

Living with fengshui

The fengshui elements of a house can be weaved into its contemporary decor, writes CHEAH UI-HOON after visiting a geomancer's home

SOMETHING creams and browns form the dominant colour scheme at Adelina Pang's house, not the stereotypical gold or red, as one might envision a geomancer's home decor to look like. This being the Chinese New Year period, some traditional decorations are put up for the season, such as the *fu* character and the ubiquitous pussy willow arrangement with *hongbao* "lanterns" hanging from the branches.

No paw-waving kitty in sight however, as a sweeping glance tells you that Singapore's best-known female geomancer's home is as contemporary as the image that she herself portrays of the ancient art of fengshui.

So what makes Ms Pang's three-storey terrace house in Serangoon Gardens a prime example of an abode that has been aligned with a *lo pan* (the Chinese compass) under the eye of her own skilled fengshui knowledge?

It's the little things — like the ever-so-slightly angled front door, a display cabinet dividing the dining area from the living room, and a back door that's not placed in line with the front door. No obvious bells, mirrors or wind chimes, save for the ubiquitous water feature at the "wealth corner" of the house in the dining area, and some discreetly placed symbolic objects which one will notice only if one has been studying the place for a while.

"In classical fengshui, it's not about putting a few 'good luck' items around the house. People have the misconception that fengshui is about buying things," says the well-groomed, petite 40-year-old mother of two girls, who first got into geomancy more than 10 years ago because of her elder daughter's ill health.

"Some people also just ask me to look at their floor plan for the fengshui of the house but it's not like that — magnetic fields can't be measured just by looking at a piece of paper; we've to be on site to do it."

"I never leave home without our *lo pan* because that's what we need to chart out the *chi* pattern of the premises, and that will indicate where the good or bad areas are in the house and how we should position ourselves. In true fengshui, it's about location and direction and taking stock of the surroundings. It's not about 'good luck' items," she points out.

In her north-east facing house, for instance, which she moved into about six years ago, Ms Pang's front door is ever so slightly angled so that it's not flush against the wall. "It's not necessary for everyone to

tilt their door for fengshui reasons. But for some people, by angling the door a little, you can avoid oncoming *sa chi* (bad energy), or you do it to correct the flow of the *chi* in the house."

Her back door was directly in the line of the front door and kitchen door, so she had that moved. "We want *chi* to be able to accumulate in the house, instead of going straight through," she explains. When looking at a house, the three key factors geomancers look at are the location and direction of the doors, the location of the stove because that affects your well-being and the positioning of the beds.

The stove in Ms Pang's kitchen, incidentally, is placed in reverse direction, with the knobs on the top left corner, next to the wall and facing the dining room. "In modern days, the 'fire mouth' would be the knobs on the stove. The knobs should be where the direction of the good *chi* is coming from," she notes, adding that, however, the position of the stove should be at a bad location to suppress the bad luck.

Water feature 'traps' wealth

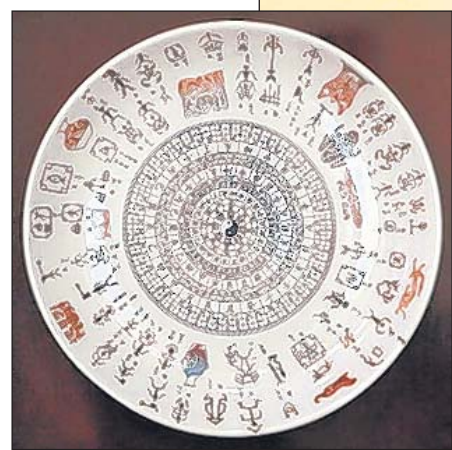
Her "wealth star" is in the dining room, where the centrepiece is a round glass dining table and upholstered chairs in red-gold brocade material. At a corner, she has placed a water feature which is a revolving ball in a bowl of water — to "trap" wealth.

Because she has appointments to view clients' houses almost every day, Ms Pang usually works out of her home office where the furniture is specifically made to fengshui dimensions, such as having a desk that's 32 inches in height, rather than the standard 30 inches. The office is in a room where there's good *chi*, and also faces a good direction.

The second floor comprises the master bedroom and the guest room, with a large landing space — with an L-shaped light brown sofa against one wall and flat-screen TV on another — that has been transformed into a TV lounge area.

"The landing space is where the quarrelsome *chi* is, so we like to use metal to suppress it because the quarrelsome *chi* is wood, and metal suppresses wood," says Ms Pang. Cleverly, the "metal" in the room is represented by the pattern of concentric circles on the carpet, as well as a framed collection of old Chinese coins — which she bought from a friend's shop — hanging over the wall behind the sofa. "Other metal elements include the metal lamps," she explains.

