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Some call it superstition or new age mambo jumbo, others regard it as religion. Whatever the opinion, the fact remains that many people still employ the age old Chinese tradition of feng shui to generate and invite harmony into their homes, work space and life. In fact, more so now than ever, feng shui has travelled from its roots in the East to the West, where it enjoys a growing popularity.

The International Feng Shui Convention, held in Singapore's Suntec City late last year, defines feng shui as an architectural theory that comes under the study of Physiognomy – the use of formulas to assess the human condition in relation to the living environment.

Often times, the 'Qi' or energy force of a space is calculated and then compared with that of the person residing in it.

The purpose of feng shui is to create environments in which Qi flows smoothly. By obtaining a balance between the 'yin' (negative) and 'yang' (positive) forces, harmony

is established. In an interiors setting, such as a home, this is usually done through the selection and placement of objects in the home, and also through furnishing, design and colour.

But how does a traditional practice that dates back some 3,000 years, and was a closely guarded secret of ancient royalty, stay relevant with the times? By exercising its very precept of going with the flow – adapting to modern lifestyles, according to Master Vincent Koh, a lecturer on feng shui in Singapore Polytechnic, founder of the Singapore Feng Shui Centre and author of four books on the subject.

The intrinsic essence of feng shui has not changed, but the approach has. For example, Master Koh modifies the traditional Feng Shui Luo Pan or compass, to include English letters and numerals. Also, when feng shui is used and explained in simple logical terms, it is easier to understand.

striking a balance



COLOUR PLAY

In a home setting, depending on the needs of the resident, the right feng shui is said to encourage everything from harmony to happiness, health and wealth. Colour plays a big part in determining ambience and subsequent daily experiences. In *Feng Shui in the Home*, Siobhan O'Brien, a renowned artist and writer who contributes to *Vogue Living*, *Marie Claire* and other titles, recommends the use of various colours for different parts of the home.

According to her, colour in a room can create specific types of energy in that area. Red is a colour of passion and should be applied to bedrooms, but not to kitchens which benefit from the clean vibrancy of white. Use orange in dining and living rooms, as it is a colour that encourages communication.

Obviously there's more to feng shui than just colour. Everything from bedlinen to types of plants. Even basic common sense contribute to how Qi flows. And different areas in the home require different feng shui treatments.

THE BEDROOM

A haven of rest and relaxation, comfort is of top priority in the bedroom. It makes sense then to choose soothing shades and keep this room clutter-free. The bed is the central focus here, and its proper placement is essential in maintaining harmony in the bedroom.

Do

- Use silk or cotton bed linen as these fabrics create harmonious Qi
- Keep the space under your bed clear so you don't sleep on unresolved issues
- Place candles around as they encourage passion

Don't

- Face the bed towards the window as you will be subjected to heat and glare
- Face the bed in front of the mirror as it gives the soul a shock on seeing its image
- Place the dressing table opposite a window as light reflected in the mirror may hurt the eyes



Do you feel happy or tense at home?
How you feel may be determined by the feng shui
where you live. **Valerie Chew**

THE KITCHEN

Because prosperity is often associated with how much food is provided for the family, the kitchen should always be filled with food. Food preparation is also important, thus the kitchen should be in optimal condition for cooking. Good ventilation, natural light and space are desired in this part of the home.

Do

- Keep knives in drawers as the sharp edges encourage negative, dangerous Qi
- Display bowls of fruit to promote flow of healthy Qi
- Place leafy plants between the stove and sink to harmonise the contrasting elements of fire and water

Don't

- Hang utensils from an overhead beam as it generates dangerous, negative energy
- Place carpets and rugs as they are impractical, trap dirt and undermine optimal conditions
- Keep dried flowers as it gives off negative Qi

THE LIVING ROOM

The living room is central to family life and supports a wide range of activities. It is a place for interaction, thus it should be welcoming and conducive for communication.

Do

- Use light-coloured curtains to cheer the room up
- Keep fish, preferably goldfish as they regulate Qi and symbolise wealth
- Hang paintings in pairs as they give balance and promote happiness
- Hang crystals near windows to bring in light
- Hang wind chimes near doors as they stimulate Qi

Don't

- Place electronic objects (e.g. TV sets) near seating as they have negative Qi
- Face the master chair towards a window as the light is glaring

- Place heavy paintings over sofas as they trigger dangerous Qi
- Keep spiky plants as they produce cutting Qi
- Place bookshelves in corners as they stagnate space and energy

THE BATHROOM

As a private sanctuary for cleansing and relaxation, the bathroom should be a soothing space, with elements designed to refresh and rejuvenate.

Do

- Use aromatic oils as it creates a soothing ambience for cleansing and purification
- Place tall plants around the toilet as they balance the excess water element
- Place large mirrors around to increase the sense of space

Don't

- Leave shelves cluttered as tidiness enhances relaxation
- Leave drains or toilet bowls uncovered as Qi will be lost
- Keep windows closed as this causes stagnation

WINDS OF CHANGE

Fuelled by practicality and shaped by the times, feng shui has survived the ages and continues to thrive. So the next time you see a feng shui Master, don't be surprised when he whips out his compact PDA – complete with various feng shui software, and starts measuring the Qi in your home. ■

