



LIFT LIFESTYLE

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SCMP Jan 12- Top Quality at Reasonable Prices



Ann Wan

For those who appreciate luxury lifestyle products at affordable prices, Lift Lifestyle is a must-visit store. Located on the second floor of a Kennedy Town industrial building, Lift Lifestyle sells samples and original pieces from its mainland factory, which designs

Top quality at reasonable prices

and makes high-end products for many famous brands around the world. Husband and wife Simon Lee and Francis Li have been sourcing and developing high-end outdoor furniture for clients in Europe, North America, Australia and other parts of the world since 1998, but interior lighting, wine fridges, ceramic homeware and barbecue grills are also part of their inventory. The company philosophy is to provide high-quality products at reasonable prices. "There is so little choice in terms of good-value barbecue grills [in

Hong Kong] and we sell these very inexpensively," Lee says. "Our entry-level grill is about HK\$3,000 for a five-burner grill whereas the same grill at other outlets is double [that price] or more." Outdoor living products include hammocks, decking, fire pits, bamboo fencing, artificial turf, patio umbrellas, gazebos and more. If you do not see what you want at the showroom, customers can choose from a catalogue of materials to customise their own products. Lift Lifestyle has branches in Hong Kong, on the mainland and overseas.



Barbecue grill



Outdoor sofas are available at the Kennedy Town showroom.

South China Morning Post

HOME DESIGN



Consider the big picture when making selections to ensure they are consistent with the interior's style, writes Victoria Ip

Adorning your home with accessories is like a woman putting the finishing touches to her make-up. "Decoration is very personal; it is something you like and [is] not necessarily functional," says Alain Wong, design director at Comodo Interior and Furniture Design. Wong says people should consider the big picture to see if accessories go with their home and are consistent with its overall style. According to Wong, there are two types of accessories for homes – fixed and flexible. "For example, a vase is relatively flexible as it can be replaced in different seasons or according to changing preferences or moods. But a pendant light or a wall-mounted painting, for instance, probably will be there for much longer. So it is better to spend more time on choosing these fixed items."

Wong says people can demonstrate their character through the way they choose to use home accessories. "Clouds by Ligne Roset [a decorative cloud concept] is very flexible. You can use it to wrap



An apartment's design can reflect an owner's personality, according to Comodo Interior and Furniture Design.

Decoration choices display character

around one of the columns in the house, hang it on the walls, or use it as a partition or a small decoration," he says. Francis Li, managing director of Lift Lifestyle, supplier of outdoor furniture, agrees. "Your home is a reflection of you. Accessorising it should always start with personal preferences." Li's approach is a layered one. "Go with things – styles and colours – that you love and make your home cosy and comfortable first. Then choose other accessories that are inspired by or complementary to the

furniture pieces you have chosen," she says. To avoid making your home look like a showroom, Li advises people to look for accessories that are one of a kind. "It can be a piece of designer furniture, an antique from Sablon or a very affordable and beautiful, modern hand-painted vase from Vietnam," she says. Li also thinks people can borrow from nature when decorating. "My personal favourite has to be fresh flowers and plants. They are not only a visual treat; they add colours, make the room livelier and make it smell wonderful. A bowl of fresh fruit also does the job," she says.

As for homeowners who are worried that their place looks too cluttered, Li has some tips. "Make sure the things you put together go with each other. Don't use pictures, clocks or plants on a mantle. Unless you have a library, bookshelves should not be filled entirely with books. Don't display your lotions and creams on the dresser. If you need to store something, keep it in an attractive box or basket."

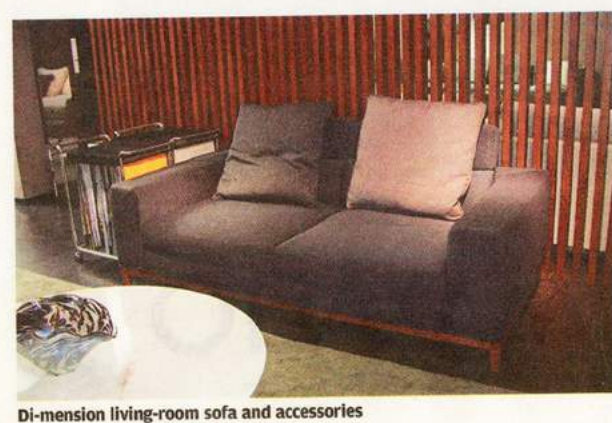
Isabella Lee from Di-mension, a Hong Kong-based online store that sells contemporary furniture and designer chairs below market price, advises people to adorn their homes with a few pieces of brightly coloured furniture to prevent it from

