

HARD COVER, Leisure Books, Cape Town, Alison Gay for SA Interior Design (1998)

There's something about browsing and leafing through pages that is so much a part of the satisfying ritual of choosing a book. But hectic lifestyles and, perhaps, an aversion to shopping have made a huge success of CD and book mail order companies which offer a convenience factor and a completely different shopping experience. Although predominantly a mail order outlet, Leisure Books has opened a store in Cape Town, facilitating either the convenience of mail order or the immediate gratification of an impulse buy.

Raymond Smith of Smith 3D Design was briefed by the company to create a visual space that would appeal to the varied client base of all ages and tastes. The aesthetic is contemporary, yet combined with a touch of retro to widen the appeal. The '60s feel is predominantly evident in brightly coloured Formica on display tables and upright shelving fins, and parquet flooring that provides a warm backdrop to the shop. Besides these touches of colour, finishes are neutral Supawood and aluminium sheeting, enhancing the colourful books and allowing the products, rather than the fittings, to dominate.

The spatial planning within the store is based around a circular, stepped book display unit, also forming part of the counter. All other shelf units and seating space radiate outwards from this central unit, facilitating good visual interaction as well as traffic flow through the space for efficient client service and security. This is further emphasised by six suspended wedge-shaped ceiling bulkheads that house low voltage downlighters to highlight the books. White walls and ceiling reflect the natural and interior light, creating an illusion of spaciousness in a small area. Maximising its high-profile corner position, the shop's large window frontage enables interaction with passers-by before they even enter the space. Varnished Supawood quarter-round display tables can be arranged in modular, curved shapes to serve as display areas for both window frontage and the interior. With the exception of the counter and wall units, the custom-made furniture is mobile and designed so that the shop layout can be changed. Versatility has dictated the furnishing designs which can be organized into rounded shapes and curved lines, such as the quarter-round high back chairs that can be positioned to make either a circle or an S-shape. Small drum-shaped stools add a subtle African tone amidst the contemporary lines. The shop is designed to add value and interest to the visitor's shopping-experience, leaving a friendly,

accessible impression. The appeal of the store lies in its simple, contemporary furnishings and a space plan that facilitates easy interaction between shoppers and products.