

Analyse me

What does where you work say about you?

Lina Mookerjee describes her basement room

Work from a basement room with no natural light. You enter it down 13 steps. I ask clients to leave their shoes upstairs - so they leave the outside *outside* when they come in. They describe it variously as a crucible, a cave, a womb or a magic room. I see it as a rich, masala mix - an invitation to engage with the depths of their inner life. It's very soundproof, with thick walls - a safe *cer*ring, very feminine space. There's a sense of being protected from the world.

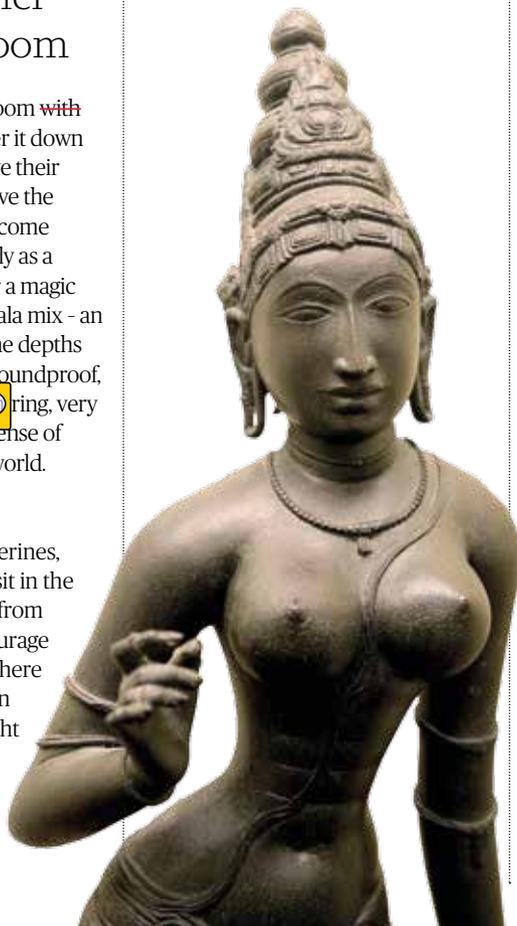
Soft colours

The colours are soft - tangerines, yellow, raspberry, white. I sit in the middle of the room, away from the walls; it seems to encourage clients to open up more. There are two client chairs, one in each corner. They're upright armchairs, soft but firm. Clients can choose which one to sit in, or they can sit on the floor. A very important element

in the room is the wipe-board. I do a lot of client work on this.

Turmoil and beauty

I have several pictures on the walls. One is a Monet - the bridge over the lily pond in his garden at Giverny. It's so elemental in the way he captures the light. The other is by Van Gogh - the Wheatfield with Cypresses. I love the way he captures the tension between the turmoil of the clouds and the beauty of the cornfield, and how they meet in the middle around the cypress trees. I also have two flower prints from the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall - a poppy and a sunflower. For me they represent having the courage to cut back the smothering undergrowth to allow beauty to emerge.



Form and energy

I also have an image of a papyrus from the Karnak Temple at Luxor. The temple is one of the greatest energy centres in the world, so that's about bringing that ancient energy and wisdom into the room. Then I have photos of Jacqueline du Pré, the cellist, and Barbara Hepworth, the sculptor. Their work is about giving form to energy. Two other photos are really for me: one of Tony Benn and the other of Mikhail Gorbachev. For me, they symbolise the impact just one person can have on so many lives. That is what we do as therapists - we connect our clients with the bigger, better life they could be living, and hold that vision for them.

Symbols and archetypes

There's a fireplace, with a gas-effect fire - that's literally the crucible. On the left is a statue of the Buddha, representing the masculine, and on the right, Parvati, wife of Shiva, representing the feminine. Parvati is very inspiring to a lot of my female clients - women who are struggling with incongruence in their lives, trying to find who they really are, without the religious conditioning. These symbols and archetypes really speak to clients.

Window to the world

The last thing clients see as they leave the room is a framed photo of the Annapurna mountain range in the Himalayas. To me it's a window looking out, preparing them to re-enter the world outside when they climb those 13 steps and leave.

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About Lina

Now: a psychotherapist, supervisor, polarity therapist, yoga teacher, writer and cruise lecturer based in Nottingham.

Formerly: the first Asian female engineer in the UK electrical industry, working with East Midlands Electricity, as it then was. I was the only woman, and just 22 when I started. All the male engineers were 40-plus. I worked there for a decade before retraining as a therapist.

First paid job: a Christmas job working on the music counter at WH Smith. It was 1985, the year of Live Aid, and Madonna had just released 'Like a Virgin'. I loved that job - I didn't want to leave to go on to sixth form.



What does your counselling room say about you and how you work? If you'd like to contribute to our regular back-page feature, email therapytoday@thinkpublishing.co.uk