

BOOKS

Aco Books

1/F, Foo Tak Bldg, 365 Hennessy Rd, Wan Chai, 2893 4808; www.aco.hk

Stepping into Aco Books, the noisy summer bustle vanishes and peace descends. Spacious and homey, this little store stocks English and Chinese language books that cannot be found in mainstream publishing houses. Kobe Ho, the petite bespectacled manager, keeps a close eye on small publishers in the US and Europe, picking up unique or controversial books to stock her shelves.

Aco books was started in 2008 when the owner of the Foo Tak Building in Wan Chai gave her property over to arts organisations. Aco (Art & Culture Outreach), a non-profit organisation, converted the first floor into a bookstore. Ho wants to cultivate a welcoming environment in her bookstore. "I want to establish a different kind of reading culture in Hong Kong," she says. "You don't need to pay me to read a book. You can just enjoy the book here. You can serve yourself a cup of tea."

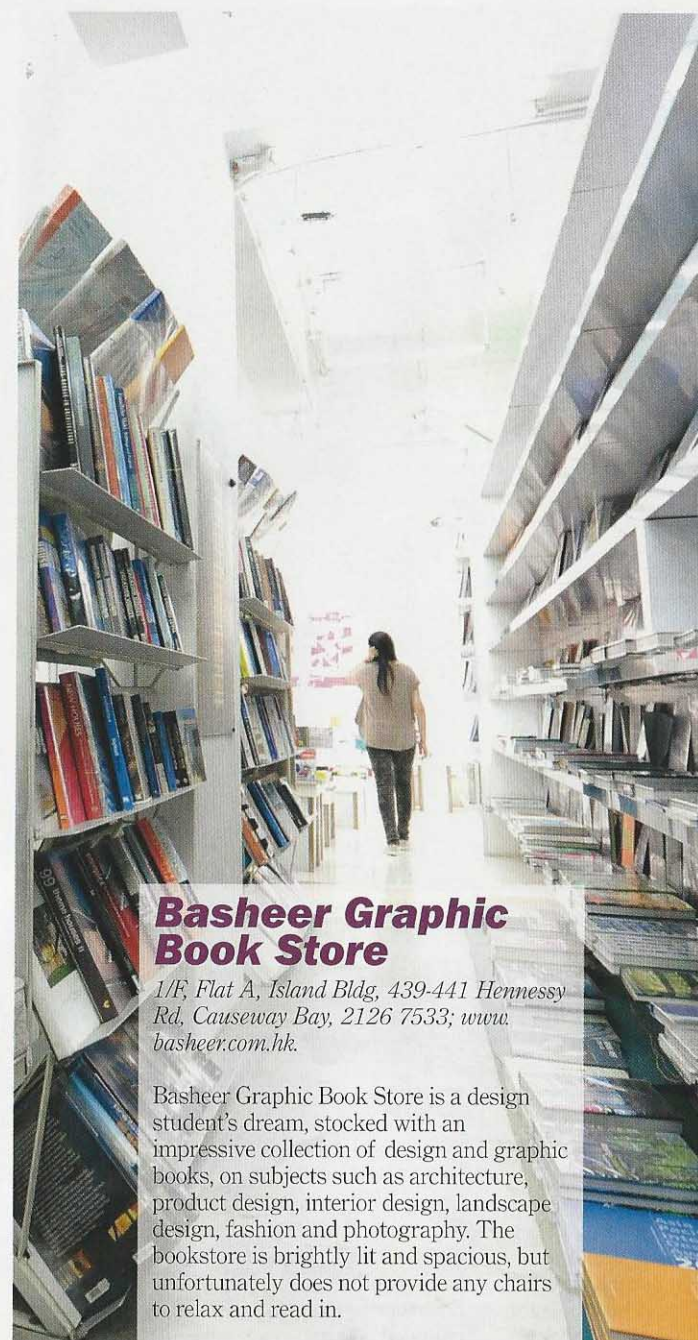
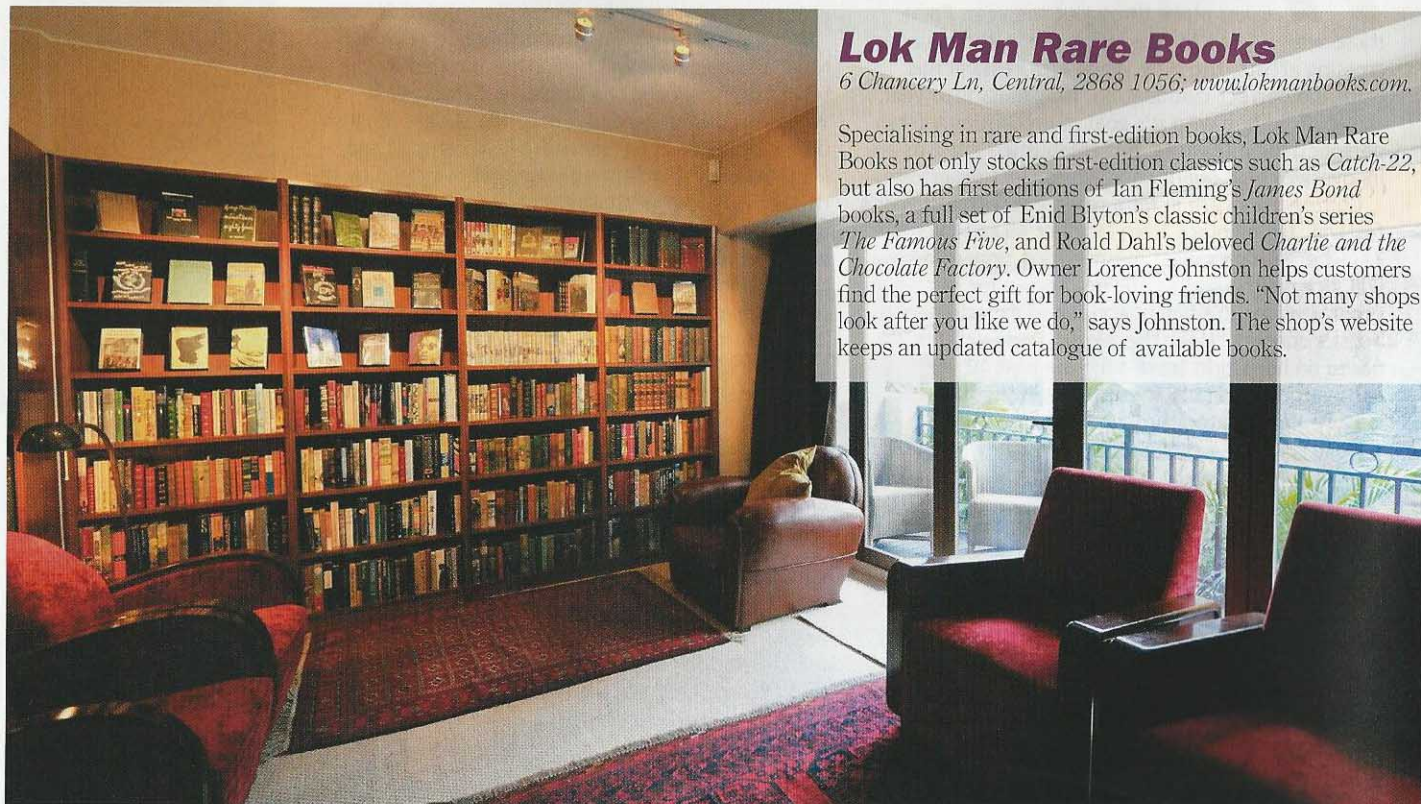
Ho also hopes to open a little café by the end of the year, but appears most content when talking about the cathartic nature of the place. "I think it is everybody's dream to work in a bookstore," she says, laughing. "It was definitely one of my dreams, so it's sort of a dream come true."



