

WHAT IS EXACTLY THE FENG SHUI?

YOU'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT
FENG SHUI?

ARTICLE #3 OF 4

By *Sam Margulies*

Sam Margulies is a designer from France. He began his professional education with an apprentice program.

After completing his education in upholstery and window treatments as

well as in interior design and architectural design in France, he traveled for several years in Europe and the Middle East where he studied different design styles and methods. In

1988, he moved to Montreal, Qc, and after working for two different design companies, he relocated to Burlington, Vermont in 1993, where he opened his own design firm, ATMOSPHERE DESIGN.

In the early 1990's, Sam began to study the Chinese art of Feng Shui that plays an important role in his approach to design and architectural conception.

Sam is involved in the SPA market since 1996. He has been invited as a keynote speaker in Spa shows in the USA and Canada, and is recognized as one of the leading experts in SPA conception and design.

For more information, please contact:

ATMOSPHERE DESIGN

Sam Margulies

N 11 Staveland Drive

South Burlington, Vermont 05403,

Tel: (802)860-7174, Fax: (802)864-

0548

E-mail:

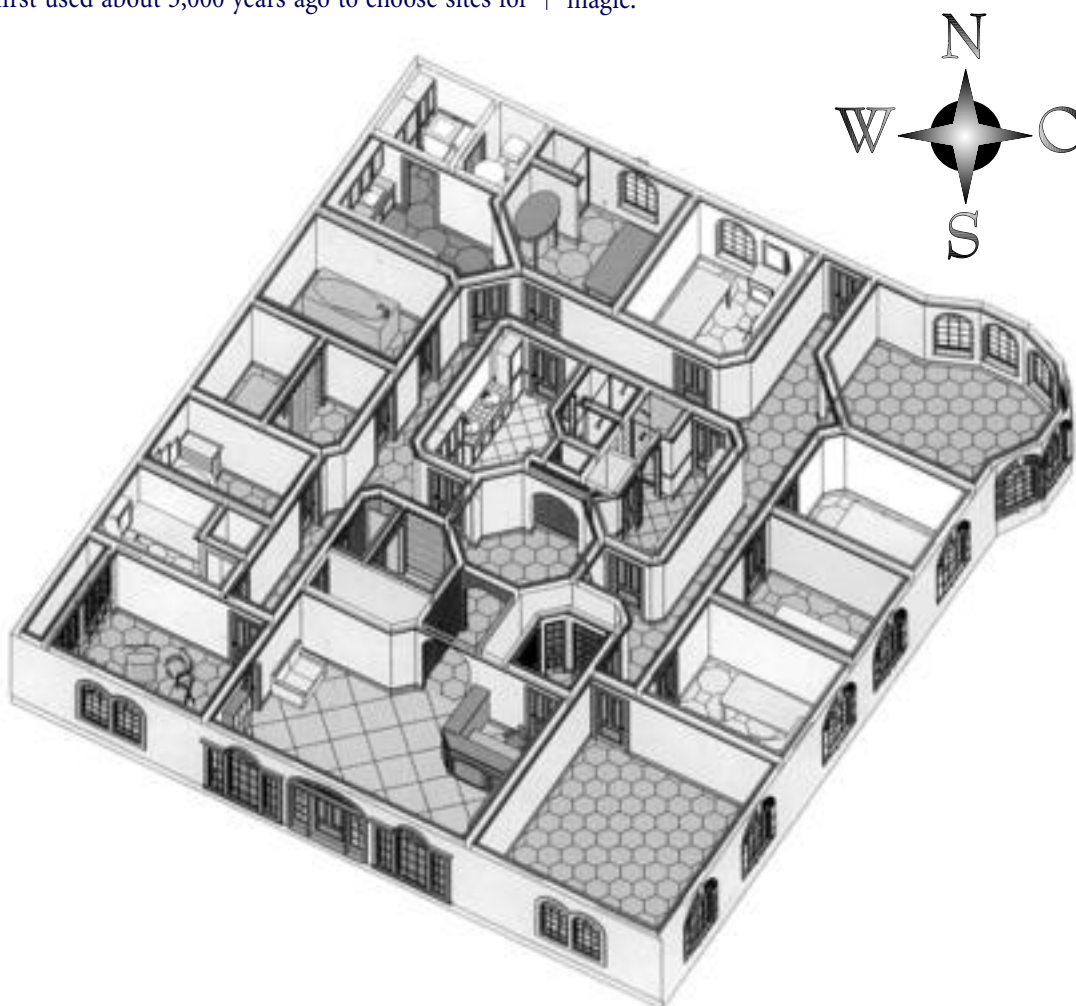
atmospheredesign@hotmail.com

For the last few years, we've heard a lot about Feng Shui. What is it exactly, and is there a simple way to use it in a spa? Today's world is fast paced. It's like fashion, changing all the time - yesterday unknown, today famous and tomorrow forgotten. For the last few years, one of the focuses of the spa design field is Feng Shui. Find it in every corner. Actually, this "new-kid-on-the-block" might be one of the oldest!

