



celebrating



years

the yoga loft

by stacey ramsower

yoga comes home



photography by stacey ramsower

Sometimes it's easy to forget about the simple things in life, especially while living in L.A. With all of the trendy new hot-spots and big brand names at every turn, we oftentimes lose touch with the satisfaction in finding that out-of-this-world sandwich from a nondescript deli, or even enjoying a cup of tea at home, as opposed to going out for a low-carb, sugar-free tisane infused with exotic herbs. What is a "tisane" anyway? The same is true in yoga; oddly enough, trendy new hot-spots and big brand names are redefining (or "defining" perhaps) the yoga community today, as well as for the future.

Having never been to India myself, I can't say exactly what it's like to study yoga there; however I will assume that students don't leave class deliberating on whether or not to buy that cute little sweater they saw in the boutique before class. Instead, I assume, students leave with a greater sense of connection to their own bodies and spirits, and perhaps even with their fellow aspirants. Now obviously, L.A. is not India, nor should it even strive to be more like India, but when beginning, or even deepening, a yoga practice, it is important to remember that now, more than ever, we have options in selecting the teacher of our choice.

For students eager to learn and practice yoga in a straightforward, community-based setting, The Yoga Loft is a definite find. Directed by Victoria

Nichols, RYT, The Yoga Loft was opened five years ago upon Victoria's return from India. When she returned from her studies in India with Swami Veda, she had simple instructions: "go home and build community." Located in Woodland Hills, The Yoga Loft feels like your best friend's home studio; there is no retail, with the exception of a few books and videos, making the lower level entry a welcoming "transition space." Rather than being inundated by the latest yoga fashions and other tempting things, students are invited to shed the concerns of the day and move gently into a more focused space.

When asking her about the studio, I sat with Victoria on the couches downstairs as if we were old friends catching up after a long time apart. The cozy atmosphere and tea kettle made it a perfect meeting point for teacher and student to discuss any questions or issues that go beyond instruction on the mat.

In addition to various mixed-level classes, The Yoga Loft offers Gentle Yoga; Tai Chi; Yoga for Stiff Bodies (aren't we all?!); Ride the Wave, a class with emphasis on pranayama; and Living Your Yoga, which integrates asana, meditation, philosophy and discussion. Coming soon are "Rush Hour Yoga" and Chair Yoga for Seniors. All of the instructors at The Yoga Loft are individual sub-contractors, and private classes are available upon request. Teachers include

Shelly Piser, an Iyengar teacher and practitioner of Shiatsu philosophy and massage. Shelly instructs with the assuredness and playfulness of a seasoned and dedicated yogini. There is also a Teacher Training course with Purusha Hickman. All of the instructors have both studied and taught yoga throughout the US and abroad.

In the midst of the "Yoga boom," many smaller studios like The Yoga Loft are finding it difficult to swim in an increasingly larger pond. Providing students with experienced and well-taught teachers, as well as an intimate learning space and a supportive community doesn't make competing with big name studios and "celebrity" teachers any easier. It is important to consider one's intentions when beginning a yoga practice and then seek out a teacher best suited to guide one on that path.

"Our wish for you is that you may always find a quiet moment for peace and reflection. That the spirit in your heart keeps you warm at your darkest times. That you find wisdom in the way you look at the world and more love in the way you live in it. In the spirit of Yoga we are truly grateful to all of you for allowing us to bring Yoga into your life."

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