

A liberation of spirit

Young woman finds freedom from fashion world

By Natalie K. Pollock
Staff Writer

Working in New York City's fashion industry sounds exciting and glamorous.

Anna Kaye, who hails from a suburb of Detroit, found that after a decade in the business, she needed to get away from it.

"I was on a weekend trip with my husband Andres to the Catskills. I felt I needed that since we were living in Manhattan. I needed to escape from the chaos to New Paltz, New York," said Kaye.

She climbed out of the car into the pristine mountain air, took a deep breath and felt her whole being relax. The couple decided to live there. They rented a one-bedroom in the mountains and commuted two and a half hours each way to their jobs in the City.

"That was the first step in my self-liberation after 10 years in big cities and high-stress work. The second step was finding my grounding. I began by meditation into a spiritual side. I took a holistic view of health and into interconnection with the earth, called energy healing. That's how liberation begins, with a series of steppingstones," she said.

She had already lived for six years in Chicago, then in Los Angeles and the Hudson Valley, in addition to New York City. A graduate of Michigan State University, Kaye created an independent, one-year course of study at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

In New York's fashion world she transitioned from model management to brand marketing to operations.

"I loved the energy of being on the set of photo shoots," said Kaye.

While working for a fashion technology company, Kaye was based in Singapore with a U.S. team.

"I traveled throughout Southeast



Anna Kaye has opened a business called A Wild Liberation and a community space she has named the PHX Room in Tariffville. Photos by Natalie K. Pollock

Asia and saw the amount of waste and inefficiencies and slave labor in the fashion industry. I decided the industry needed a shakeup from a sustainability perspective. We have already produced three generations of clothing [for everyone], so we don't need any more clothes," she said.

Kaye pointed out that the fashion industry is "the third largest polluter" with its synthetic fabrics made from plastic like polyester, and "the end-of-life practice of burning clothes."

She added, "even [the production of] organic cotton causes damage [to the environment] because of the

amount of water that is used."

The third step in her quest for self-liberation involved pursuing her creativity.

"You discover your creative self, what passions you have, and then find the courage to practice those passions. I began writing and journaling and writing music. That led to the full expression of liberation, an actual leap of faith for the launching of my business which I am trying to bring to life for people," said Kaye.

Her new business is named A Wild Liberation and is located at The Mill at 2 Tunxis Road in Tariffville,

where she shares the reclaimed historic space with such other tenants as the Present Company restaurant plus a variety of small businesses and offices. She opened her doors about eight months ago, although it all began with an online presence several months before. She calls her studio a "lifestyle space," and she has named it the PHX Room, short for Phoenix. Her 17-month-old baby is named Phoenix as well.

"I am referring to the symbolism of the Phoenix rising from the ashes. It's on my logo. And [it refers to] the birth of my new baby. He goes to all

the events here. I believe that life, work and play environments should be all synergistic and fun," said Kaye.

In her "lifestyle space" she invites visitors to seasonal and weekly events she calls "creative gatherings" to sit and talk, paint with a local artist, attend a dinner party with a chef, or join in with guided meditation and live music. Her goal is to bring people together and create a comfortable sense of community and "empowerment" on an on-going basis.

From a business perspective she offers photography, website and branding design, and a wardrobe refresh through image consulting. Using her fashion knowledge, Kaye presents vintage clothing with a suggestion for how to wear them, and often

photographs people trying on her clothes in the store. She also sells certain items on her website. She has been "thrifting" since she was 10 years old because she enjoyed the treasure-hunt aspect of it.

"I offer a more curated experience in shopping. I am constantly seeking inspiration and trends at thrift shops, on Facebook and in estate sales. My collections are season-based and cohesive. I use local teens and families to bring the clothes to life through photography. This builds excitement about thrifting. Then I offer clothes in exchange," said Kaye.

Elena Antonetti, who lives in Simsbury, discovered A Wild Liberation with her 16-year-old daughter while strolling through the town's arts and crafts fair.

"We went to Anna's display because it presented vintage clothing as sustainable fashion. I appreciate the concept of upscaling what you have versus buying new. Especially for my teen it was a nice introduction," said Antonetti.

She has experienced Kaye's shop and enjoys visiting other tenants at The Mill. Her daughter Emily Antonetti has been photographed by Kaye wearing vintage items.

"It's fun to find something unique and affordable. But I am also interested in her [Kaye's] story. I believe in women sup-

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A transplant from Manhattan, Anna Kaye brings her fashion and photography knowledge to The Mill, joining other small businesses and the Present Company restaurant.



porting women. I would like for myself and my daughter to have this business survive. I also went to the Friendsgiving event and it was memorable," said Antonetti.

She was pleased with Kaye's photography from their store visit and appreciates her professionalism.

In just a short time in Tariffville, where the couple moved because Kaye has a sister and with her family living there, she has discovered a small community of new friends. In addition, she has been setting up popups at area fairs and outdoor markets every weekend in the months of September and October.

"I am building community now with fashion. Fashion ties into creativity. It's a full expression with an image that is aligned and eco-conscious," said Kaye.

She and her husband live with their son within walking distance of The Mill. Andres Kaye now works at Rhone Athletic Wear in Stamford. He changed careers from finance to fashion when they moved to Tariffville. His wife had lost her job during Covid when she became pregnant.

"I have a love for the visual art of fashion and the beauty of fashion photography. I have dreamed about it. And I am putting everything on the line here with my business. I can cater to everyone who craves more sustainable experiences," said Anna Kaye. **VL**

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Local area teens Betsy Kellogg, Emily Antonetti and Jennifer Campagna pose for A Wild Liberation's fall campaign. They are wearing vintage fashions from the store.

Photo by Anna Kaye Prieto

