



Kinokuniya in Jurong

The bookstore chain's new outlet in 14 years has features inspired by Jurong's fishing village past



White undulating interwoven boards, inspired by the criss-crossing pattern of fishermen's nets, cover the ceiling (above) at Books Kinokuniya's outlet (above left) in Jem. ST PHOTOS: JAMIE KOH

Lisabel Ting

The first suburban outlet of Japanese bookstore chain Books Kinokuniya will open today in Jurong East. The 7,600 sq ft store is housed in Jem, a newly opened mall next to Jurong East MRT station. It is the fourth Books Kinokuniya store here, in addition to the ones at Ngee Ann City, Liang Court and Bugis Junction.

Mr Hiroshi Sogo, group managing director of Books Kinokuniya, says: "Jurong is getting developed unlike any time before. A thriving market needs an aspiring bookshop." It is also the first new Books Kinokuniya outlet to open in 14 years. Despite the rising popularity of e-books and the closure of other book retailers such as Borders and Page One, Mr Sogo is not worried.

"In a time of digital reading and online purchase, we believe that we need to provide a bookshop environment where people can touch, browse and decide to buy books more than before, because a website alone cannot offer the full experience of appreciating what a book can do to you," he says.

The outlet on the fourth floor of Jem houses 70,000 titles in three languages – English, Chinese and Japanese. Like other Books Kinokuniya stores, it also sells a selection of manga or Japanese comics, and magazines.

Aside from its suburban location, another feature which makes the Jurong store unique is its interior design.

The outlet, which is accented with bamboo and bright LED lights, was designed by architect Tan Kay Ngee. He was also behind the design of the chain's flagship store in Ngee Ann City.

Mr Tan says his concept for the Jurong store was inspired by the history of the area: "Although Jurong is known for its industrial development, we traced its history all the way back to when it was still an idyllic fishing village."

The first thing customers notice when they walk into the store is the ceiling. Instead of the usual flat panels, the Jurong store's ceiling features white undulating interwoven boards, which were inspired by the criss-crossing pattern of fishermen's nets.

The boards then extend towards a display area at the entrance of the store, cascading downwards to form elongated scrolls, which Mr Tan says are "like paper waiting to be filled with words – the origins of writings, in whatever language, the basic form of a book".

Another distinctive feature is a granite pathway which winds from the entrance through the various collections, and all the way to the shelves of children's books at the back wall.

Mr Tan says it was constructed "in the pattern of old village or garden paths". And that "different categories of books unfold along this path, with each zone clearly defined and mapped out with bamboo striped flooring".

Mr Kenny Chan, store director of the Singapore main store, hopes the new outlet will reach out to book lovers. "Our readers are not just purchasing products, it's more than that. We want to build a rapport and understanding."

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