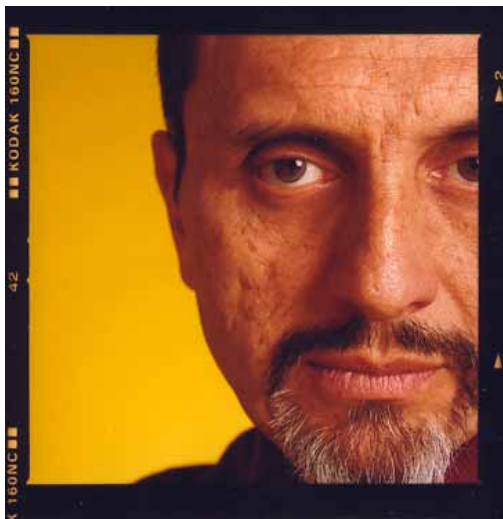


the new healers

Backed by an army of celebrity patients, buttressed by clinical studies, alternative medicine is winning new respect in New York. Some of the best practitioners in the world are a cab ride away.

By Nina Burleigh



Magical blend: feng shui master Alex Stark finds the black steams under your bed that can cause disease

'EVERY HOUSE HAS NINE ENERGIES," says Alex Stark, a *feng shui* practitioner who uses geomancy to track down bad energy in houses and eradicate it. "What I do is like a CT scan, so you can say in this precise corner of your house the danger is greatest, and in this corner, you might want to put an altar to improve your relationships."

Stark, who has a large, global client list, is half Peruvian and half Swiss and grew up in a family that was open to notions of South American magic and ritual. He studied architecture at Yale, but in his mid-thirties he had what he terms an identity crisis and began to use his gift—a gift that his fellow architects scorn, although he is respected enough that he teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design.

There are many *feng shui* practitioners working in New York (Donald Trump im-

ports his from China), but Stark's method is more intuitive and magic-oriented than most. He not only operates on *feng shui* principles of directions but says he physically senses the earth's grid of energy. Where the lines of that energy intersect, migraines or damage to the immune system or other ailments can occur. Lay people cannot know whether their bed just happens to be situated on such an intersection.

Stark's geomancy has enabled him, he says, to ferret out a "black stream" beneath the bed of a woman who had been diagnosed with lung cancer. He is much in demand at \$250 an hour among the well-heeled who want make sure, for example, that they haven't placed their bundle of joy's crib over an intersection of bad energy.

Over lunch at Zen Palate, Stark offers to give me a quick Chinese astrological reading, which would be the guide for how he would rearrange my living quarters if I had the \$250-an-hour fee. I give him my birth date, and he consults a tiny chart in his wallet, then tells me I am efficient and organized and have a good head for business. "You have a very strong potential for happiness and prosperity," he concludes.

A guy who tells you that—and convincingly—is worth every cent of his fee. I can't wait to scrape up the funds to have him check my apartment for black streams. ■

"What I do is like a CAT scan, so you can say in this precise corner of the house the danger is the greatest, and in this corner you might want to put an altar to improve your relationships."
