

client
Pustablume Zentrum
engineer
Franken & Kreft
manufacturers
Sto, Freudenberg, Royal
Mosa, Villeroy & Boch,
Drapilux, Recycled,
RZB, Ansgor, Jung,
FSB, Duravit, Keramag,
Grohe, Franke, Benz and
Berlinterpete

**custom-made
furniture**
Jugendhilfe Cologne
and Meta
graphic design
ideengestalt
total floor area (m²)
150
**duration of
construction**
4 months

opening
May 2006
project
Pustablume Centre
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gps
N 50°57' E 006°55'



100% interior

Pustablume

cologne/germany

Text by Anneke Bokern

Spherical lamps, juicy colour contrasts and photos of ordinary people characterize the Pustablume Centre for dance, gymnastics and leisure activities. Space was limited, but Sylvia Leydecker of 100% interior used the simplest of means to create an interior that is both minimalist and highly playful.

A gap-toothed girl with freckles and blonde plaits greets visitors to the Pustablume Centre in Cologne. The natural glow of her cheeky grin radiates from a large photo on a wall by the stairwell. Sylvia Leydecker of Cologne-based 100% interior explains: 'Her name is Lulu, and we found her among our own circle of friends and acquaintances. Rather than a groomed child model, we wanted to use an ordinary kid who looks as though she's just returned from the playground. I even made sure that her hair wasn't combed for the photo.'

'Normality' and 'bright colours' are keywords describing Leydecker's design for Pustablume. Backing the smiling Lulu is a raspberry-red wall flanked on either side by a grass-green wall – a vivid scene underlined by a floor of cornflower blue. A striking combination, indeed, but one that is nonetheless easy on the eye. It all comes down to Leydecker's skilful selection of hues.

'I met Pustablume's director at a cultural exchange,' Leydecker says, 'and we clicked immediately. He told me he'd soon be opening a second centre. When he contacted me a few weeks later, he asked me to design the new spaces. He was afraid we would be way beyond his budget, but I regarded his limited budget as a challenge. It's all too easy to be expensive.'

With minimal means, Leydecker transformed the 150-m² ground floor and basement of an old parish library into a studio for dance, gymnastics and leisure activities. Unlike most commercial fitness studios, Pustablume, which originally sprang from a communal initiative, does not target the rich and the beautiful. 'People who come here are completely average and include children, singles and older clients. The image is bright, cheerful and, above all, unusually ordinary,' says Leydecker, who is surely aware that her statement is paradoxical.

All corridors at the centre are bright. According to Leydecker, the colours are consistent with the corporate identity of Pustablume. 'We've just given them a slight update. Right from the start, they were part of the overall design concept. My client wanted Pustablume to be a unique and unforgettable experience with a great feel-good factor. Despite spatial restrictions, we achieved his goal mainly through colour effects, which structure the various areas. No one who has visited Pustablume will ever forget it.'

In the dance studio, where classes take place and where pupils and teachers spend a great deal of time, colours are more placid and more natural. Warm shades of brown and beige predominate, the ceiling is wood panelled,



'The image is bright, cheerful and, above all, *unusually ordinary*'

«Sylvia Leydecker»

← The colour scheme of each room is repeated in the signage used to guide visitors to the various areas of the centre.

↑ Changing rooms are dominated by cornflower-blue walls and simple furniture.

translucent curtains in front of the mirrors can be drawn shut to conceal cellulite exercising. An 8-m long side wall features a hazy print of dandelion clocks – called *Pustebumen* or ‘blow flowers’ in German.

The only splashes of colour are a few bright-blue gym balls incorporated into another wall as pieces of functional equipment that also add a decorative touch to the room. ‘One problem was that we didn’t know where to put the gym equipment in such a confined space. We could stow most things in a wall cupboard or in movable chests. But large balls take up a lot of space. So I decided to put them on display,’ says Leydecker. Her decision gave birth to the spherical motif that went on to permeate the centre. Epoxy-resin floors in blue and green, for example, are covered with tiny glass balls called *ballotini*, and various sizes of round paper lamps hang in groups throughout the interior.

Besides these incredibly inexpensive lamps, Leydecker relied on tubular lighting for the corridors and reused lamps from the old library in the rest of the centre.

There is not a trace of designer furniture at Pustebume. All furniture was made by members of a youth project in Cologne.

Chic designer furniture would hardly have fitted with the concept of ‘normality’. Lulu would smear every seat and backrest with her chocolaty fingers. And the older ladies, looking out from a tiled frieze in the changing area, would not have known what to make of it. ‘We simply selected old photos taken in Pustebume classes and had them transferred to tiles. These are just ordinary elderly women. Whatever else, I didn’t want them to look like an advertising brochure for an exclusive retirement home,’ says the designer. The result of all her efforts is an impressive interior that skilfully avoids any kind of commerciality, while never sacrificing the standards that Leydecker applies to her work.



Looking like a cheeky kid sister of Pippi Longstocking, Lulu grins from the wall. She’s part of a concept that embraces the enjoyment of ordinary things.



The large gymnasium features warm shades of brown and beige.