

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BURRIS

# Space Woman

Feng shui expert Yarrow offers solutions that are about both design and spirituality. By Christine Stutz

YOU WANT TO LIKE A WOMAN WHO CALLS HERSELF YARROW—yes, just Yarrow—and practices feng shui. And you do. There are no unwelcome surprises here: You expect her to be wearing crystals and Native American jewelry, and she is.

But what you don't expect is the authority with which she plies her trade. The same woman who can sound pretty ditzzy and disorganized on the phone coolly explicates the ancient Chinese art of placement in a way that makes you want to believe.

Even when Yarrow strains the limits of credulity, talking about clearing spaces of "ghost" energy, you want to hang in there, because you sense there's wisdom in her words.

In an Annapolis coffee shop, talking about energy flow and energy transfer, she is a sea of calm. While the caffeine-charged customers flit by like bees, she radiates the serenity of Buddha. It's as though in order to recognize the chi—or energy—in a space and redirect it, she must herself be as grounded and unflappable as Buddha himself.

A good feng shui practitioner is part interior decorator and part counselor. When someone invites you to feng shui his or her home, Yarrow says, it's not unlike engaging in psychotherapy.

"Often people are seeking to fix something that's broken," she says—most often related to money, relationships, or career.

At its essence, feng shui is about setting up one's environment to feel "harmonious," she says, and that requires ridding the space of negative energy and allowing positive, creative energy to flow freely. This is achieved through the proper placement of objects in the space, and through the use of rituals.

Clutter, for example, "impedes the flow of energy," and may increase anxiety. Decluttering "frees up energetic space" and "helps you clear

your mind," says Yarrow. By the same token, broken items in the home or office impede the flow of good chi and should be repaired or removed.

Like many of her peers in the late 70's and early 80's, Yarrow explored her spirituality—first with a psychosynthesis course at U.C. Berkeley, then through studying Native American practices, like sweat lodges, and later through a variety of Eastern modalities, such as acupuncture and reiki. In the 90's, she dropped her first name (Yarrow is her last name) when she moved to Maryland and took her life in a new direction.

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While Yarrow has long been fascinated by the unseen, the intuitive, and the mystical, she did not latch on to feng shui until 1993, and only started her business seven years ago.

Her business background has helped Yarrow to promote herself as an entrepreneur first, feng shui practitioner second. As the principal of Feng Shui At The Bay in Annapolis, she is an effective networker, prolific contributor to Annapolis area publications, and instructor at two community colleges.

Susan Hahn, an executive coach and management consultant, met Yarrow through an An-

napolis networking group and sought her input on a remodeling project in May.

The most important influence Yarrow had, she says, was discouraging her from installing wall-to-wall carpeting. Yarrow convinced her that, based on Hahn's birth date and birth location, she should have more wood in her surroundings. So Hahn put in a wood floor and bought area rugs.

Now, upon entering the room, "I absolutely find it welcoming: soft, yet energetic," says Hahn. "[In] my old office, I always felt awkward. I could not get comfortable. It is now absolutely comfortable."

School speech pathologist Chris Eggert was looking for more than a comfortable or practical space when she sought Yarrow's help with her Severna Park home last November. She was looking for a change that would lead her to take charge of her life in new ways.

For example, the outside of Eggert's home was light gray. Yarrow encouraged her to go with a dark gray instead, to give the house more yin, to balance the very sunny and bright (yang) feeling around the home.

And Yarrow gave her a list of suggestions to energize her interior living spaces, including fixing a broken clock and lighting up dark corners. Eggert says she has seen benefits from the feng shui exercise.

"I feel like I have more direction in my life," Eggert says. "Part of what I wanted to do was see more direction from where I was. . . . I feel better in the space, and when people come into the house they often say it feels good in here."

Eggert has taken several of Yarrow's private classes and is training, at 59, to become a feng shui practitioner herself. For her, it is about much more than a career change.

"Energy is also spiritual," says Eggert. "I look at feng shui as a spiritual path. For people who resonate with feng shui as a way to grow spiritually, Yarrow's a great practitioner." ❁