



Ann Hartley

ALYS BEACH

PHOTOS *by* TODD DOUGLAS



As Alys Beach continues to grow, we're thrilled to work with friends and partners who share our vision of community, beauty, and refinement. One of those friends is Ann Hartley, former owner of George's, who has returned to her first love—curating fine retail.

Ann Hartley Alys Beach, now open at 11 North Castle Harbour Drive, across from George's, features a collection of carefully-edited, outside-the-box treasures from Hartley's travels. From fine clothing and artisan jewelry to one-of-a-kind found objects and home goods, Hartley has shared her treasured travel experiences through the spirit and experience of this exquisite space.

We talked with Hartley to learn more about her inspiration for the shop, her background in retail, and her deep love of travel.

We know you've been involved in the restaurant industry for years. What intrigued you about opening a retail store? How did this all come to be?

Fashion and retail was my "former life" before we moved to 30A. I opened my first shop in Dallas when I was 27, and I loved every part of the experience. (The store was also named Ann Hartley.) It was fun, vibrant, and very cool, and in fact, many of my first customers are still my friends!

After selling George's at Alys Beach and LaCocina Mexican Bar and Grill, my husband and I thought we might retire. But after several months, I realized that it just was not for me—it just didn't feel right! I have worked since age 13, and I couldn't imagine ending my work at that point. When Alys Beach let me know of the opening of the space, it was just the tap on the shoulder I needed to jump back into the game. It was a clear decision for me, and here we are six months later with this wonderful, totally cool shop full of great treasures. And the very best part is seeing all of my old friends and customers from George's—and making new friends—because it really is all about the relationships.

Where did you find inspiration for this shop?

This inspiration for Ann Hartley Alys Beach comes from my life as a traveler. I fell in love with the world outside my hometown while on a family trip to Europe and Africa in 1969. I suppose that's how my sense of wanderlust began. I'm fascinated by other lands and other cultures, and I love bringing back treasures from my travels. My store is an extension of that desire to bring home pieces of the places I love, from the markets in Paris to the Souks in Marrakech, from the streets of San Miguel to the artisan villages in Bali.

I started my own wholesale line of clothing in 1990, manufactured in Indonesia, and sold all over the world, and I learned about developing relationships with great artists and manufacturers. I love buying from artists and cottage industry people I meet along the way, and I've developed a unique partnership with these craftsmen. We listen to each other and bring customers the very best.

Travel is obviously a big part of your life and has influenced your style and way of thinking. How do you hope to infuse global colors, textures, and design into the 30A landscape through this store?

I love when customers and designers come in to the store and fall in love with one of our pieces or our overall aesthetic. I get very attached to the pieces I sell in the shop—they all seem to have a story, whether it's a wooden carving of a saint from San Miguel or a hand-cast bronze "hut protector" from the Ivory Coast. There's history and meaning and story in these pieces. Of course, I do attend clothing markets in New York, Dallas, and Los Angeles. I like to say I'm a scavenger—always on the hunt for special pieces—so whether a local artisan or a craftsman across the globe, I'm constantly looking for the unique and the beautiful.

I sell pieces that add a global touch to your home or wardrobe. I think folks love to see how I've edited collections. We have built our business over the years by loving and getting to know our customers as friends.

For someone who might not be used to incorporating these types of exotic or global pieces into their wardrobe, how would you recommend introducing global style into your closet?

A global style might not be for everyone, but if it is what you love, you'll love the shop, the eclectic offerings, and the great story of each piece. If you'd like just a touch of "global" added to your wardrobe or home, I'd suggest you buy a piece or two and try it out. See if it feels right. See if you receive compliments. Go from there. Maybe it starts with a gorgeous scarf from London or a fabulous ethnic necklace from Malibu. Or maybe its a hand-embroidered tablecloth from San Miguel, framed for your dining room.

I've always told our customers, just because something is "in style" doesn't mean you need it or that it will look good on you. I encourage people to dress themselves and their homes with what feels great for them. It's not about the number of things in your closet or on your shelf, its about you loving it, feeling great in it or around it, and feeling connection to the things you buy. I have always loved gutsy women, and I love seeing women step out of the box and feel great. 🌻

Ann Hartley Alys Beach is located at 11 North Castle Harbour Drive. Hours are Monday - Saturday 10am - 6 pm. | annhartley.net.