In every culture, there is a philosophy about how to live in harmony with the environment, whether it's natural or manmade. Feng Shui originated in China and means "wind and water". Supposedly, it was first used about 3,000 years ago to choose sites for

the tombs to give them the best vantage to help their descendants, as well as for locations of palaces and monuments. Later, whole cities like Hong Kong were designed and built according to Feng Shui principles.

Feng Shui is the most powerful natural tool to help someone to be in sync with the environment. If some so-called experts make you believe it's a secretive, quasi-mystical and magical science that only they have access to, don't believe them. It does take years of studies and practice for a good professional to become an expert, but there is no magic.



IS THERE A SIMPLE WAY TO USE IT IN A SPA?

In the 20th century, western scientists discovered the world is made of energy, and that every thing in that world is actually made of millions and millions of particles of energy, or cells, that connect together. However, Chinese monks created the art of Feng Shui based on the same concept thousands of years ago. Considering that everything is energy, and that all things inter-connect, a spa designer doesn't want opposite energies to fight each other. To enhance the energy of one, you will look for another similar energy and their similarity will make each of them more powerful.

So how does this art affect our surroundings, our homes, our preferred stores, our offices and our lives? Sometimes, we go to a place for the first time and, with no apparent reason, we feel uncomfortable, impatient, just not at the right place, and we don't know why. Alternatively, we go to a place for the first time and, with no apparent reason, we feel comfortable, calm, and welcome, and we don't know why.

Chinese art, culture and religion reflect these energy principles. As westerners entering the third millennium, we may not be able to relate easily to Chinese culture and religion. For example, if one would tell you to hang a red ribbon above the front door of your spa to enhance wealth, it would sound strange. In Chinese culture, it would feel natural. Unfortunately, some Feng Shui specialists give this kind of advice too often to people who have no connection with Chinese culture.

The incorporation of Feng Shui principles and techniques has an important influence in the conception and interior design of a spa. There is no simple way to use Feng Shui, but you can follow the most important principles such as energy flow. So let's imagine that your spa is the bed of a river, and that the goal is to create the smoothest path for that river to flow in every part of the spa.

Let's take a couple of examples. Try to visualize a spa where a wall would be built three feet from the

front door: The river would splash against the wall, and the river (energy) wouldn't flow smoothly inside the spa. Now imagine that the retail area of the spa would be so cluttered that you would need to zigzag all over to go from one side to the other, a space that would feel like a path in the jungle. Would that feel to you more like cruising on Lake Champlain, or more like rafting in the Colorado River? I like rafting a lot, but not in a spa...

Every aspect of a spa is about creating the right experience for the client. What is exactly this experience that all spa professional speaks about? Let's try together to define it:

" The client's experience is how they feel when spending time at your spa. It is not an intellectual state of mind that we talk about. It is more of a body feeling, a heart enjoyment. If it were to be in your head only, it wouldn't be your thoughts. It would be the tingling "thing" that you can feel finding its path all the way up toward the back of your head that make you feel relaxed, contented and fulfilled. It is like what you give to your clientele that make them love themselves back again and again. The "clients' experience" is what they come for that makes them feel good, and what makes them come back again and again to your spa... And this is a healthy addiction! "

The principles of Feng Shui can be an essential part of the creation of this experience by creating a structure within which the energy flow will be well balanced. Let's look at space by space. The first thing that a client sees is the reception/retail area when coming for the first time at your spa. Just a few month ago, a client sent to me the surface plan that had been designed by her interior designer. A

long reception counter was facing the principle door just 8 feet from it. Visualize the river coming into that spa:

The water would enter the spa, splash on to the counter, being pushed back into the arriving water, turn into a whirlpool movement while rushing into

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YOUR CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE IS HOW THEY FEEL

the lateral walls on both sides of the counter.... Great energy for rafting! No necessity to tell you that I redesigned that aggressive reception area as well as the whole spa.

The reception must be welcoming in a non oppressive manner, inviting the client to come inside and making him/her feel the serenity of the place. One of the most important area in a spa is the corridors. It might sound to you bizard at first, but it is really some of the most important part of the spa. Years ago, when I begun to get involved in designing spas, I went one of the most famous day spas in the States to have a Hydrotherapy treatment.