The guest room is where the good *chi* is, which is also where Ms Pang's husband has his work desk. But as the room is sel-



PHOTOS: YEN MENG JIN

The way of the master: Ms Pang (above) won't leave home without her 'lo pan' (inset). Her front door (right) is angled so that it is not flush against the wall but it is so slight that it is almost imperceptible

dom used, she placed a clock with a swinging pendulum to "activate" the *chi*.

In the master bedroom, an abstract painting of flowers over the bed and the use of the colour green on that wall is made to represent the wood element for the room. Generally, the headboard of the bed shouldn't share the same wall as the door, but because this is a better place to put the bed, what Ms Pang has done is to build a small glass partition between the door and the bed.

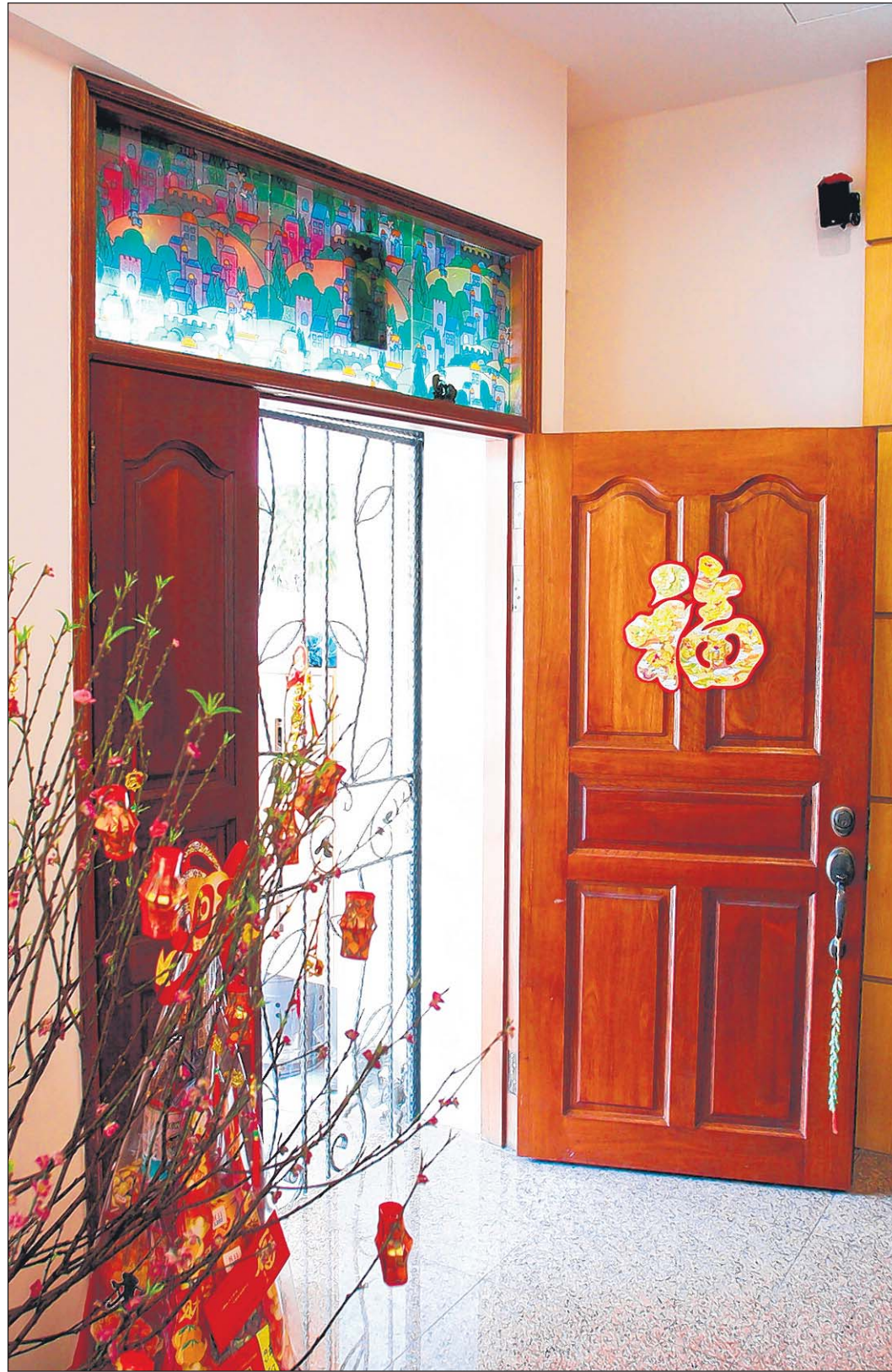
For her daughters' rooms, the main factor is also where the beds are placed. In one room, the bed is placed under the higher end of the sloping ceiling. "Because the lower end is the oppressive side. And we didn't want to level the ceiling because it's nice to have it so high," says Ms Pang.

