

Horst Design Creates a Special Environment for Wind & Water Gift Shop

What was once a pharmacy on the ground floor of a seven-story art deco co-op building on Manhattan's upper east side has been transformed by Horst Design International (HDI), Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, into a serene residential-like setting for the Wind & Water gift shop. Basing their design on owner Fran Ilagan's philosophy of feng shui, HDI brought a sense of peace, balance and harmony with nature into the store's interior using color, contrast and texture.

When shoppers step inside, they find a soothing and warm traditional interior enhanced with natural but luxurious

materials. "Cherrywood cabinetry, stained maple floors, various shades of seafoam green and ochre, carved ornamental detailing along the perimeter casework and on the fixtures help shoppers relax and feel good," says Bernhardt Rumphorst, principal designer/planner at Horst Design International.

"We balanced a variety of different textures that you might expect to see in Japanese design inspired by feng shui," explains Rumphorst. For example, a sisal wallcovering made of grass from the orient brings people close to nature. Ceiling boards instead of sheetrock create a more honest look while a textured stone material in the center is juxtaposed against the wooden floor. No hard-edged granites or marbles are used.

Shoppers are energized by HDI's lighting concept and subliminally motivated to leisurely move throughout the store and view the product assortment.

"Passersby are drawn into the store by the soft golden halo emanating from a huge dramatic ceiling oculus lit from above in the center of the store," says Rumphorst. In addition, the lighting highlights the unique stone floor below. Throughout the store, incandescent curved track and recessed lighting highlight the merchandise.

According to Fidel Miro, design and planning director of HDI, "If you draw a line on the ceiling, people will follow it." That is why the well-defined lighting pattern eventually leads shoppers to the rear of the store where they find a department devoted to sophisticated children's dolls like Madeleine and Little Lulu, animals, books and crafts.

The focal point of this area features a large eye-catching fireplace of Nantucket red woodwork with products displayed on the mantel and mirrored niches above. At Christmas, the fireplace is used as an evocative showcase for numerous children's items. Wood carvings of ribbons and cherubs etched on the fireplace as well as the carved elephants, reminiscent of 'Babar', hung above the shelving units create a cozy yet playful feeling.

Wind & Water's 1500 square feet of street level space contains an array of exclusive large and small imported gifts and unusual home decorative accessories from the Phillipines, ranging from curios, ceramic and wrought iron tables,

chairs, mirrors, clocks, bedsheets and linens, to a children's area, bath products, dinner ware and more. According to Ilagan, the store's successful design attracts people to the items by evoking a quality image.

"Due to the enormous amount of a constantly changing product mix and merchandise density, we created a flexible, versatile environment as well as custom adjustable, shelving units for different size items," notes Rumphorst. By opening the ceiling cavity, we gained more space for the merchandise."

Not only did HDI design the exterior and interior of the store according to feng shui, but the firm also carried the theme through to the packaging. The shopping bag and accompanying store packaging reflect the store design and retail philosophy. Wind & Water elements are portrayed on the bag along with the new logo of a mermaid (water) reaching out to butterflies (wind). A poem chosen by the owner for its 'love of the joy's of life' theme is printed in two quadrants on the bag and packaging.

Horst Design International is an award-winning retail planning and design firm ranked among the top 30 retail designers in North America by *Visual Merchandising & Store Design* for the past few years. HDI's president Douglas Horst and his design team are credited with over 45 million square feet of successful store imaging for all types of merchandising. According to HDI, a successful retail environment creates an entertaining and energized atmosphere that is both persuasive, long lasting and seductive – inspiring the shoppers and correctly promoting the products. *gr*



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