

TRADITIONAL FENG SHUI: MYTH OR ULTIMATE GREEN SCIENCE?

By Simona F. Mainini, Dr. Arch., Assoc. AIA

During the past ten years, a new trend in design and architecture has gained popularity and has become a significant force in the market. It is not a fancy design style, a sleek new material, or a revolutionary construction system. It is the ancient science of Feng Shui (pronounce Fung Shuae), and its increasing popularity necessitates an expertise that marries the traditional knowledge with contemporary sensibilities.

Although initially looked down upon by architects, designers and realtors, Feng Shui has made its way from Asia to America to Europe and back in the most effective yet underestimated way: Word of mouth.

Along with the growing interest and coverage from the press, the number of self appointed “experts” exploded. But, in many cases, their training was dubious and misguided, leading to a proliferation of questionable applications. Today, Feng Shui is associated with anything from haircuts to car design to mirrors and crystals. It’s no wonder some design professionals are skeptical, rolling their eyes when clients request to work with the dreaded “Feng Shui master”.

In nearly ten years of practice as a Feng Shui consultant for architectural projects, I have worked with some architects who feared or otherwise avoided Feng Shui. Their mistrust may have stemmed from a previous unfavorable experience or some horror story from a colleague. Having received training in architecture myself (School of Architecture of Polytechnic in Milan, Italy), I understand the architect’s perspective when designing a project, and I tailor my interventions to his or her professional skills as much as to the client’s requests.

When I first began my practice, there were no models to follow. So, I forged my own path and have since honed it down to a science.

FENG SHUI: THE MYTH

First of all there are a few myths worth unveiling when we address Feng Shui. Let’s begin with its terminology.

When most people mention “Feng Shui,” they are usually referring to a westernized version that is a conflagration of simplified design psychology, superstitions, and religious symbolism, much of which has been adopted (or invented) over the past 20 years.

When using the term “Traditional Feng Shui,” I am referring to an ancient form of *geomancy*, a discipline that was revered in many ancient cultures - Celtic, Egyptian, and of course Chinese - but was progressively forgotten as those ancient civilizations disappeared or evolved. The Chinese geomancy was preserved through elite scholarship. Only well educated scholars were allowed to study and practice it, and only those of high social class were able to use it.

Traditional Feng Shui was developed over about 5,000 years. It is composed of several theories and addresses multiple applications, including timing of construction, building orientation, and design and decoration. An extremely dynamic science, it also considers compatibility between the building and the occupants.

This takes us to the second myth that I'd like to address: the certified Feng Shui master.

To acquire enough knowledge and experience to qualify as an expert requires years, especially when working with architectural projects, which are exponentially more complex than the decorating of an apartment, for example. The title "Feng Shui master" was originally bestowed only upon individuals who practiced for 10 years or more. And, the title "Grand Master" was reserved for those individuals with at least 25 years of experience.

Sadly, I have witnessed a proliferation of "Certified Feng Shui Masters," many of whom are highly unqualified. And, because there is no regulatory board to discriminate the true Masters from the well-intentioned but incompletely trained practitioners from the snake-oil salesmen, it is important to inquire about the training and experience of any so-called Feng Shui Masters before deciding to work with them.

TRADITIONAL FENG SHUI: THE "GREEN" SCIENCE

When I became interested in Traditional Feng Shui fifteen years ago, I was very intrigued by concepts and questions of quantum physics. I also became quite passionate about "bio-compatible" and organic choices in nutrition, wellness, and the environment.

What I found when researching the geomantic principles of Traditional Feng Shui was that the root principles had much in common with other early scientific disciplines and were often developed in connection with them. These include astronomy, meteorology, seismology (the study of the Earth's movements), Traditional Chinese Medicine and mathematics. So, the scholars that developed this system for designing buildings, decorating and arranging the landscape were also well versed in mathematics, weather patterns and the internal motion of the Earth.

Furthermore all of these disciplines were rooted in the understanding of *Qi* - translated in English as *Life-Force energy*. Qi is the building block from which everything is made. Different vibrational patterns define different materials - a concept strikingly similar to those explored in quantum physics.

And how does Traditional Feng Shui apply to buildings today?

Properly applied, Feng Shui can preserve and improve the well being of a building's occupants in multiple areas of their lives. It can make sleep more restful, offices more focused and productive and scholastic or financial achievements easier and more plentiful. Consequently, relationships between spouses, within families and among coworkers often become healthier and more supportive. And, this can all be achieved within any architectural style, design theme and location in the world.

The results, although sometimes miraculous, are not miracles. Rather they are natural manifestations of a balanced and supportive environment. Using the principles of Traditional Feng Shui, the existing life-force energy of the environment can be positively channeled through the building, creating a holistically healthy environment in which to live and work.

Would you like to learn more about how you can use Traditional Feng Shui to increase health, abundance and happiness in your life?

Join us for a two-hour lecture: "Traditional Feng Shui: Myth or Ultimate Green Science"
November, 3rd at 7.30 am at AIA/LA - for location please call AIA/LA at 213 639 0777

You can also visit our web site at www.fengshuiarch.com for more information on future events.

About the Author

Simona F. Mainini earned her Doctor in Architecture degree from the School of Architecture of the Polytechnic in Milan, Italy and a diploma from the School of Arts of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

She studied traditional Feng Shui with Master Lawrence Sang, is a senior instructor for the American Feng Shui Institute and conducts classes at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on "Feng Shui of Designers and Architects".

Dr. Mainini has been published internationally and lectures and teaches around the world.

Since the establishment of her international practice, Feng Shui Architecture, Inc. in 1997, she has consulted worldwide with homeowners, architectural and interior design firms, international corporations, diplomats, and celebrities in the application of these ancient principles to contemporary design.

Her first book, *Feng Shui for Architecture*, is available on line and in any major bookstore.
Her web site is www.fengshuiarch.com