

THE KEY -

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

PICTURES

Jodi Brunner rates the rooms with the best or worst feng shui.

Victorians are turning to Feng Shui to cash in, reports Andrea Moss.

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- White bathroom:

The window provides good ventilation and a pleasant view. There is no clutter.

- Bathroom in bedroom:

Bathrooms are for flushing away bad qi, bedrooms are for sleep. The two don't harmonise.

- Wood coloured kitchen:

The curving bench is good, and it's nice, bright yet warm room.

- Mostly white kitchen:

Sinks should not be opposite stoves – that represents fire and water clashing.

- Green-white lounge:

The room is clutter-free, light and spacious. Bringing the outside in is good as long as there is good-quality yang energy outside. Some black (water) would balance out the white (metal) and green (wood).

- Mostly white lounge:

The front door opening straight into the lounge room is not desirable; qi needs to accumulate in the entrance hall then disperse. The two-seater couch has its back to the door, which would give a sense of insecurity to those seated on it.

Energy balancing act in your home.

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- Earthy red and beige bedroom:

The headboard is against a solid wall, which gives a feeling of security and well being. Curved headboard is the shape of water, which is good for romance.

- Lime and white bedroom:

Green is a very yang colour, which is too active for bedrooms. There are too many doors and windows: too much energy will pour through them, which could make sleep restless.

ARTICLE

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To believers, feng shui can invite health, wealth and romance.

To skeptics, some of it is simply common sense and the rest codswallop.

The Chinese tradition, whose Cantonese pronunciation is “fung shoy”, dates back thousands of years.

Its central premise is that improving the way energy, or qi, flows through your physical surroundings can also improve your life.

Once the province of traditional Chinese wisdom, now the industry is thriving in the Western world, with practitioners and books galore to advise us how to feng shui our way to success.

Amongst its more famous believers are Madonna, Ricky Martin, Gwyneth Paltrow and billionaires Oprah Winfrey and Donald trump.

Prince Charles is said to have had his residence, Highgrove House, feng shui’ed and Bill Clinton apparently had a consultant check out the White House.

The tradition’s primary terrain is where we spend most of our lives: the home and the workplace.

And it has made inroads into Australian housing. United Australian Feng Shui Association president Kirstey Holland estimated that in Victoria, feng shui consultants are employed by the thousands each year: by homeowners to rearrange their furniture, place lucky objects and help design new homes; by buyers to determine whether a prospective house purchase will be fortuitous; and by vendors for tips on how to get their house to sell more quickly and for a better price.

Australian feng shui practitioner Gahle Atherton said that a renovation assessment can help homeowners avoid those “feng shui horror stories” in which people have divorced, lost money or experienced ongoing bad luck after renovations.

“From a feng shui perspective, there’s no smoke without fire,” Ms Atherton said.

And Ms Atherton believed a pre-selling assessment could help to correct “unseen energies” that gave the property a bad feel. “If a building has a bad feel, it doesn’t matter how much coffee smell you create or how many flowers are out on the table.”

A typical consultation, in which an expert examines your home or building plans and recommends how to create the best feng shui outcome, costs between \$300 and \$500.

Ms Holland said good practitioners were trained in three schools of feng shui: form, which looked at the landscape around a building; compass, which looked at the influence direction has; and flying stars, which involved mathematical calculations and looked at what energies were in what sector of the home.

The association is looking to regulate the industry, stamping out those who represent themselves as feng shui consultants without proper training.

“Feng shui is where massage was 10 years ago,” Ms Holland said.

One Melbourne consultant is Jodi Brunner, a nine-year veteran who trained under Master Joseph Yu, founded the FENG SHUI network, trains new practitioners and runs the Feng Shui Cures and Crystals shop at the Queen Victoria Market.

Ms Brunner, who rated for *The Key* rooms with the best and worst feng shui, said misconceptions were common in the midst of the traditions growing popularity.

“It’s not about keeping the toilet seat down (to avoid your fortune being flushed away) or about or about not having your front door lined up with your back door,” Ms Brunner said.

And putting mandarin ducks in your romance corner would not attract relationships of a lifetime if you didn’t also get dressed up, go out and meet people.

Feng was instead about the balance of yin and yang, she said.

Yin represented darkness and stagnant energy, while yang was active, vibrant energy. The point was not to get rid of yin, but to balance the two.

Ms Brunner said her workload had already tripled this year – mainly because February marked the start of a new 20-year feng shui cycle.

"I'm seeing current clients who are updating for the next 20 years, but also many new clients who are just becoming interested in feng shui," Ms Brunner said.

Her clients were a mixture of residential and business – including the Sheraton Hotel at Southgate – with people of Chinese and Western backgrounds represented.

A typical residential consultation began with an observation of a home's external features, and what was around it, and the compass reading of the site, Ms Brunner said.

"Then I draw up a chart based on a mathematical formula. The nine numbers are divided into five categories represented by the elements, and they correspond to the 'flying stars' – living spirits that influence our lives and can bring us health and wealth."

One of feng shui's most important concept is qi (pronounced "chee"), which translates as energy.

"Qi comes in through the front door. Whatever we bring in through the house when we enter will go right through the house," Ms Brunner said.

Therefore, what could be seen around the house when standing at the front door was important. For example, trees blocking the line to the doorway blocks energy; sharp pointed angles and lines nearby encourage sha qi (negative energy); and living opposite an industrial site, cemetery or a police station draws too much yin energy.

In contrast, beautiful views, meandering roads, well kept gardens and sometimes water would help yang energy to enter the house, Ms Brunner said.

Bedrooms were particularly important, she said: "We spend one third of our life in bed, so where we sleep has a strong impact on our personality."

They should be restful; mirrors, for example, were "too yang" for bedrooms and could disturb sleep.

In the lounge room, couches and armchairs should be placed with their back to a solid wall – the position of power in which we feel secure. Likewise, kitchens should be designed so that those cooking do not have their back to the room.

And in dining rooms, nobody should sit with their backs to the door.

"Also a convex mirror in the dining room is said to help double the food that's on the table," Ms Brunner said.

But Ms Holland warned that simply implementing the commonly read "form school tips" was insufficient, with the "flying stars" mathematical calculations of energies overriding form.

So if you don't want to pay for the consultant, what is the best feng shui tip for the novice?

Ms Brunner said: "Walk into your home; What does it look like, sound like, smell like and feel like?"

"Does it look beautiful? Are there any unpleasant sounds – traffic, barking dogs, construction, screaming children?"

“You can’t always smell your own home, so ask a friend who will be honest to smell it. How does it make you feel? And there should be objects around that empower you and make you feel happy – no reminders of unhappy times.”

Jodi Brunner is a Master of Feng Shui with Master Joseph Yu, Feng Shui Research Center, Canada. She is primarily a Feng Shui practitioner and trainer, also an accredited speaking member of the National Speakers Association of Australia and the founder of the FENG SHUI network. Contact Jodi at www.fengshuimaster.com.au for more info.

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