

Commercial real estate industry tackles new challenges with ancient art of feng shui

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When celebrity chef Tom Kime was looking for a premises to launch his new Ceru restaurant, he visited a site in Sydney's eastern suburbs where several businesses had previously crashed.

He liked the area, he loved the potential but he hated the space.

"The aesthetic was all wrong and the energy there was even worse," he says.

"Not one business had done well there, and it felt like it too. I knew something dramatic had to be done to change the look of the place and its atmosphere."

Back in his native Britain, he'd seen how the enormously successful Zuma restaurants chain had started out seeking the help of a feng shui expert to advise on locations, designs and colour schemes.

So he approached Australian feng shui master Mina Zheng to see what she thought of the premises and if – and how – they could be improved.

She came, she saw, she told him what should be done and he duly did it.



Tom Kime and Mina Zheng at Ceru restaurant. Photo: Brook Mitchell

The entrance shifted, a glass wall was blocked, the ceiling was levelled, the bar moved, the colours changed to blue and yellow, a planned black floor became grey and recycled wood and copper panels were brought in.

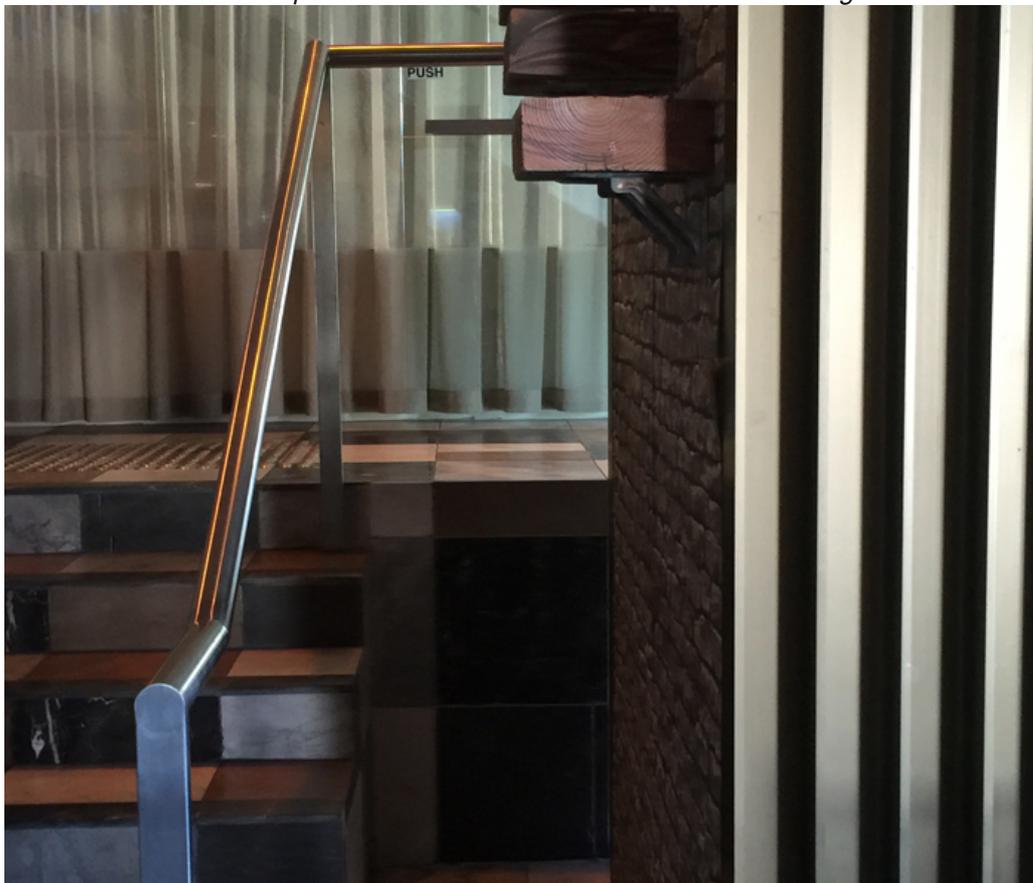
"It was so horrible and it was trapping energy and leaking money but now it

looks a lot better,” says Zheng.

“We opened it out a lot more and softened it from a ‘sinking ship’ formation into a ‘golden ingot’ shape, with positive qi flow. I think now it will do well.”



Before: The restaurant space before the renovation. Photo: Mina Zheng



Before: The space was leaking money and trapping energy, according to Mina Zheng.

Finally, in late January at the base of the Larmont Hotel in Potts Point, Ceru opened with a blaze of publicity, packed tables and glowing reviews. Ceru uses free-range, mostly organic and sustainable ingredients to serve Middle Eastern-style “street food”.

“Everyone who comes in now says how calming and welcoming the restaurant feels,” says Kime, the founder of sustainable seafood cafe Fish & Co, author of six books about food and regular TV cooking show presenter, who’s previously worked with Rick Stein, Jamie Oliver and David Thompson. “I think it was money well worth spending.”



After: The Ceru space was opened out, from a “sinking ship” formation to “golden ingot”, with positive qi flow. Photo: Brook Mitchell

Kime is the latest in a rush of businesspeople turning to practitioners of the ancient art of feng shui for help to reshift the energy and focus of their commercial real estate.

Property developers today routinely take notice of feng shui when planning new projects, with orientation one of the most important facets, and many architects also apply feng shui to their designs.