

How Many Ways Can You Feng Shui?

by Margaret Wang | Posted: Thursday, May 1, 2008 12:00 am

“Have the foot of your bed facing out towards your doorway. Rest your head near windows. This creates an abundance of air and fluid circulation within your personal space and your own body,” advised Nelson Tsou. Educated in Taiwan and the U.S., Tsou is an architectural contractor who works in Queens, Long Island and Manhattan. He is also schooled in the art of Feng Shui, one of the latest trends used in design.

Feng Shui, properly pronounced “Fong Sway,” literally translates into “wind water” in English. Applicable in any arrangement of space, it is the ancient practice of design and placement within the interior of a home or place of business for ultimate harmony and success in family, love, finance and health.

An accumulation of experience and wisdom drawn from Chinese society and formed into laws, this 4,000 year old art has found symbolic methods to ward off negative energy in one's immediate surroundings. Space, weather, astrology and pseudo-geomagnetism are all elements of the practice.

Next to sushi and sashimi, tea houses and acupuncture — all trends of Asian inspiration in modernist America — the art of Feng Shui is gaining popularity, fueled by the excitement and mystery of the Eastern tradition.

Woodside resident Arthur Abayev decorates his Brooklyn store, Grand Jewelry, according to the principles of Feng Shui. “My storefront faces the sun and its natural light,” Abayev said. “My mirrors are faced to maximize lighting and my plants placed accordingly.” Around midday, sunbeams hit a window decorated with ornaments and jewels. The storefront responds by lighting the sidewalk with a golden sheen, bathing passersby in the warmth of the light.

“Anyone can start small, with simple stuff like plants and mirrors,” Abayev added. “Once you notice the slightest difference in results you won't be able to stop.” Jade tangerine plants or jade grape plants are believed to boost fortune in family and work. A statue of a Pi Yao, a highly auspicious and mythical creature that resembles a lion, might fend off bad energy or bad “chi.” Hanging wind chimes in the south is believed to help steer one clear of possible accidents.

The principles of Feng Shui also include rules governing design and the arrangement of furniture.

“Any architectural structure, built from the bodies of men, with labor and heartache, tears and sweat, is also a body of life,” Tsou said. “Just as the human body contains different areas where oxygen and fluids traverse for health, protection and growth, a building or a home needs wind and water, Feng and Shui, flowing freely for fortune and success to bloom.”

Energy created when abiding by the theories of Feng Shui is meant to be long-standing. Once instilled within the walls and ceilings of any structure, the positive elements are meant to transcend generations.

For example, an architectural design with two or more doors adjacent to each other creates a floodgate of negative energy. Neither wind nor water can ventilate a body on a linear path, inducing poor circulation.

To walk through the entrance of a home where you can see the interior from front to back, without obstruction, is like a having a gutted fish; it is a body with no organs, a home without substance.

“Without passage ways for air and fluid to course, and without walls for protection of private areas, it is said that one's life becomes as vulnerable and transparent as the space resided,” Tsou explained.

Other components that govern the laws of Feng Shui are the elements of fire, earth, metal, water and wood. Each element possesses its own combination of colors. The colors are symbolic of the elements' characteristics. Each also corresponds with a direction.

Fire, an element of the south, is represented by the colors red, bright orange and purple. Earth, an element of the northeast and southwest, is represented by yellow and beige. Metal, an element of the west and northwest, is represented by white and gray. Blue and black denote water, the element of the north, and brown and green signify wood, the element of the south.

There are many colors in the spectrum symbolic of the characteristics of the five elements, each exuding different essences beneficial to physical and spiritual growth within the home and in one's life. Combined with the energies created by space arrangement, decorating with these colors in the direction that corresponds with each element can induce prosperity, creativity, boldness and security.

Red, the color of joy, luck, money and health, should be used in the southern part of your home. Yellow and beige are conducive to fluidity and neatness. White and gray might influence control and steadfastness. The water colors, blue and black, are symbolic of depth and wisdom, soothing and protective of both emotions and power. Brown and green can represent nourishment and feelings of harmony.

Some helpful reading material to grasp the fundamentals of Feng Shui include “The Complete Illustrated Guide to Feng Shui: How to Apply the Secrets of Chinese Wisdom for Health, Wealth and Happiness” by Lillian Too, an illustrative book which discusses the five elements. Too also goes into detail about the symbolism behind concepts and energies of the art.

“Practical Feng Shui” by Simon Brown, is another helpful starter. Brown's book contains categories and subcategories breaking down the history of principles and design elements.

Practiced and praised by traditional masters and modernist designers alike, Feng Shui is winning over adherents. With the lucrative interior design industry scrambling to borrow these art concepts, next time your home or business needs a little sprucing up or revamping, ask yourself: how many ways can you Feng Shui?