



INTERIOR DESIGN MASTER CLASS

100 LESSONS FROM AMERICA'S FINEST DESIGNERS ON THE ART OF DECORATION



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Feng Shui

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Fire, earth, metal, water, and wood: these primal elements, even in the twenty-first century, compose our world. Feng shui, the ancient Chinese philosophy, is a spiritual science, the study of how to balance these five elements in the rooms, buildings, and landscapes we inhabit. Feng shui teaches us to enhance our daily lives through spatial harmony: the position of a building in a landscape, the design of the building itself, and the placement of furniture and objects in an interior. Through the complementary principles of yin and yang, feng shui strives to create harmony and a sense of well-being that subtly influences our health, wealth, career, and relationships. The philosophy dates back to at least the eighth century and the Tang dynasty, and while a full exploration of feng shui's complexities can take a lifetime of study, everyone can benefit from its basic principles.

The gut renovation of a large Palm Beach apartment provided a perfect opportunity to put into practice the spatial principles of feng shui. On the thirtieth floor of a modern building, the previous tenant had placed a wall directly in front of the entrance, blocking the energy flow—and also a spectacular view of the ocean. I had this wall pushed back by only two feet, but the effect was momentous. Not only did the energy flow improve, but you could also now see from one end of the apartment to the other, encompassing an ocean view and a city view. A wall dividing the kitchen/dining area and the living room was eliminated, creating a single large space now unified by a two-sided fireplace, which brought the element of fire into the center of the home.

We also rearranged the furniture according to the principles of feng shui. The library desk, for instance, was situated in the power position, giving the client an oblique view of the room's entrance, balanced by the view out of an adjacent window. The bedroom was

The harmonious placement of a large color photograph softens the strong lines of the dining room in this Miami apartment, preventing the flow of potentially harmful *sha chi*. The vases of flowers have a similar effect.

OVERLEAF: This colorful room, which faces the Atlantic Ocean in Palm Beach, Florida, is a case study in balancing the primal elements of fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. A large mirror, itself an element of water, reflects the expansive ocean views.





organized along similar principles, with the bed positioned along a wall to the left of the entrance. All clutter was eliminated, which helped clarify thought patterns and allowed the free flow of energy, or what is known in Eastern philosophies as chi.

Feng shui teaches that the world is influenced by energy lines around the globe, which affect one's life for better or worse. When designing a home, one must augment the flow of positive chi, also known as *sheng chi*, in order to bring good fortune and harmony, rather than discord. Harmful chi, also known as *sha chi*, may be caused by too many straight lines in a room, making energy flow too quickly. This is remedied by the harmonious placement of objects or the use of leafy plants that filter and slow the energy flow.

Color in feng shui is a richly energetic factor. Fire is balanced by earth, metal, water, and wood, with each element corresponding to one or more colors. An excess of one element or color creates an unbalanced, disharmonious effect. White is linked to metal; brown to wood; blue or black to water; and taupe to earth.

Another principle of feng shui is to design a space based on the personality and astrological chart of the client. A large Palm Beach house was designed in a traditional vein and featured furniture and fabrics chosen to create a calm oasis for the client. Mirrors, representing the element of water, were used to enhance views and redirect the flow of energy, or chi, in a positive way. Mirrors can also redirect negative energy away from the home. One of the most pleasing rooms was the family room, with French doors on three sides. The room was grounded by taupe furniture and a green patterned rug, symbolic of the earth element, and any potential negative chi was softened by the use of large leafy plants and curtains.

Whatever the project, the basic principles of feng shui cultivate many aspects of our clients' lives and well-being. Even the smallest project benefits from feng shui principles of balance and harmony. The correct positioning of a bed or a desk, of artwork or lighting, may dramatically change the way a room is experienced. The rich, complex tradition of feng shui, implemented for centuries, continues as a major force today.