

Life & Style

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A fine balance

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View as a single page Page 1 of 2

Hidden among the clanging metal, bellowing workmen and building developments behind K Road on Cross Street is we'ar headquarters, a small slice of tranquility in the city. Perhaps it's the divine smells, the soothing music, or the amazing handmade steel and teak gate outside, but it's almost enough to make even the most uptight urbanite want to drop into the downward facing dog pose.

That's a yoga position for those who aren't into that sort of thing, and we'ar is an ethical yoga clothing label founded and designed by Jyoti Morningstar.

Morningstar launched the label in 2005, after teaching yoga in Wellington and finding a gap in the market for cute, natural fibred clothing for "urban yogis". Her designs include breathable and unrestrictive yoga wear from shorts to "piratess pants" to dresses and more, all made of 100 per cent cotton or cotton rich knits.

"Anytime sportswear gets into the mix, there seems to be a massive predominance of artificial fibres and nasty chemicals," says Morningstar.

"Yoga is a really subtle practice; it's not just exercise for the body, it's for the organs, the endocrine system, the energetic system, and one thing that we know is that artificial fibres tend to interrupt the natural bio-electrical flow of vital energy in the body. If you're going to take the time to do yoga you may as well do it properly. Why lose the benefits of your practising if you're being committed enough to put that time aside for yourself?" The label recently launched an online store, at www.wearyogaclothing.com.

Morningstar, who grew up surrounded by yoga ("it's very much the wallpaper of my upbringing and my life"), splits her time between Waiheke and Bali, and wherever else her travels may take her. It's an existence that sounds a little like paradise, with homes in both places, and travels around the world teaching yoga. But for Morningstar it's less about a life of luxury and more about finding fullness – as well as a place to ethically manufacture her we'ar

garments, which are designed in Auckland and made in small production houses in Bali. "We're really interested in working in places with lots of respect for the individual, with good holistic environments and production."

Morningstar visited Bali as a child, and went back just over three years ago to sample her first collection and with an aim to find production houses "that had a sense of the value of their own workers, didn't want to expand too quickly and were run by families who were actually present during the production process rather than leaving their lackeys to do their job".

Ethical fashion and production is a key part of the brand. Morningstar's interest in the area was piqued during studying towards her Masters in Development Studies at Auckland University (she'd already studied anthropology and comparative religion at Victoria University). She views it as "holistic production – getting rid of this gap between the consumer and the producer, letting people be human about the decisions they make, letting people who actually produce the stuff be human beings and live like human beings."

Morningstar's Balinese life is a combination of peaceful and frantic. Most days she wakes up early, eats organic coconut and papaya for breakfast, practises some yoga, and "if there's a swell that's suitable for my hopeless but passionate surfing technique", will drive to Canggu and have a surf.

"Some phases of the production cycle are conducive to good yogic living; designing clothes is really fun, the creative part of it is really beautiful, you can have this really ideal life of balancing yoga and drawing designs and sourcing fabrics." And other times she is running around from morning until night fixing problems – something that can be difficult in a non-secular country that's focused more on spiritual cycles than work. "Bali life is really different from here; there it's about the yin and the yang. They don't have the systems there that we have here," explains Morningstar.

Is it difficult splitting her time between the two? "It's really important for me, I think I'd go mad just living in New Zealand, it would just bore me to tears. Having the chaos and beauty and abundance of Bali makes me really appreciate the serenity and cleanness and the clarity of thinking that we have here.

"I need both to live in fullness. I'm really lucky that I'm able to maintain both those worlds."



Jyoti Morningstar from new clothing retail store we'ar in Newton. Photo / Babiche Martens

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