. Craigslist Couch. Michelle "surfs" to and fro the studio. At Right: signage explains and reminds mindfulness. Organic-ish bath products are offered, along with composting and recycling. Sustainable "Alaya" threads and handmade carpet.





facing glass supplemented with high-efficiency, natural spectrum indirect fluorescent lights. And it's adjacent to a private park and landscaped courtyard, which incorporates drought-resistant plants and a meditative reflecting pool.

In TRUYOGA, we think we've brought yoga studio design to a new level of functionality and harmony. And we look forward to being bested!

Peter Sterios is a licensed architect and international yoga instructor. A longtime contributing editor and writer for Yoga Journal, Peter is CEO for Manduka, a yoga products company he founded in San Luis Obispo, California. His first yoga DVD "Gravity & Grace—Yoga for Finding Your Inner Teacher" is available at manduka.com. He lives and teaches in Santa Monica, California where he is Director of TRUYOGA. For more: peter@manduka.com.



ADVICE

- » During demolition, try to salvage building materials, hardware and components for re-use.
- » Replace synthetic finishes with natural, sustainable, fair-trade and/or recycled products.
- » Repaint with low VOC products or natural clay.
- » Increase passive solar intake, adding skylights and windows or increasing existing window sizes.
- » Replace existing high wattage lamps with energy-efficient, natural spectrum alternatives.
- » Source products locally first.
- » Replace plumbing fixtures with low-flow devices.
- » Re-insulate walls and ceilings with natural fiber insulation.

- » As they wear out, replace petrochemical yoga props with natural/recyclable products.
- » Eliminate paper printing: schedule and market via internet and email.
- » Help students keep their cars at home by installing bike racks, providing public transportation schedules and offering class/product discounts to walkers, public transporters and cyclists.
- » Use nontoxic cleaning products and recycled goods.
- » Choose sustainable, reclaimed, vintage and antique furnishings and plants and sustainable retailing like eco-friendly mats, accessories and hemp clothing.
- » Provide recycle bins for students and staff.