

Feng shui creates harmony

BY KATHERINE MORTIMER
MORNING STAR STAFF

Chimes ring, music plays softly in the background, accompanied by the soothing sound of several water fountains, as Teresa Hwang explains the principles of feng shui from her elegant home on Okanagan Landing.

"Fountains are very important for feng shui, but they must be in the right place," said Hwang, a feng shui master and lecturer in Vernon. "Depending on the placement of objects, different types of energy will come into the home."

"A lot of times I go to a place and see a huge fountain going, and if they are doing well, that means the fountain is in the right place. Correct placement can bring luck into a home or business."

Feng shui is an ancient Chinese practice that is often referred to as the art of placement. Feng shui takes the approach that your surroundings affect all aspects of your life, including your home, work, relationships and health.

"Feng shui is thousands of years old," said Hwang. "In Asia and in Vancouver, there are many places where a feng shui master is always consulted as to the correct placement of fountains and other objects."

Feng shui is a term composed of two Chinese words: feng (wind) and shui (water). Wind and water are the two natural elements that flow, move and circulate everywhere on Earth. The essence of these life-giving elements is qi (pronounced chi), or life force. Feng shui is the art of designing environments in harmony with the flow of qi through one's living space, and this flow supports and enhances one's personal qi or life force.

"The most important thing is the orientation of a building when it is first built," said Hwang, who built her home on Okanagan Lake with her husband, physician Ghee Hwang, designing it around a traditional Chinese courtyard, with every element designed and placed for maximum benefit according to feng shui principles.

While feng shui is widely used in Asia, as well as in larger centres like Vancouver, Hwang said the practice has become increasingly popular in the Okanagan. With clients who are building a home, Hwang will help them with the correct placement of the building on the property, to ensure the ideal energy: to harness auspicious qi, and avoid inauspicious qi.

"For example, placement of the front

door is so important. Where the bedrooms are located is important, and different areas of the house would be better for different members of the family."

Most of Hwang's clients are westerners, who welcome the chance to improve their living or work environments.

"Often, by simply changing the placement of objects, people will see a dramatic change in their finances or in their health. I've seen feng shui help clients who are going through terrible periods in their lives."

"So if a home is working for you, everything flows well, if it's against you, it's like an uphill struggle, an obstacle. Often, people will move to a new home and start getting sick and not understand why."

Clutter in a home or office is seen as blocking the flow of good energy. As well, something as simple as the selection of plants can determine success in the workplace. The thorns of cactus plants are seen as tiny arrows that cause bad luck to build up and eventually hurt you.

In addition to private residences, Hwang's work includes the design and planning of the Tom McMurtry & Peter Baerg Cancer Centre, the doctors' lounge and admitting area of Vernon Jubilee Hospital, and the head office of Ripley's Believe It or Not in Orlando, Florida.

Growing up in Hong Kong, Hwang said she was aware of the daily application of feng shui in all aspects of life.

"My father was always very interested in feng shui, and it was something that was just an accepted part of our lives," she said. "A lot of it is common sense."

"Feng shui is sort of ingrained in the Chinese people, you just accept it, it's a matter of fact thing, it's not something you say, 'Oh, I'll just go against it.'"

Some of the easy-to-apply principles of feng shui include not sleeping under an open window, as any movement of curtains will disturb restful sleep, and interrupt the energy.

"If a mirror is placed at the foot of the bed, many people won't sleep well, as any movement will be magnified by the mirror."

And the sound of metal in the house, such as that created by chimes, will help to dispel negative energy.

Hwang originally trained as a nurse and worked in nursing for a number of years. Hwang had always studied feng



CARA BRADY/MORNING STAR

FENG SHUI master teresa Hwang uses a Luo Pan, a compass used in feng shui.

shui through books, but 10 years ago, began to get serious about the practice.

In 1997, she completed her interior design certificate program at Okanagan University College, and started her interior design business. Since then, she has taken courses at the Western School of Feng Shui in San Diego, and has completed the Master Chinese Feng Shui Practitioner Course, with Feng Shui Master Lillian Too in Malaysia.

And for the past few years, Hwang has been studying under Master Joseph Yu of Toronto.

"He is very knowledgeable and I go to Toronto at least twice a year to update,

and I always pick up something new."

Hwang is currently one of Master Yu's Feng Shui Research Centre Feng Shui masters and lecturers, and is qualified to teach the professional courses.

Hwang will offer her Feng Shui Research Centre Professional Certification Course in Vernon Feb. 15 to 18 and Feb. 20 to 23 in four two-day modules. Hwang said the course is ideal for anyone working in interior design, or people who are involved in the businesses of decluttering and organizing people's homes. For more information, or to register for courses, e-mail Hwang at feng-shui@teresahwang.com