Lok Man Rare Books

6 Chancery Ln, Central, 2868 1056; www.lokmanbooks.com

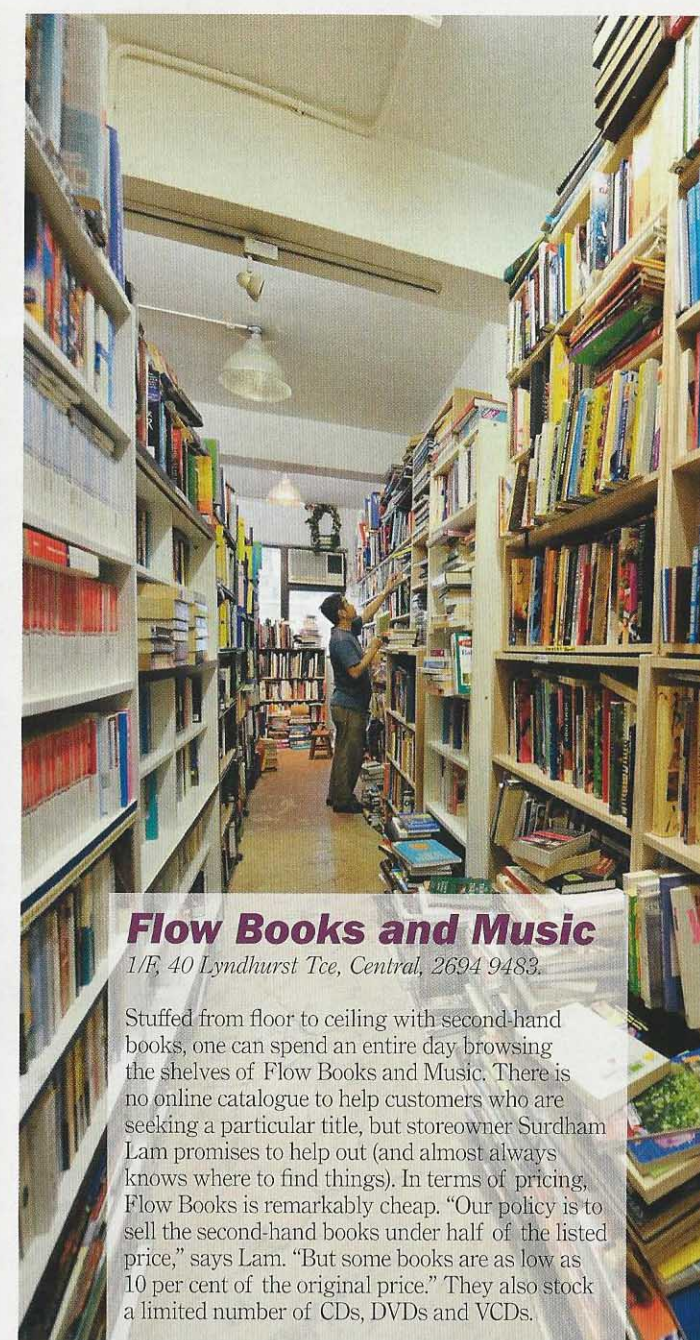
Specialising in rare and first-edition books, Lok Man Rare Books not only stocks first-edition classics such as *Catch-22*, but also has first editions of Ian Fleming's *James Bond* books, a full set of Enid Blyton's classic children's series *The Famous Five*, and Roald Dahl's beloved *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Owner Lorence Johnston helps customers find the perfect gift for book-loving friends. "Not many shops look after you like we do," says Johnston. The shop's website keeps an updated catalogue of available books.



Basheer Graphic Book Store

1/F, Flat A, Island Bldg, 439-441 Hennessy Rd, Causeway Bay, 2126 7533; www.basheer.com.hk

Basheer Graphic Book Store is a design student's dream, stocked with an impressive collection of design and graphic books, on subjects such as architecture, product design, interior design, landscape design, fashion and photography. The bookstore is brightly lit and spacious, but unfortunately does not provide any chairs to relax and read in.



Flow Books and Music

1/F, 40 Lyndhurst Tce, Central, 2694 9483

Stuffed from floor to ceiling with second-hand books, one can spend an entire day browsing the shelves of Flow Books and Music. There is no online catalogue to help customers who are seeking a particular title, but storeowner Surdham Lam promises to help out (and almost always knows where to find things). In terms of pricing, Flow Books is remarkably cheap. "Our policy is to sell the second-hand books under half of the listed price," says Lam. "But some books are as low as 10 per cent of the original price." They also stock a limited number of CDs, DVDs and VCDs.

Kubrick

Shop H2, Prosperous Garden, 3 Public Square St, Yau Ma Tei, 2384 8929; www.kubrick.com.hk

Named after the famed American film director Stanley Kubrick, this bookstore was originally opened in affiliation with Broadway Cinematheque. Besides the books on film, though, it has a solid selection of Chinese and international literature. Over the years, Kubrick has become a big supporter of local artists, not only publishing their books, but also selling various artists' postcards, T-shirts, and other crafts. With its little in-store café, Kubrick is a lovely place to hang out on a rainy afternoon.

BookKanZen

Unit 2A, 2/F, 13 Pak Sha Rd, Causeway Bay, 8102 1011

This children's bookstore is a treasure trove of good reads for children (aged 3-17) and parents alike. The selection for children includes childhood staples like *Dr. Seuss* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, as well as fun educational reads like *Romeo and Juliet for Kids* and a selection of kids' cookbooks. Shop staff say they don't keep the books in their wrappings because they want to encourage children to open the books before buying them, instead of picking books by their covers. BookKanZen also stocks a variety of parenting books, covering all ages from baby care to teenagers.

Tung Sun Magazine

G/F, 32-34 Nathan Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2366 2914

The street level newsstand has been around for 40-odd years and stocks the most comprehensive collection of leisure/business/current affairs magazines from the US and the UK. From *The Week*, *Nylon*, *Auto Trader* and *Glamour* to *Vanity Fair*, you name it, they have it. Quirkily enough, the newsstand, which is tucked away in an alleyway next to Chung King Building, also does a full range of dildos and porn mags. What would Anna Wintour say if she saw her esteemed magazine displayed next to these explicit objects?