

HL SCOUTS

places to go, people to see

AMAZING SPACE

tour de workforce

These Pretoria offices bring new meaning to the term 'good working environment'

The exterior of Mathews and Associates Architects, with its patterning cut into the concrete, lends a design-savvy air to the suburbs of Pretoria.



LEFT The company's reception area. The boardroom can be seen in the background. ABOVE LEFT The tree-lined veranda runs the length of the building. ABOVE RIGHT The statement-making entrance to the offices. BELOW The Angus Taylor sculpture stares out onto the road in front of the building.



Forget ropey space dividers and epilepsy-inducing fluorescent lighting. The Brooklyn office of leading design firm Mathews and Associates Architects, headed by top South African architect Pieter Mathews, is a work space that embodies ergonomically progressive creativity. And it looks mighty fine. Inside and out.

'We were enlisted by the owner of the land to design ... a Pretoria icon,' explains Pieter, 'and we couldn't help thinking that working in the space would be the chance of a lifetime. So we moved in!'

With an exterior that proudly juts out into the surrounding suburb of New Muckleneuk, and that boasts an impressive use of raw concrete, the building is a perfect juxtaposition to the highveld landscape. It flaunts a simplistic beauty as well as an honest approach to design and use of materials. 'We chose to expose elements of the structure and "exploded" its components,' says Pieter. 'Cleverly placed windows make the roof look like it's floating away from the walls, and even the air-conditioning units are on display.' An edgy, freehand barcode pattern was cut into the exterior walls and the veranda balustrades emulate an equally random pattern too. Elements of this slightly haphazard design continue inside – even studio lights were asymmetrically placed.

The firm designed this office space as 'a home away from home' because they spend so much time here. The central design and work area is open planned and light filled so that the team can interact and work closely together. That said, it's also calm and tranquil – 'even though I'm a scatterbrain with ADHD,' Pieter says with a laugh.

His office opens onto both the team's workspace and the boardroom, and, like the rest of the building, is filled with an impressive selection of South African art. Images of Strijdom van der Merwe's land art sit alongside Ike Nkoana sculptures and Gordon Froud's 'Hanger works'. These artworks, along with interior accents of bright red, bring out the natural hue of the exposed concrete walls.

Outside, one of Angus Taylor's sculptures acts as a piece of public art. Nominated for this year's Design Indaba South award, it's abundantly clear that this is a building that embodies good design. And it's enjoyed just as much by those who pass it as by the people who spend their days creating in it. □

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