

INTERVIEW

A French Coolhunter in Tokyo

Are costumed Chihuahuas the next Hello Kitty? If so, credit Loic Bizel with the prediction. Three years ago, Bizel, 32, quit his job as a fashion merchandise agent for a French company in Japan to prowl the streets of Tokyo as a professional trend-spotter. Today the Lyon na-



tive leads execs from companies like Disney Europe, Esprit, and Peugeot on "fashion tours" of Tokyo for \$600 a day. *Business 2.0* asked him how he spots what's hot in the Land of the Rising Cool. — YEO KWEE CHUAN

Why is Tokyo a must-see design destination?

Japan's streets are a laboratory for creativity. Trends appear in Tokyo years ahead of anywhere else. Japanese people spend much of their lives in uniforms—in school and after college when they go to work. In between, however, it's their one and only chance to be unique and different. There's an attitude of profession-

alism that they bring to creating their look.

But what if I'm not in the fashion industry?

Consumer products are becoming more closely related to fashion, so people come here looking for ideas. Peugeot's head designer came to see the new trends in colors and

materials—general things that may influence how he creates automobile interiors. The challenge for foreign designers is to figure out how to adapt Japanese fashions for customers elsewhere.

What's the most interesting fad you're watching right now?

In Tokyo, people are using small dogs, like Chihuahuas and dachshunds, as accessories. I have pictures of Chihuahuas dressed as Mickey Mouse, Chihuahuas as firefighters, Chihuahuas in Japanese soccer team uniforms. I don't know what these people will do when their dogs aren't in fashion anymore.