



The larger meditation room at Inscape. Photo: Frederick Charles

DESIGN

The Perfect Meditation Space Is in the Middle of New York City

The founder of glam fashion retailer Intermix brings meditation to Manhattan at Inscape

By Hadley Keller

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Calm, quiet introspection and the sights, sounds, and pace of New York City may not seem to go hand in hand, but one former retail mogul is trying to change that. This month, Khajak Keledjian, the founder of pioneering luxury fashion destination Intermix, has set his sights on an endeavor vastly different from shopping, but one that Manhattanites may need even more than retail therapy: reflection. Keledjian partnered with architect Winka Dubbeldam to create Inscape, a meditation studio in New York's Flatiron neighborhood. The 5,000-square-foot space will offer immersive

group sessions in a setting thoughtfully designed to soothe the mind and foster introspection. On Inscape's website, Keledjian and Dubbeldam describe the studio as "somewhere between 4th-century monasteries, the mood in the temple at Burning Man, and the feeling you get when you look at the infinite horizon." While it may sound over the top, Inscape's design (and, in fact, the company's mission) truly reflects such a range of influences. Soft lighting, natural materials, and curved spaces create a restful feel in the entryway and two studios. A rope installation by artist Tini Courtney graces the ceiling of one studio, and a continuous, geometric honeycomb-like pattern of bamboo ensconces the other. Inscape will also be the first meditation studio to have an associated app, extending relaxation into the home. *AD* caught up with Keledjian and Dubbeldam to hear more about the importance of meditation and how they created a serene sanctuary in the middle of a bustling city.



Inscape's 21st Street location. Photo: Frederick Charles

Architectural Digest: How did you make the jump from retail to meditation?

Khajak Keledjian: Inscape is a reflection of my everyday life: modern, innovative, and balanced. I've meditated for ten years, so this was natural for me. We're reimagining meditation, just like how, in 1993, my brother and I reimagined the concept of the specialty boutique when we founded Intermix, which disrupted the luxury shopping experience by styling different designers together in one space. Similarly, Inscape has infused a modern delivery of a traditional practice. We facilitate meditation in a new way, one that's relevant to 21st-century lifestyles. Inscape delivers unique audio-guided meditation and relaxation experiences that empower the meditators to focus on what's within rather than what's outside of themselves.



Inscape's reception area. Photo: Frederick Charles

AD: What do you think accounts for the recent surge in the popularity of meditation?

KK: Meditation is gaining in popularity because quiet time is so scarce; it's necessary to have a chance, and a way, to shut down and be still. Technology is everywhere. We're constantly overstimulated, and the "empty" time of running, commuting, showering, vacationing, or even laying in bed is now crowded by screens and phones. Mobile devices eliminated moments of quiet. We're now

continuously in an exchange with someone or something. Meditation has shifted, too. It used to be about spirituality, but now people understand its benefits scientifically and see how it can empower them to connect to their best selves, to live to their fullest potential, to be present. At its core, meditation is an extension of a movement toward self-care. We see wellness as a new dimension of luxury. In a few years, meditation will be integrated into daily life just like yoga is now. Sixty years ago, if someone said they were going running, people would ask who was chasing them. Now running is common. Thirty years ago, yoga seemed like a foreign concept, and now it's part of many people's lifestyles.

AD: How do surroundings affect your ability to meditate and clear your head?

Winka Dubbeldam: A transition into a completely “other” space with an immersive light-and-sound environment can transform one's mood and state of mind, thus clearing it for focus and concentration. Upon entering the main space at Inscape, one already feels calmer. In the living room, natural linen seating, large floating ceiling lights, natural bamboo shelves, and curved meditation room walls create a soft atmosphere.



The Alcove meditation room featuring a rope sculpture by Tini Courtney. Photo: Frederick Charles

AD: What design elements did you select for this purpose?

WD: We designed soft ellipsoid spaces with spiraling bamboo-and-linen ceilings, and chose soft colored lighting. Another important calming element is a low ring of light, a sort of “horizon” that helps settle the mind and ground the meditator. When one enters, the light has a calming color that during the meditation softly dims down to just the lower ring, holding the guests in a sort of virtual embrace that makes them feel warm and comfortable. Specially designed seating elements support the guests in all poses and allow them to relax.

AD: How can people create a more relaxing environment in their own homes?

WD: By creating a special spot in the house that provides a calm space without distractions!

AD

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