

Styled for Serenity

Yoga studio Spandarama gets a green remodel

From the outside, Spandarama looks like the studio where the tough yogis practice. Tucked next to a pastry shop in the corrugated-steel complex of Early Street Plaza, across from the expansive blacktop surrounding Tiny's Lounge, it's a spot where you might expect to sweat yourself to enlightenment through impossibly distorting poses. But walk through the deep blue door, and, before you even start yogic breathing, the tranquil and deliberately designed space (which embodies the teachings of Anusara, a spin-off of hatha yoga that means "flowing with grace") starts to work its powers of relaxation.

A wooden bust of Ganesh—the elephant-headed Hindu deity, son of Shiva, and remover of obstacles—greets you from a *nicho* lined with hand-applied gold leaf in the entryway. Red terracotta tile warms the floor, and a sleek reception desk with a raised circular wooden mandala welcomes yogis into two practice rooms. Their soft, off-white pine floors, walls, and ceilings suggest walking into the center of a cloud. From the lightly textured, whimsical, white-on-white paintings inspired by Lakshmi, the goddess of abundance, down to the recycled-wool yoga blankets, everywhere you look there's an expression of sustainability.

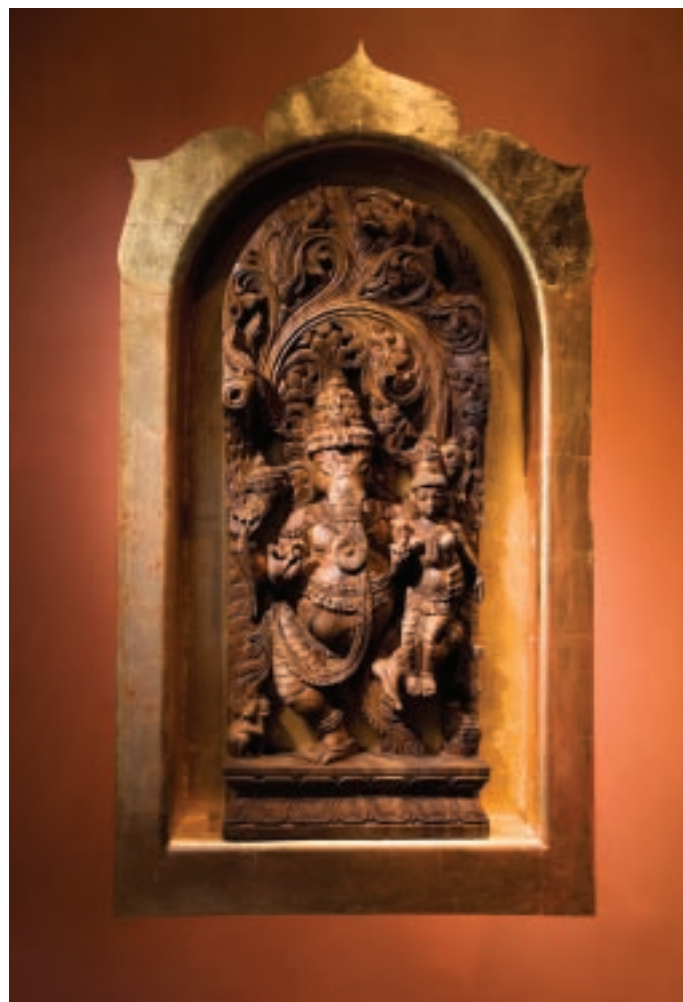
Spaces like Spandarama's are highly intentional. The name is the invention of owner Wendy Borger, who says it means "divine pulsation." Her vision was to design a studio that honored the Hindu roots of Anusara yet incorporated the best local and sustainable building practices. Borger, a dark-haired ball of energy who tends to speak in metaphors couched in yogic spirituality, didn't have to look very far to find support. A fellow Anusara practitioner, Mark Giorgetti, who is a local green-building

contractor and principal of Palo Santo Designs, jumped on board and pulled in his project manager, Kevin Long, and architect Courtenay Mathey of Mathey and Associates.

The team designed an interior that would work within the limitations of the existing commercial shell that once housed a dingy, cubicle-divided community art project. Yet they emphasize that keeping down costs was critical, and they had to be inventive.

Says Borger, "We had to work with special and financial limitations, just like we have to work with our bodies' limitations. But with beauty and artistry we tried to expand into those limitations."

Inside the studio Giorgetti broke down walls to create flow wherever possible. The imitation-tin ceiling tiles are made from recycled gypsum; the storage cabinets are built from formaldehyde-free materials; the pine floors come from a sustainable source through Santa Fe's Plaza Hardwood; and the glues are nontoxic. Everything Giorgetti wasn't able to use in the remodel went to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore or was



Ganesh, the elephant-headed god, greets yogis at the entry. Opposite: Stenciled wall finishes are by Sattva Ananda, an Anusara practitioner.





Imitation-tin ceiling tiles enhance the blueness of the dressing room walls. Opposite: Mark Giorgetti chose pine floors from a sustainable source. The shades are handwoven from Nepalese yarn.

recycled at the local scrapyard.

“The remodel work was very satisfying,” says Giorgetti. “It was like transforming a hopeless ugly duckling.”

After the construction, another Anusara student and artist, Sattva Ananda, used propylene- and glycol-free paints to create finishes inspired by Indian architecture. The rich colors and textures change from room to room; the dressing room’s blue hues are as saturated as the southern ocean’s.

With elaborate yantras, triangular symbols of the expressive nature of an expanded heart, painted at the ends of each practice space and adorned with ancient wooden *murtis*, or expressions of Hindu deities, silk flowers, and beeswax candles, the studio feels like a house of worship.

“There’s a sense of harmony you can experience in a building that was harmoniously created,” says Borger. “If you’re a sensitive person, you’ll walk in and feel love, community, and intention.”

That is, until the yogi on the mat next to yours pulls off a picturesque *valakhi-lasana* or stands easily on her head, while you’re still struggling with the angle of downward-facing dog. Breathe through those limitations, invoke beginner’s mind, and picture yourself floating in those clouds. ✨

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