



## KNOCK KNOCK

**Not many people like to discuss their love and sex life with strangers. Unless it's with 'love therapist' Vera Steenhart. *Amsterdam Magazine* takes a look inside her home practice in the north of Amsterdam.**

Her last name might suggest otherwise (it literally translates as 'stone heart'), but Vera Steenhart is all about fixing broken love. As a relationship and sex therapist, she's been helping couples get through hard times for over 30 years. Once you step into her home practice, you immediately understand why people open up so easily here. The whole basement floor of her cute village-like house in the north part of Amsterdam breathes comfort. From the Buddha statues on top of the fireplace to Vera's two cats jumping on your lap: it feels homey and warm, without being overwhelm-

This cute village-like house breathes comfort

ing. 'I think details are very important,' Vera explains. 'Besides the fact that I love every item in this room, it shows clients I have an eye for detail. This subliminally tells them I will notice the details in their stories as well.' Asian art, like the large wooden

Buddha head on the table, is Vera's favourite. 'Therapy for love and sex issues has existed in Asia for ages. The Chinese already wrote about men's and women's needs in 4000 BC.' The first thing Vera does when a new couple comes in, is ask them if they want any coffee. Not an unusual question, but for Vera the response is a first indication of someone's personality. 'Some people are like: "I don't know, whatever you're having". Then you know they might be insecure and obedient. Others look at each other, to see how the other one responds.' To have couples open up about the most intimate details of their relationship, Vera does not have any special tricks. 'It's all about making people feel comfortable. The colours of the floor, walls and ceiling, which are yellow and orange, are very soothing. Orange is the colour of the sacral chakra, which is below the navel and related to feelings and sexuality. Whether you believe in chakra's or not, it does seem to work.' The Moorish features, like the star-shaped lamps and big pillars, stem from Vera's love for southern Spain. 'I spend half my time in a little town in Andalusia. I receive clients there for multi-day sessions and work on my book.' One item in the house that has a strong symbolic meaning is the broken orange Carmelite stone on the table. 'I like that the two halves are different but still belong together - just like lovers. And even though the outside looks pretty rough, if you look at the inside it is actually really beautiful.'



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