



Eve Mercier, founder, Insight School of Interior Design, which opened early this year.

'CAN-DO' ATTITUDE
Paris-born Eve Mercier first moved to the city 14 years ago with her husband, because of his investment business here. At the time, Mercier took the opportunity to set up a fashion accessories and clothing business, selling to customers in Europe and the US.

Since then, they left Hong Kong for several years but came back in 2012 (again because of Mercier's husband's work). This time around, she has put the extensive design training she gained in London to use by opening the Insight School of Interior Design in Chai Wan. "We were very happy in Hong Kong the first time around and felt it would be even more exciting this time," she says. The school, which opened early this year, has an international teaching cohort which melds European know-how with Asian design traditions.

"It's not like a European school that is planted in Asia and

not paying attention to what is happening around us," she says. Mercier says that the positive attitudes here, coupled with the locals' eagerness for self-improvement, were big attractions for setting up another business in Hong Kong.

"There's really a 'can-do' attitude, especially when you come from France, where everything is 'No, no, no' before it's 'Yes, yes, yes,'" she says. "I like that. I like that people are really there to help if they find that your idea is good. Things are quite easy if you want to set up a business here. Also, people are very curious and hungry for knowledge – they always want to get better and know more."

Finding suitable premises for Insight was one of her biggest headaches. "It took me much more time than I anticipated to find the right place at the right price, and negotiate a long lease," she says.

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– Eve Mercier, Insight School of Interior Design



The French Connection



The booming French community in Hong Kong takes advantage of the city's 'can-do' attitude.

Even in a place as famously multicultural as Hong Kong, the city's French community has been standing out. For one thing, its size has almost tripled in recent years – from 6,000 in 2008 to around 17,000 today, according to estimates by the French consulate general in Hong Kong. And while many have come to Hong Kong to work for French companies, many others have founded their own businesses here.

French wine shops, delicatessens, boutiques, cafes, bars and restaurants are now familiar sights around the city, bringing an authentic touch of Gallic chic to Hong Kong's already vibrantly international shopping and dining scene. For these business owners, Hong Kong is more than just a passing fancy, and their presence here adds depth to Hong Kong's claim to be Asia's world city.

Find the full article in the **November** issue of The Peak.