looking too stark or boring. "We recommend a simple basic colour tone for a home and, with the help of a few unique pieces of furniture in outstanding colours such as shocking pink, purple, orange or baby blue, the overall theme is consistent and doesn't look too cluttered," she says. Besides juxtaposing different colours to create an eclectic feel, Lee says different textures can also be used to spice up interiors. "People can try to tastefully accessorise their home with

cowhide, cashmere or wool," she says. Lee says accessories made of environmentally friendly materials are very popular for home interiors. "Recycled or salvaged wood is commonly used in furniture in Western countries and is becoming more popular in Hong Kong. After proper treatment, the wood becomes alive again and is given a second life as a new piece of furniture. The vintage character shown in their grains fits well with modern homes."



Accessories can be fixed and flexible, says designer Alain Wong.



Di-mension living-room sofa and accessories

South China Morning Post

HOME DESIGN

Creative use of space

Durability is a key question to consider when selecting garden furniture, writes John Cremer



Ventura dining set from Lift Lifestyle

Anyone choosing furniture to make the most of their outdoor space in Hong Kong has to consider more than styles, costs and colours. First will be how durable different materials will prove in the face of the annual onslaught of heat, humidity, creeping mould and sudden rainstorms. To avoid mishaps, it pays to seek expert guidance on what wears well so that this year's buys remain as good as new for many summers to come. "Synthetic rattan is particularly good, but only if it is highly dense," says Simon Lee, managing director of Lift Lifestyle. "It is cooler to the touch and not as 'soft' as low-density which, although it may look the same, is only going to last about a year before it breaks or stretches to the point where you can't use it."

As for other materials able to weather the local climate, Lee highlights the value of aluminium frames – which won't rust – and wood such as teak. The latter, though, requires proper care and attention. Chairs and tables should be sanded down and treated regularly with the correct protective coating. The process might seem time-consuming, but it is essential. Otherwise, even the best quality teak can deteriorate – turning greyish in colour and starting to crack – if left outside subject to the elements. A similar level of care is needed



OUTDOORS

for any fabrics left outdoors. "From our experience, the only option is Sunbrella fabric and quick-dry foam," Lee says. "This comes from America and even Chinese manufacturers have found it hard to replicate. You can use regular fabrics if the furniture is stored indoors." These days, the firm's top-selling items include sun loungers, day beds, high bar tables, and dining sets. Especially popular are sofa sets configured in an L-shape. Aligned against a wall, these provide an ample seating area, while leaving maximum space free on a balcony, roof garden or patio for accessories.



Walter Lamb rocking chair from Deem



Ventura day beds from Lift Lifestyle

The choice of outdoor furniture in Hong Kong is still fairly standard. In Lee's opinion, the best designs come from Europe, which makes them pricier and means they are designed on a slightly larger scale. Responding to demand, Lift is now coming up with custom-made designs more suited to local tastes and dimensions. "The maximum lead time is only four weeks," Lee says. "Because we have a factory in China, we are quite flexible and can offer prices which don't need to factor in the high cost of retail premises in Hong Kong." Considering some of the trends in outdoor furniture design, Deem director Debra Little notes that it often leads the way when putting social or environmental themes into practice. For example, in the 1950s, designers, such as Walter Lamb, were recycling in the United States, using reclaimed material from sunken ships to make outdoor chairs and tables. "Today, there are many contemporary examples of this pursuit," Little says. "I really like the 'Smood' outdoor chair and table

collection by Thai designer, Apirat Boonruangthaworn, made from recast recycled aluminium waste. They are lightweight and stackable, with a great joint detail." Other interesting materials being used for outdoor furniture include carbon-textile reinforced concrete, fibre cements and cement-based polymers. These enable updated versions of items such as the 1954 Willy Guhl "loop chair" made from a single self-supporting fibre cement loop. Being lightweight and almost indestructible, Little notes it is a great low, wide armchair for a balcony or garden. She adds that Thai designers and Europeans based in Thailand are

also coming up with new green-themed ideas set to have a lasting impact on the outdoor furniture sector. Companies such as Yothaka International, which previously pioneered the use of water hyacinth for furniture, are now trying other sustainable materials such as pineapple paper fibre. It is used for outdoor chairs, tables and benches in a range of colours. "The other design direction in outdoor spaces is the layering of environments," Little says. "Sculpture can be a nice element in the mix, whether to add character, provide a focal point, or assist with partial screening from neighbours."



Sculpture garden from Deem