

Fabric of the Community / Laguna Beach Yoga & Fair Trade

Products and Poses

LAGUNA BEACH YOGA & FAIR TRADE CO-OWNER KATIE BOND GALLEN HAS CULTIVATED A COMMUNITY SPOT THAT FOCUSES ON WELLNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HER NONPROFIT, THE PEACE EXCHANGE.

By ASHLEY RYAN



Katie Bond Gallen at Fisherman's Cove with husband, James, and daughters, Maia and Kalani

Over the last decade, the success of The Peace Exchange has been understated. The nonprofit, which was established by Laguna Beach resident Katie Bond Gallen, works directly with artisans in countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Congo to sell their pieces while simultaneously improving their lives.

Through pop-up shops and an online store, the organization has flourished. But in September, Bond Gallen and her

husband took things up a notch with the creation of the new Laguna Beach Yoga & Fair Trade, a downtown boutique and fitness studio that has already gained traction as a gathering place within the community.

"I feel like ... [Laguna Beach] is this unique town where there is this focus on mindfulness and community. It's like old Laguna—that heartbeat of old Laguna is still here," Bond Gallen notes. "And so we're trying to tap into that, ... into what

people are wanting—just to be part of something, to know your neighbor, to have a coffee. Bring your laptop, connect to our Wi-Fi, sit out there and just hang out. We want this to feel like a safe space where people can just feel a part of something bigger in a real peaceful way."

As you enter into the boutique, you'll find all of the fair trade offerings as well as products made by local mothers, Native American jewelry, potted plants, crystals and more. A small snack bar provides coffee, tea and light bites while a bench under the window doubles as storage for shoes during class. Natural light floods both the shop and the adjoining studio, where classes and community events take place.

"I feel like Laguna is this really sacred space where there are a lot of artisans and a lot of people ... [that give it] an international feel," Bond Gallen says of combining the two concepts. "And fair trade is very much supporting of international artisans. So I think more people are open to the concept of fair trade here."

Although the doors have only been open a few months, Bond Gallen says that the community is already buzzing, with locals selling out some of their classes. In the future, Bond Gallen and her husband, James, plan to expand with more classes, community events featuring complimentary sessions, reiki training, yoga retreats and more.

"We're blessed to have this space," Bond Gallen adds. "We feel like we get to open and close the doors, and we get to take out the trash and sweep the floor—we keep it clean and we keep the lights on. But we feel like it's not our space, ... it's a space for everyone."

MADISON SEIDE STUDIO

ONE-STOP SHOP

TAKE A YOGA CLASS, GRAB FAIR TRADE GOODS OR FIND A NEW PIECE OF ARTWORK AT LAGUNA BEACH YOGA & FAIR TRADE.



From left: a class at Laguna Beach Yoga & Fair Trade; a look inside the shop, which offers a variety of products and drawings by Steven Lustig

STRIKE A POSE

Open seven days a week with a variety of classes, Laguna Beach Yoga & Fair Trade is the ideal place to embrace wellness. Co-owner Katie Bond Gallen is one of 17 teachers at the studio that aim to help you achieve both physical and spiritual growth along with a sense of connection. "We have some really beautiful teachers that show up in the most beautiful way to hold space for others," Bond Gallen notes. Classes range from vinyasa, gentle flow, restorative, ashtanga and power yoga to meditation and reiki, with additional offerings for children and moms who are pre- or post-natal. "You can be someone who's never done yoga and still come and take a sound bath or take a restorative class or come to meditation," she says. "... We're trying to have a little something for everyone."

SHOP FOR A CAUSE

Whether you're looking for a gift or simply perusing the boutique before

yoga class, you'll find some true gems. Many of the items come from artisans in Tanzania, Kenya or Congo, who create pieces to present to Bond Gallen as well as collaborate with her. "In Africa, the brighter, the better," she explains. "... So sometimes we'll take their idea and say, 'Instead of doing multicolor or neon beads, let's do all white.' ... What we allow them to get super creative on is the earrings." Aside from jewelry, you'll find beaded baskets, woven purses, yoga mat bags in African-inspired prints and more. Still other pieces come from Native American artists—a tribute, along with the land dedication in the shop, to Bond Gallen's husband's ancestry—or from local mothers, who supply the shop with things like handmade chocolates, candles and yoga pants. "I think the greatest impact we're having right now is on the women in Tanzania, because we're selling so much of their stuff. ... They have been able to build a ... house that they can all work in. ... For

some of them, like the Kenyan artisans, ... the impact is minimal, but ... what we pay them could pay for six months of schooling for their kids."

AN ARTIST COLONY

From the art festivals in the canyon to the local museum, numerous galleries and public art galore, creativity is weaved into Laguna's fabric in just about every way possible—even at Bond Gallen's new yoga studio. Through an artist in residency program, Laguna Beach Yoga & Fair Trade showcases local artwork that is for sale. "Life is art, yoga is art, movement is art, fair trade is art—and that's important to us, too, that we keep that connection," Bond Gallen notes. From the September opening through the end of the year, artist and photographer Karen Redding's work was on full display. Transitioning into 2024, Steven Lustig's charcoal drawings now adorn the walls of both the fitness studio and boutique. In a few months, a new artist will be swapped in. ■