

SERENE AND CLEAN

TRUE NATURE'S NEW KIVA ARTFULLY MELTS WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS TO OFFER A ONE-OF-A-KIND WELLNESS EXPERIENCE.

STORY BY ALLISON PATTILLO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENT MOSS



A window-like cutout in the kiva's spiraling entry ramp allows guests one last glimpse of the garden before going inside.

DESIGN STORY

The new spa has its own entrance.



Incorporating yoga, meditation, and other types of mindful healing into one's lifestyle can be an important part of overall wellness. Likewise, for Eaden and Deva Shantay, the owners of True Nature Healing Arts in Carbondale, integrating a new kiva into the facility's other elements was imperative. Happily, the result delivers on their desires far better than they could have even imagined.

"I can't say I could have ever pictured this," says Deva. "The whole process of sharing what came to us with the architect and the team—it's like it became a living being. From seeing it on paper to being here now is incredible."

With the new building's opening in March, True Nature is that much closer to the Shantays' goal of offering an international destination for personal growth and consciousness.

The couple didn't begin with a grand plan for True Nature, then find a piece of land to suit their vision. Instead, they realized that being in downtown Carbondale was important to them, as was honoring the five elements (water, fire, earth, air, and space) of yoga philosophy.

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Though it wasn't easy, they've managed to create a peaceful setting in the middle of town.

The Shantays believe that an inspiring location encourages people to do the heavy lifting that comes from looking within. "We didn't just want to put buildings up for people to do things in," says Eaden. "We wanted to create environments that would truly touch people's hearts and open their minds."

True Nature's North Third Street campus, which opened in 2014, includes an existing contemporary building—time-

DESIGN STORY

A crystal garden sits at the entry to the kiva.



less interiors reference India, Pakistan, Morocco, and Afghanistan—that houses yoga and other movement classes, an organic café, and a retail boutique. Outside, the Peace Garden includes a stone reflexology path, labyrinth, yoga spiral, fire circle, and, now, a new Zen garden.

The kiva is the latest example of how True Nature's buildings and land can positively affect the psyche. The Shantays assembled a team of more than 300 artisans and experts, most of them local, to build the structure, which is modeled after the circular underground space for sacred ceremonies said to have originated with the Ancestral Puebloans. The kiva, which took two years to complete, also contains a new and larger home for True Nature's Ayurvedic spa on the lowest level, and the rooftop Zen garden.

Eaden credits the team for listening closely to the land to transform what had been a tumbleweed-filled abandoned railroad bed into a peaceful, ecologically respon-

sible oasis. "I approached the structure as a land art form, something that you could experience like other pieces in the garden," says Aspen architect Lea Sisson, who worked on the project along with Carbondale-based architecture firm Land and Shelter. Board-formed concrete walls give the building the masonry element of a traditional kiva but with a more modern, minimalist aesthetic.

Kivas are usually accessed via a ladder through the roof, but Sisson designed a more practical entrance ramp that encircles the entire building before reaching the door. "It's like you're descending into the earth," she says.

The kiva's interior



Notes Eaden, who offers architectural tours of the structure the first Thursday of each month, the spiraling entrance “is a common practice in sacred sites around the world. Here, you are actually walking down and around into the womb of Mother Earth in a sense.”

Behind the front-facing tranquility, there’s a lot going on. “You have no idea how much work went into creating a serene environment,” says Sisson. “To create a quiet space for people to meditate is a challenge in a building with an enormous mechanical system.”

The kiva is fully equipped with stage-quality light and sound systems—in addition to yoga, meditation, and community events, the Shantays plan to host artistic performances—and each spa treatment room has its own shower and tub. To help counteract the effects of so much activity, a feng shui expert was called on to help cultivate positive energy. In addition, all of the wiring was shielded, and fiberglass (instead of steel) rebar was used to cut down on electromagnetic frequencies; solid wood doors and board-formed concrete walls help dampen sound; and walls that are slightly angled outward help channel noise toward sound-absorbing acoustic panels. The building’s partially subterranean siting also adds to the tranquility, though it incorporates as much natural light as possible via a skylight and upper windows facing the four cardinal directions, each with a large crystal placed in front of it.

Colin Dusenbury, an interior designer from Los Angeles, was brought in to provide natural warmth to the structure. “He finessed every single interior material,” says Sisson. “From the pale, earth-toned colors used to the ceramic mosaic floor and light cherry-wood millwork, there was so much thought put into the process, and it shows in the attention to detail.”



One of the new spa treatment rooms

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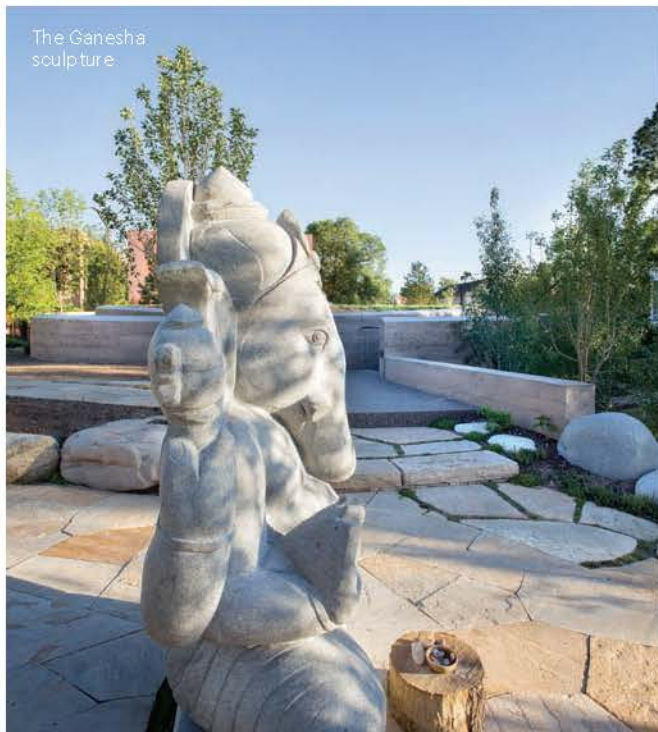
—Lea Sisson, architect

That attention to detail continues outside in the lush gardens, which are filled with native plants that require little water. The result feels like being in another world, though Carbondale’s Main Street is just a block away. “To develop a vision with Eaden and Deva and the rest of the team, draw it on paper, and then actually see it brought to life with a high level of intention is incredibly gratifying,” says Laura Kirk of landscape design firm DHM Design, which has worked on True Nature’s grounds from the beginning, along with Basalt Mountain Gardens. “The beauty and energy come from that level of consciousness.”

The elements of the Peace Garden were intuitively situated to relate to one another. “The center of the yoga spiral is relative to the fire pit, which is relative to the reflexology path,” says Kirk, who has a particular interest in the healing powers of landscape. When seen from above, the ground reveals multiple spirals—Eaden believes they harness a beautiful, creative, and feminine energy—including the one that now encircles the kiva and brings visitors to its entrance.

New garden components include a wishing tree and a sculpture of Ganesha, the Hindu deity with an elephant head. The Shantays commissioned the sculpture in India, and it arrived at the peak of the solar eclipse last August. The brightly colored fabric used to protect it during shipping is now being used for visitors to write down their hopes and attach them to the wishing tree.

As for the positive integration of new and existing elements that the Shantays hold so dear, Sisson, who attended this spring’s 24-hour ceremony to celebrate the new kiva, experienced it firsthand. “To be there when the sun was rising and see the light coming in, I realized all the elements came together. It was probably one of the most magical experiences I’ve ever had.”



The Ganesha sculpture