

What do they do: **Nina Kati**, feng shui practitioner

The power of positive forces

Never sit with your back to a door, keep your home clutter free – and always flush the toilet with the lid down. **Bernice Harrison** reports



Feng Shui practitioner and interior designer Nina Kati in the Jacuzzi room she designed for a client using Feng Shui principles. Photograph: David Sleator

By now, most people have filed away Feng Shui as one of those weird fads that had instant, but passing, appeal among normally sensible people – like rag rolling or pot pourri.

It's a pity that it did indeed become such a fad because the way Nina Kati explains it, it's a way of seeing the world and how we and our physical spaces work has been around for centuries and is a powerful force in Asian societies. She has been a Feng Shui practitioner and interior designer for the past eight years and has based her business in Waterford close to the Clonmel border. She encountered Feng Shui while travelling in the Far East, and did courses in London, but eventually found a Feng Shui master to train under.

"Feng Shui helps people make the most of their homes, she says. "The idea is to maximise the positive energy and minimise the negative." Before she assesses the Feng Shui of a house, she Feng Shuis its occupants and works out a plan to match the energies of both. However, there are some general "rules" that anyone can follow, she says, to improve the energy in their surroundings.

In the living room, people frequently and subconsciously place their televisions in the "power seat" of the room. "If you put a chair where the TV is", she says, "you'll soon find that it is the most sought-after chair in the room, particularly by the person who is the most powerful person in the house". Instead, she advises you arrange the seating so that conversation can flow naturally and that a chair should never have its back to the door. "It's a basic human response based on ancient fears of attack not to want to sit with your back to the door", she says. "You'll notice in rooms where a chair is positioned like that, the chair's occupants always sit at an angle."

In the bedroom, headboards should never be up against a wall that has a toilet on the other side. "In Feng Shui terms you're sleeping with your head in the toilet and you are polluting your thoughts with sewer energy", she says. Toilets apparently bring a lot of sewer energy into a house – "always flush with the seat down," she cautions – so the fewer toilets a house has, the better. Not good news in a country where even the most modest newly built semi comes with three loos.

Water is linked to the state of your finances so stagnant water is a no-no and even humble fish tanks should have their water moved around by a pump. There shouldn't be a direct path between a front door and a back door "all the energy comes in the front door and goes right out the back" and clutter should be kept to a minimum because a clutter free environment promotes productive activity. "Your house is your outer skin", she says, adding that if a fuse blows you should consider that you might have some problems brewing in your own internal wiring.

A recent job combined her interior design skills and her Feng Shui knowledge. A Clonmel woman (it's mostly women who initially contact her) who had attended one of the courses she gives asked her to help turn a bathroom into a Jacuzzi room. "The view from the window was beautiful but it was obscured by frosted glass so I designed a new clear window and used natural materials such as stone, slate and glass in the design. Palms were brought in for greenery and there is a complex lighting system.

"The idea is that your view from every point in the bathroom has to be beautiful and soothing", she says. As to all the things that come in earnest with Feng Shui, such as candles and windchimes, Nina is resoundingly sensible. "Candles do help to purify the air but you have to be careful about having lots of them lighting in the house for fire reasons and there's no point in having a lovely set of windchimes in the doorway if you bang your head off them everytime you walk through."

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