

Space For Life in Cape Town reminds me of film sets on *Mad Men*. I almost expect to find Betty Draper, January Jones's character in the TV drama series, reading on a sofa here with her feet up. As in America, the mid-century modern look is all the rage these days. At Space For Life you'll discover Scandinavian furniture for sale from that time. I meet Space For Life's Stefan Frylinck who tells me the tale of how the store came together. Local art and décor is also for sale here resulting in a vibrant mix of culture and era.



The original mid-century Scandinavian décor collection selling at Space For Life includes wooden tables, beds, chairs, stools, lamps, pendant lights, chunky glassware and even stainless steel kitchen trays. The items, either one-off finds or forming part of whole furniture sets, are sourced from century-old, family-run factories, small retailers or private sellers in Scandinavia (Denmark in particular). Some pieces are lovingly reupholstered and restored; others remain marvellous in their original form. The furniture is light in appearance and, while robust, light in weight. Great for decorating small spaces and just one piece will add wonderful character to a room.

"Space for Life was started by four friends," says Stefan Frylinck, one of the four and a partner in the business. "Two of the friends (now also partners in the business) had bought and collected furniture they liked on trips to the Scandinavian region. It went into storage there and they needed to work out what to do with it. The four of us got together and decided to bring it to Cape Town and in time establish a retail outlet." Stefan had been running

his own successful interior design business and has solid retail and shop layout experience having worked as national visual merchandiser for Spilhaus for many years. "We also have an established artist as one partner, and one who's Danish, which helps. We decided together we brought quite a lot to the table."

Space For Life opened in February this year in the Spearhead Building on Hans Strydom Avenue in Cape Town. Seventy per cent of their stock sold in the first month. "This space used to be the Fifa ticket sales office. We instantly saw potential for a showroom: central location, great parking outside and high ceilings. Space for Life is also something so different. It's not what people expect to find.

"Mid-century Scandinavian furniture can be easily integrated, sitting perfectly comfortably in an ultra-modern interior space. Each original furniture piece here is in supreme condition and has such personality; I love watching people connecting with one item in particular, showing off a bit of their own personality."

This is everyday furniture, what most Scandinavian homes looked like in the fifties. "Many people there today see it as outdated, what their parents had, and opt for IKEA, for instance." It does mean that there's furniture available for a more appreciative South African market.

"New SA regulations on the importation of collectors' furniture pieces are strict and controlled by means of permit applications and once your container leaves you're not perfectly certain it will be let it in," says Stefan. There is also competition, America's fascination with mid-century style is at a current fever pitch (*Mad Men* only accelerating the appeal). "The fact that these items made it here makes them more special. But things run out. That's why when you see something you like, grab it!"

Stefan says the Space For Life partners currently sourcing in Scandinavia are discovering several manufacturers creating mid-century style furniture again. "We could bring these items too, to sell at a good price. We also want to develop our own locally-manufactured range inspired by the Scandinavian





originals. I love clever design. We have an assortment of original Danish doilies in different colours and sizes and I thought how about sandwiching them in between glass for a striking coffee table. Even just framed on a wall they would look fantastic.”

The partners also sell work by talented South African artists and crafters, such as Isaac Sithole, Stanley Hermans, Stefan Blom, Brett Shuman and Cape Town ceramists Leslie van Blerk and John Bauer. Stefan’s five interior

settings in the showroom look amazing with Design Team wallpaper and some of the original Scandinavian furniture is upholstered in Design Team fabrics. “Design Team’s Amanda Haupt and Lise Butler wanted to introduce their new fabric collection, ‘Young at Heart’, in a way that could show it to people better,” Stefan explains. Also in the store are TLC’s (the Tammy and Lauren Collective) mid-century South African furniture items. (Interesting to compare the Scandinavian originals with their South African counterparts.)



“These kinds of synergies really work, and I love this idea of the foreign promoting the local. These days you have to be creative and think of doing things differently, and collaborative projects keep businesses going.” Space For Life is also not just a gallery, retail outlet and comprehensive interior design service, but a venue for book launches, musical evenings and even fashion shows. “I want people to talk about this space as much as possible; to remind people that we’re here and to keep things alive and interesting.”^{DW}

For more information visit www.spaceforlife.co.za or contact Stefan on 021 418 1734 or info@spaceforlife.co.za