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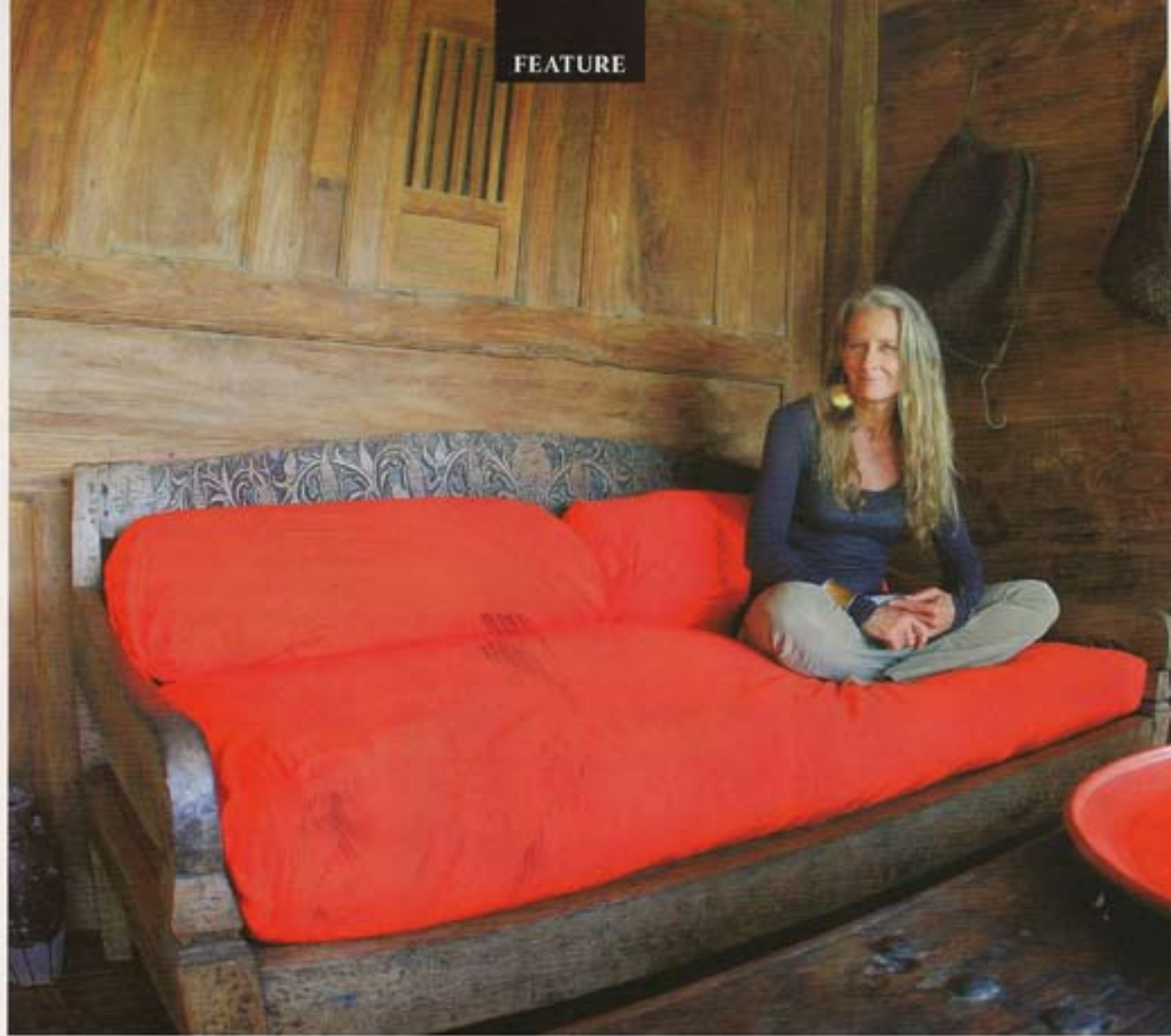
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STARTING YOUNG

Imagine the simple yet effective concept of a green school, where children learn from young how to preserve the environment. Cynthia Hardy, the co-founder of the Green School in Bali is as fiercely protective of the environment as her husband, famed jewellery artist, John Hardy, and as determined to inculcate green values to future generations.

TEXT SHANTI GANESAN



Cynthia Hardy hopes to build minds that are more aware of our surroundings.

Living in Bali for more than three decades now has seen co-founder of Green School, Bali and entrepreneur, Cynthia Hardy grow into a beautiful person. An American whose stopover at the island during a round-the-world trip in 1982 turned into a lifelong passion for her adopted home, Cynthia became one with Bali after she realised it was a magical place to live in. "The quality of the Balinese people as a result of their spiritual practises is truly beautiful. They live in the moment and in their hearts, they are playful and wonderful with children. They are creative and into possibilities," she says.

Clearly driven by the people and land of Bali, Cynthia stayed on. Little did she know that when she decided to start a small jewellery business there, it would eventually lead to meeting her husband-to-be, jewellery designer John Hardy. Their combined talents would eventually become a creative tour-de-force that would take the world by storm, with their jewellery much sought after at retail stalwarts such as Neiman Marcus.

Recently, they opened a green school in their quest to spread the green word. Both Cynthia and her husband are famous for being staunchly eco conscious and opening this school is possibly one of their best ventures ever. "We started dreaming of Green School in April of 2006 when we brought over an educator, Alan Wagstaff, to speak on holistic educational learning

opportunity for children, not only for this generation but for generations to come. As stewards of the earth, we want children to be moved and inspired in their educational process. We created this school because we wanted to leave something that would be a powerful legacy," she continues.

