

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

QiGong at DEN Meditation

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, May 17th, 2017

I have been practicing the ancient Chinese art of QiGong for over a year at [DEN Meditation](#) under the guidance of Felicia Rondeau.



DEN-QiGong © Elisa Leonelli

We prance around a cozy room lit by candles and a Moroccan brass chandelier, on top of a Persian carpet, we bow to each other, we tap our belly, we stretch our arms and legs, we chant: “Life is good. Love surrounds you,” then we lie down on flowery pillows for the final relaxation. It is a joyous gathering lead by a smiling Felicia (her name means happy in Spanish). In her interpretation “Taoist Yoga Qi Gong is an eastern healing art that brings restoration, health, harmony and balance into your life.” Like [Tai chi](#), [QiGong](#) is a practice to cultivate the qi or chi (life energy).



DEN-Living room © Elisa Leonelli.

The DEN, opened by Tal Rabinowitz in February 2016, is designed as a warm environment for socializing; there is a couch and armchairs, just like in your own living room, to sit and chat, sip complimentary coffee and tea, even wine in the evening. Tal says: “I really wanted to create a space that made everybody feel welcome. No matter who you are, what your age, what your background is, where you work, this should feel like a peaceful place that is open to all people. Our community is richer for people having differing opinions and ways of living, we can all learn from each other.”



DEN-desk © Elisa Leonelli

You may experience DEN with a \$50 introductory special for 3 weeks of unlimited classes and 3 workshops. Try it and you will make unexpected discoveries. After a Healing meditation lead by [Hargopal](#), a Kundalini teacher at Yoga West, I was invited to a Family Constellations session she was leading, having studied with [Bert Hellinger](#). To my delight I was a child again, happily dancing ring-around-the-rosy with the two young women representing my long-dead parents.

I also frequent another studio, [Unplug Meditation](#), opened in April 2014 by Suze Yalof Schwartz. I like the large room with white walls and a shiny wood floor, soothing colors and sounds, the peaceful atmosphere that allows for silence after receiving the teacher’s guidance. They offer 2 weeks of unlimited classes for \$35. You may learn about new trends, such as [Souping](#), as I did at

Unplug last year. Suze just wrote a book titled *Unplug: A Simple Guide to meditation for Busy Skeptics and Modern Soul Seekers*.

Like mindfulness, meditation is a way to reduce stress in our busy lives, to look at our thoughts and quiet our mind. I had been practicing in private since 2009, with a guided meditation recorded specifically for me by [Reiki healer Katt](#), but I was inspired to try it as a group activity after interviewing Arianna Huffington in 2014 about her book: *Thrive*, where she encourages us to slow down, don't read emails after working hours, relax and sleep more.

In order to heal my aching joints, three years ago I started acupuncture at [Body and Soul](#). Antonio offered a dark soothing place for me to zone out, while needles and micro current worked on my tense body, followed by cupping and massage.

This year I took an intensive course of therapeutic yoga at the [Iyengar Institute](#) founded by the Indian guru. Lisa taught me complicated positions to hold for several minutes. It felt like meditating.

The ancient Chinese and Indian cultures have many lessons to teach the Western rational mind, as we've been rediscovering since the [hippie counter-culture](#) movement of the 1960s.



DEN-Tupac © Elisa Leonelli

And if you wondered about the connection between the mural of rapper Tupac Shakur and the DEN symbol, Tal explains: "When the street artist proposed Tupac, it felt completely synergistic, because his poetry crossed all lines, and the message is what we represent: For every dark night there is a brighter day. The symbol of the 4 Ds means unity, balance, the 4 seasons and the 4 elements, going around into infinity."

Photos by Elisa Leonelli

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