

METRO

TWIN CITIES METROPOLITAN 12/06

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Hand-blown glass vase, available at Dick Huss Studio

DECEMBER 2006
\$3.99US \$4.99CAN

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Hand-blown glass vase, Dick Huss



SMALL SPACES, BIG RESULTS

A NEW CROP OF BOUTIQUE FITNESS STUDIOS OFFERS TRAINING PROGRAMS TO MATCH YOUR BUDGET, SCHEDULE AND TRAINING GOALS.
SUSAN GAINES

GETCONNECTED

1. FIT STUDIOS

1 E. 19th St.
Minneapolis
612.871.2848

214 E. 4th St.
St. Paul
612.871.2848
fittc.com

2. KOFICORE STUDIO

104 W. Franklin Ave.
Suite 100
Minneapolis
612.871.4831
koficore.com

3. AVATAR

311 5th Ave. N.
Minneapolis
612.333.0466
avatartrainingstudio.com

4. BALANCE

3350 Lyndale Ave. S.
Minneapolis
612.290.5820
seek-balance.com

5. GREEN BODY

328 E. 9th St.
Studio One
St. Paul
651.225.9895
greenbody.net

Tired of the big gym, where rows and rows of machines and cardio equipment stand at lonely attention, waiting for you to run your body through its paces? That's if you're lucky enough to get there before rush hour, when you probably have to wait for your favorite equipment, or find yourself annoyingly close to the guy who's dropping his weights with a territorial thud after each set.

A fresh crop of micro gyms is blooming around the metro area, offering elegant, stripped-down workout spaces, each of them with a unique vibe, guided by trainers and teachers with the most current knowledge of what it takes to get and stay fit. Many of them offer the benefits of personal training for the price of small-group training, starting at around \$25 a session; classes can run as low as \$12.

You won't find these boutique gyms by their flashy signs or New Year's specials. They're nestled among us, but you might not know it; most of them are low profile, relying chiefly on word-of-mouth advertising.

FIT STUDIOS, for example, is marked only by a red door that faces East 19th just around the corner from Nicollet. Clients are buzzed in. Owner/trainer Aaron Leventhal, a former Thunder soccer player, is not trying to be mysterious. A large percentage of his clients are professional or elite athletes, but there is nothing elitist about Leventhal's training philosophy, nor intimidating about the interior of his training space, a renovated parking garage. Exposed brick and an artist-designed iron railing that separates the main training

area from a split level one-on-one Pilates area lend Fit a warm urban vibe.

Leventhal boasts some high-profile clients, including three-time Olympic ski team member Kristina Koznick and hockey player Matt Henderson of the Chicago Blackhawks. But Fit is also the workout home of scores of weekend warriors taking their training up a notch and ordinary people improving their overall fitness. Fit features a soft turf training surface that lets clients minimize the impact of their workouts on their joints while they're building the stability and

strength they need for both peak athletic performance and everyday life. "The emphasis is on functional training," Leventhal says.

"Functional training" is the name of the game for any trainer current in sports physiology literature. And their studios should reflect this, says Kofi Robinson, the owner and trainer at **KOFICORE STUDIO** in the coach house of the

Semple Mansion (formerly home to African American Family Services) on the corner of Blaisdell and Franklin. "When you don't see machines, join that gym," he says. The space, with Brazilian cherry wood floors and Douglas fir ceilings, has only a couple of cardio machines; otherwise, it's stocked with balls, Bosus and bands, props that help people strengthen their cores and make their muscles "smart." Koficore's full schedule of classes, from dance to yoga to "boot camps," makes it hard to fall into a workout rut.

"I train moms the same way I train athletes," says Robinson, who was a popular personal trainer at the YWCA before he opened his studio this summer.

"I TRAIN MOMS THE
SAME WAY I TRAIN
ATHLETES."

—KOFI ROBINSON, OWNER/TRAINER,
KOFICORE STUDIO



AVATAR PRIVATE TRAINING STUDIO, in the warehouse district of Minneapolis, operates on a similar philosophy. "Machines are bad teachers," says owner and trainer Eric Hall. Avatar emphasizes one-on-one training for clients, a large percentage of whom are women looking to "regain control of their bodies, lose weight or address medical conditions." He and his four trainers challenge clients on strength, balance and flexibility. Avatar also offers Gyrontonics®, an expansion system known as "yoga for dancers."

Whether he's training athletes or grandmothers, Hall aims to help clients find joy in movement. "Moving well is for life," says Hall. "It's about picking up grandchildren when we're 85."

Whether you want to lose weight, win the triathlon or simply jumpstart your training regimen, the great promise of fitness is its power to transform the entire person: body, mind and spirit. This promise is at the core of **BALANCE**, founded and run by personal trainers and wellness coaches Morgan Luzier and Craig Helmer (who Leventhal says is, hands down, one of the best trainers around), at Lyndale and 33rd Street in Minneapolis. The storefront fitness studio emphasizes small-group training, yoga, Pilates and fitness "boot camps." As scary as the name may sound, Luzier hopes her camps, which run two to 10 weeks, provide a way for people "to have a different experience with their bodies so that they walk away more comfortable in their own skin." The two-week-long bootcamps with trainer-led group workouts once a day are priced at \$250. +

Left top, middle and bottom: Aaron Leventhal, trainer and owner of Fit Studios, puts client Marne Brooks through the paces at his Minneapolis studio. Leventhal's small-group training sessions start at the ultra-low price of \$20.