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Expat Living Nov/Jan 11/12 - Finding a Bargain

FINDING A BARGAIN WITHOUT CROSSING THE BORDER

By Claire Locking

A new retail destination for savvy homeowners with a keen sense of style and an eye for a bargain.

Outlet shopping back home often has something of a stigma attached. Although secretly we all love a bargain, it's unlikely that many residents of New York or London would openly boast about a Stella McCartney dress being a factory second rather than claiming it as the real thing.

In Hong Kong, however, "clever" shopping is something of a dinner party topic of conversation. Whether it's the cut-price cashmere at Stanley market or a successful trip to Shenzhen for designer seconds, uncovering a gem of a bargain is spoken about with a sense of pride rather than shame.

With this in mind, savvy shoppers will want to add the following name to their little black books of discount shopping destinations:

Lift Lifestyle.

The young company is the brainchild of husband and



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wife team Simon and Francis Lee, an enthusiastic and entrepreneurial couple who have their fingers on the pulse of interior trends, as well as a long list of top designer names in the US and Europe that they count as happy clients.


Francis's family have been manufacturing in China for over 40 years, but this is the first time they have chosen to branch out into retail. The idea for a Lift Lifestyle showroom came from Francis's growing awareness of the frustrations many Hong Kong shoppers felt at being unable to find quality "Made in China" products in the city, despite the fact that they are manufactured just over the border.

If you are in the market for outdoor furniture, lighting, barbecues and other lifestyle luxuries then it's worth making the effort to find Lift's retail showroom in an industrial building in the back streets of Kennedy Town. Buyers can choose from "overruns" and last season samples of garden furniture, including umbrellas, sofa sets, dining sets and outdoor beanbags. The samples are perfect quality and the stock is constantly rotating with prices often four times lower than the same model in a store in London or New York. When we visited, we spied a rattan sofa set straight from the pages of one of our favourite UK online retailers retailing at just \$10,000.

If your ideal design is not on display, then you can choose from a catalogue of Lift's designs. Lift can also custom-make an item to your own specifications.

It's also an idea to take hubby along as wine fridges and gas barbecues are also Lift's specialities. "We

manufacture gas barbecues for one of the leading names in the US," explains Simon. "These floor samples really are a bargain: about \$6,800 for the largest model compared to a recommended price in the US of three times that amount. Wine fridges start at a reasonable \$1,800 for a 28-bottle model to \$8,600 for a monster 155-bottle version." Lift also now stocks a home-cooking gadget called the ThermoChef which is almost like an all-in-one kitchen – ideal for Hong Kong's confined spaces. It retails exclusively in I Love Kitchen stores in Hong Kong or direct from Lift.

There is a certain irony to buying such high quality in an industrial unit just north of Kennedy Town, but this under-the-radar retail spot is sure to become a favourite of shoppers looking for quality, affordability and something a little bit out of the ordinary. 



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