The Green School is still considered a seedling to the entrepreneur. It opened its doors to the public in September 2008 but since its launch, they have managed to enrol 108 students with another 16 confirmed for the upcoming term. "It's an incredible campus full of beauty, in nature's own science lab. Our teachers and staff are inspired, exceptionally qualified teaching professionals and we have high hopes for the school in the coming year," she says.



The children take part in activities at the green school.

practises to a group of parents that were interested in holism," Cynthia says.

GREEN BEGINNINGS

"We opened the school because we wanted to create a fabulous educational

Currently, each classroom is kitted out with its own resources, but there's still more to come. Cynthia says when the heart of the school is completed there will be many other things to accomplish but these ideas are brewing on the side.

"The heart of school is, we think, the largest bamboo building in the world, and it will be home to many possibilities. We are building a learning village for cultural tourism, a conference center, language and science labs, basically a knowledge hub," she says.

The difference in this school is its curriculum activities. Its current kitchen is stocked with organic food from its land and in the future, its students will manage a store and cafeteria selling its produce. The heart of the school will also house an art gallery and be a space for performances.

"We also have a village bamboo

on how they behave. We want kids to be motivated, inspired and to learn to take care of not only themselves and their fellow people, but of the earth itself," she stresses.

PASSION FOR GREEN

Cynthia herself is very mindful of the way she treats the ecosystem and wants to pass this on. Her penchant for saving the environment is evident in the way she's always done her business. "When we moved our jewellery offices (her other business with her husband, jewellery brand John Hardy) in 1997 from a very small village to a larger one for the

we converted to a lily pond. We rarely used the pool, so why run a pump? The lilies flower every morning. They are gorgeous. We are resetting our expectations and find beauty in simplicity more and more. And less these days, for us, is more!"

HAPPY DAYS

Cynthia's best working experience was during her early days of work, some time around 1990-1991. This was when she and her husband would take a 45-minute bike ride through the rice fields to work and be intimately involved with the design, manufacture, pricing, wholesaling and retailing of their jewellery brand. Although that meant 18-hour days at the office, she loved every moment of it as if it were her favourite hobby.

"We would sleep in sleeping bags under our desk, wake up at 6a.m. to go for a run and resume our work at 7a.m. We would work for a few months then get on a plane and travel around the United States doing personal appearances at Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue as well as small family run and owned jewellery stores," she reminisces.

"There was one period when we visited 29 stores in 6 weeks and that was a whirlwind trip. We designed and we helped the stores sell. So we had that direct firsthand experience of knowing what the buyer was looking for and that was very rewarding."

Today, Cynthia's happiness comes from a different place. She wants to raise a happy family and wants her children to be curious, conscious contributors to the planet and to love deeply and laugh a lot. "So far I believe I have achieved just that, our children are really happy," she says.

Beauty, nature, smart people, creative

"WE WANT KIDS TO COME OUT OF GREEN SCHOOL KNOWING THE SURVIVAL OF THE PLANET DEPENDS ON HOW THEY BEHAVE. WE WANT KIDS TO LEARN TO TAKE CARE OF NOT ONLY THEMSELVES..."

reforestation project, and this month we are launching Green Camp—which is a summer school/holiday camp offering children who want to share in the Green School experience but are not able to enrol full-time," says Cynthia.

The main objective of this school is simply to educate children to take responsibility for their lives and to think not only about getting good grades but also about relationships with one another as well as the planet, something most schools don't take into consideration.

"It all has to be win-win. We want kids to come out of Green School knowing that the survival of the planet depends

jewellery workshop, we built buildings that could be removed very easily so that the land could return to its natural state in a short time. We hardly used any concrete. We also planted organic vegetables and rice everywhere that there was a speck of arable land," she explains.

Cynthia also travels less to reduce her carbon footprint and for the last several months, she and her husband have been getting around mostly on their little motorbikes. She is also drastically reducing her electricity and telephone use at home.

"We are watching all consumption carefully. We have a pool at home that



Green School entails a peaceful atmosphere.

thinkers and physical health inspire her. She also reveals that she loves running on the dirt trails through the rice fields!

Cynthia wants to be remembered as somebody who cares, who realises dreams and is passionately committed to making the world a better place. Her double Libra-ness of wanting balance and seeking harmony is probably what drives her. "Thinking about things from every perspective is great and often ends with a well-balanced decision. But the downside is that I get very emotional in the face of unfairness and injustice. I don't calm down until I see equity and fairness," she says. ☺☺



Cynthia and her husband, John Hardy.

CYNTHIA'S HOPE

"My message to Marie Claire readers for this green issue is to take an interest in keeping the earth alive. Consider seeing the film made by Al Gore called *An Inconvenient Truth*, consider being open to the possibility that fossil fuels are just that—fossils. We will use them up someday in the near future. Please consider that each and every one of us can play a part to minimise our footprint on the earth. If we can do

it, our children can do it too. It is as simple as that. I would love to see every reader of this issue personally at Green School. Please come visit us, carve your name on a piece of bamböö, donate to the school or even sponsor a Balinese child to get this fabulous education. But most importantly, tell yourself that future generations will depend largely on us and our current commitments."