The trough is that I really wanted to have a complete visit of that renown spa. I had a great treatment there, but before getting the treatment, I had to wait for about a quarter of an hour in a corridor on a wooden bench. Because of the width of the corridor, only 3' 9", the bench itself was only 1 foot deep.

It mad it pretty uncomfortable. And every time somebody had to pass in front of my bench, I had to get-up to let him/her pass in order to try to avoid a physical contact that make people feel not at ease. Even though A got there a great hydrotherapy treatment, when I think of this spa, the first thing that come to my mind is that uncomfortable waiting time in the corridor, and I don't feel like going back to that spa.

By definition, a corridor is an area that is not made to stay inside, but only to be used to go from one place to another. So, to have people waiting on a bench in a corridor is not OK. But beside that, the corridor itself was too narrow to allow people to cross pass without being forced into a physical contact while wearing only a bath robe. Imagine now the same river going down this corridor: With 4 _ to 5 feet wide, the water would head smoothly

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toward the end of the corridor, while in this case, with only 3' 9", the same river would have to rush trough the corridor and splash on to it's end. When a client finishes a treatment, let say a Vichy shower, he feels good and relaxed, and is ready to go to the next treatment room for his massage. If he needs to pass by a corridor where the energy his high powered, the benefits of the Vichy shower might have disappeared by the time he reaches the massage table.

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Pr. Carrel discovered that if you take an old cell, let's say a skin cell, and put it close to a young similar cell, the second one will stimulate the old one that will begin to vibrate at the same rate and intensity as the young one. One of the things that we learned from this discovery is that two similar energies put

together stimulate one another and make each of them more powerful. And this is what you want to do: for example, if you have a fitness club with a spa, or a salon with a spa, these are very different energies. The fitness or the salon are high powered energies, while the spa needs a calm, soothing, nurturing, serene energy. It doesn't mean that salons and spas or fitness club and spa are incompatible, but it means that you need to have a clear separation between them to allow them to share a common location under the same roof without one overpowering the existence of the other.

Another important principle of Feng Shui is to avoid clutter. For example, in many spas, the owners

WHEN SPENDING PRECIOUS TIME AT YOUR SPA

believe that to have a good retail space, it needs to overflow with merchandise. More you have in display the more you sale.

All depends in what you sell: If you sell items from a few cents to a few dollars, you can go with the WallMart, Kmart or WhateverMart policy. But in a spa, most of the products for sell in the retail area are high quality products that are at the quality level of the treatments proposed in the spa. So prices average are well over the few cents or dollars, and you have to begin to think in term of "the least you show the most you sell".

But beside the marketing reason for clearing up the alley, if your clients feel that to go from one side of the retail to the other they need to go trough a path in the rain-forest or need a marine-corp training to do it, the energy will also have a hard time to flow through the space. Clearing the clutter can be a challenging exercise for a lot of people. Actually, clutter is like a wall that some people surround themselves with to make sure that nobody can touch them. It makes them feel more secure.

Now imagine how would feel your clients when coming to your spa to get taken care of, to get massages, wraps, pedicures, hydro therapies, Vichy showers, etc, in a place where it will be written on the wall:"

You are going to take off your clothe and be treated, and touched by people that are afraid to be touched by you". How would you feel as the client? Do you really thing that you would feel comfortable in that situation? By avoiding clutter, you make a clear statement to your clients:" It is safe here, you don't have to worry about your privacy or safety!".

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a tricky element in term of Feng Shui. In general, any mass of water is better out of the building, and even then, needs to be proportioned to the structure size. In a spa, some water mass is to be inside there. Some stagnant water will make the energy being stagnant too, and this will stop its flow. So if you have some artificial pond, or some water fountain or waterfall, make sure that the water doesn't stay immobile.

The best way to take care of the problem is to have any of this items as a self contained , self recycling system so that the water does never stay stagnant, and by recycling itself, it will also recycle the energy and its flow will be stimulated inside the whole spa.

Concerning the water treatments, there are two major ones to deal with: the Vichy shower and the Hydrotub. For the Vichy shower, A big quantity of water is drained all along the treatment, while for the hydrotub, it is at the end of the treatment that all the water is being drained .

To make sure that the energy will not be drained out of the spa together with the water, the door of the room needs to stay closed as long as the water is being drained. In order to keep the energy inside the spa, you also want to add in the room a grounding element, maybe in stone or heavy metal.

In conclusion, remember this: when opening a spa, you are investing thousand of dollars in products, and tens of thousand of dollars in equipments. But you are going to invest hundreds of thousand of dollars in the conception and design of your spa. So do it wisely with a good professional designer that practices Feng Shui and that is specialized in spa design. If you are about to build or redesign your spa, open the door to the river and look at the energy flowing harmoniously into your spa. ■