After a tour of Ms Pang's home, one who isn't well-versed in fengshui wouldn't pick out the fengshui elements in the house. You would think that they are part of the decor and the layout of choice. It's that ability to weave classic fengshui into contemporary, design-friendly decor for the living space that makes Ms Pang quite a favourite with interior design companies and magazines, not to mention corporate clients like banks.

"Whenever I buy something for the house, I do try to remember what I need for the space and whether it'll fit in," she says. The paintings she has picked for the house are mostly modern and abstract, with the occasional one carrying a bit more symbolism to it — like the large metallic-coloured abstract painting in the living room which hangs over the off-white sofa and chairs. The dominant metal elements in the room are again discreetly represented through the painting, which is incidentally called Golden City, and some metal-plated objects like the lamp base and telephone.

No gut feel goes into her fengshui readings at all, Ms Pang stresses, because she bases her readings on the classic Flying Star analysis. "It's definitely scientific and very mathematical."

As to whether fengshui is an art, it clearly helps if the fengshui master has a naturally artistic eye as well.



Wealth area: A display cabinet divides the living room from the dining room, which is the home's 'wealth star'

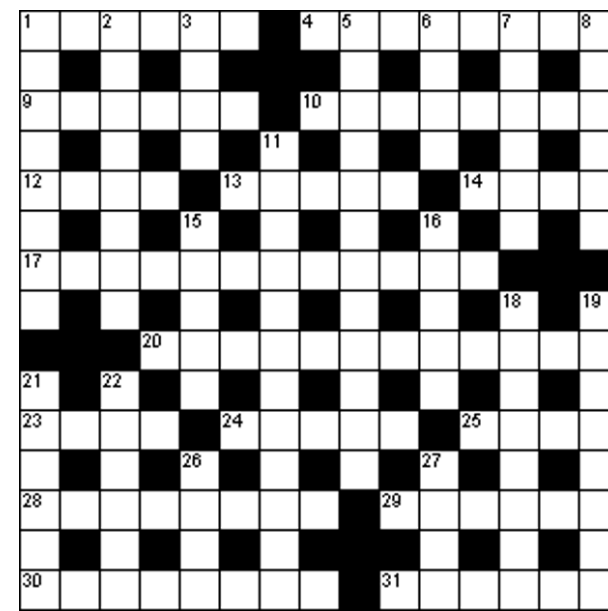
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Nervous reaction from tense bad speller? (6)
- Exercises for journalists covering drink? (5-3)
- Approach a good man to take over key company (6)
- Spoilt little brat publicised (8)
- Stalk half of them on the road (4)
- Box tree's main support (5)
- Trouble follows wife's lament (4)
- One country about to stop the establishment (12)
- Feminists with staff sure get angry! (12)
- Language that's the way into universities (4)
- Endeavoured to be heard (5)
- Couple lack source of cash for bank (4)
- Serving tea, a rule that is honoured (8)
- Soldier with young lady becomes negligent (6)
- Rule out major key in opening music (8)
- Musician acts in front of the monarch (6)

DOWN

- Send military leader into area of airport (8)
- Appreciate where the batsman stays (8)
- Copyright on a way to mould (4)
- Told off - or men started to panic! (12)
- Quiet morning is just a front! (4)
- New Labour bow out awkwardly? That's fanciful! (6)
- Seat for theologian in auction? (6)
- Grew rapidly in favour, if alerted to change (12)
- Appreciate victory over a louse, oddly (5)
- Company doctor generating envy (5)
- The vigorous way in which to twist rusty lid? (8)
- One might judge there is sulphur in fool's gold! (8)
- Either way, it means arrest (4,2)
- A record spinner about to admit fashionable charge on oath (6)
- A creature from the deep lake (4)
- Collapsed on the hill (4)



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Radli, 4 Labourer, 10 Ferrari, 11 Feature, 12 Ramp, 13 Track, 14 Fine, 17 Fingerprinting, 19 Psychoanalysts, 22 Adam, 23 Hertz, 24 Anti, 27 Reredos, 28 Lenient, 29 Diddlers, 30 Spend.
Down: 1 Riff-raff, 2 Duramen, 3 Iran, 5 Affectionately, 6 Opal, 7 Reunion, 8 Reeve, 9 Microprocessor, 15 Deuce, 16 Stale, 18 Assisted, 20 Starred, 21 Sincere, 22 Acrid, 25 Idol, 26 Gnus.

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