

April 2023

Arkitektur

the interior and exterior guide for styling homes

Seeking a
Harmonious Life
with Feng Shui

Vol. 1 Issue 4



9 0123456789

contents

the environment issue

April 2023

Hanya Yanagihara 5 Letter from the Editor

Madeleine Janz 8 11 Bedroom Design Tricks
to Create a Calming Space

Alex Ross 15 Richard Neutra's
Architectural Vanishing Act

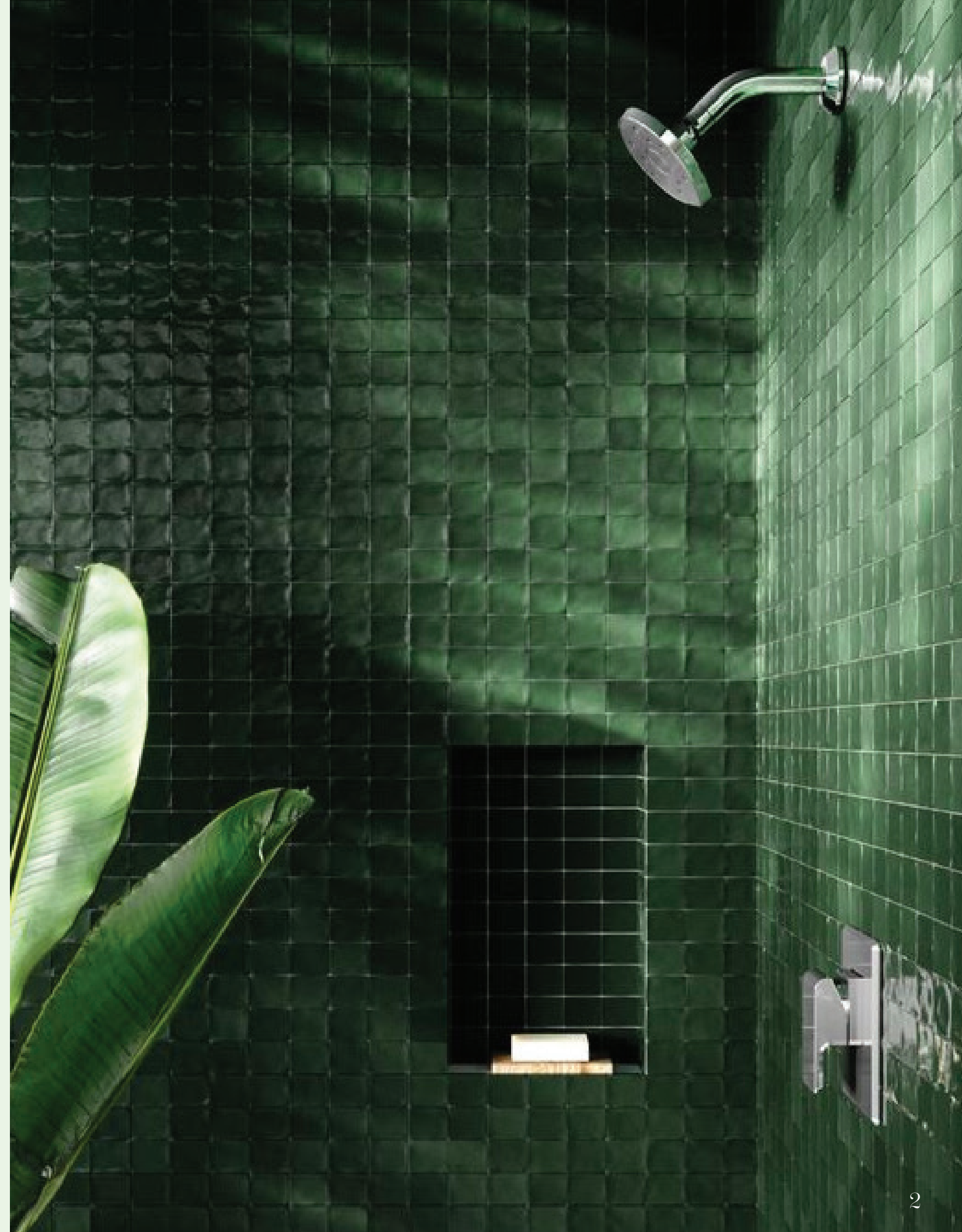
Nick Johnson 21 Sustainable Homes: The
Earthship

Dinah Eng 27 Seeking a Harmonious Life
with Feng Shui

Lala Tanmoy Das 37 Why Indoor Plants Make
You Feel Better

Ronda Kaysen 41 Making Your House
Greener

Ray Mark Rinaldi 49 An Argentine Designer
Rocks the Boulders





Seeking a Harmonious Life with Feng Shui

By Dinah Eng

Anne Martini believes that following the principles of feng shui has resulted in concrete benefits for her and her family. When she first had her home analyzed 17 years ago, she was being laid off from a pharmaceutical company.

Her feng shui expert advised her to put water in the front of her house in Princeton, N.J., to bring prosperity.

“My landscaper dug six feet in the ground and created a fountain in the front, just as I was negotiating my severance package,” Ms. Martini said. “I ended up getting a quarter-million dollars more than what they had initially offered. I’ve since added two more water structures — 8-by-20-foot features — more water, more wealth!”

Feng shui — the Chinese practice of using the flow of “energies” in the home to create harmony and good health — is a technique that is thousands of years old, combining Chinese astrology with the shape, magnetic direction and age of structures. It has become a popular practice for Asians and non-Asians alike as Chinese influence on cultures worldwide has grown.

But just cleaning the house and decluttering space for the Lunar New Year is not good enough. Feng shui experts say energies and directions change yearly, making it important to get your home’s design in tune with the Year of the Yin Earth Pig, which started on Feb. 5 and runs until Jan. 24, 2020.

David Cho, the feng shui consultant based in California who re-evaluates Ms. Martini’s home every year, said he also evaluates about 1,000 properties a year worldwide, the majority of which are owned by non-Asian clients. He’s currently working on a resort in Costa Rica, a townhouse in Manhattan, a castle in Ireland and factories in Saudi Arabia. (Consultants may charge either by property size or by the hour, with fees often starting at \$400.)

“Feng shui is not a one-size-fits-all thing,” Mr. Cho said. “I calculate a structure’s shape, magnetic direction and factor in the year built. The client’s relationship to a home is then determined by his or her gender and date of birth.” If you want to try some feng shui for yourself, Mr. Cho’s tips for this year include:

- To maintain good health, accessorize the northeast area of your home with metal objects.

- To expedite the completion of a project, add metal objects to the southwest area of your home. If your bedroom is in the southwest, and you can’t move it, put 25 pounds of metal under the bed.
- If you’re looking for love, and your Chinese animal sign is a: Rat, dragon or monkey, place a water fountain on the center of the bedroom’s west wall. Ox, snake or rooster, place it on the center of the bedroom’s south wall. Tiger, horse or dog, place it on the center of the bedroom’s east wall. Rabbit, ram or pig, place it on the center of the bedroom’s north wall.

Mr. Cho, who has been working with feng shui for more than 25 years, practices the Flying Stars school of feng shui, one of many schools of feng shui thought that aim to determine the best spaces inside and outside a home to enhance health, wealth, relationships and love.

“Good feng shui means being in harmony with nature, or your environment, your mind and your soul.”

In general, Mr. Cho said, it’s a good idea to soften hard surfaces, like marble floors, with area rugs. And when it comes to getting rid of clutter in the home, don’t forget to throw out “toxic relationships,” he added.

Debbie Sharp, head of The Sharp Group with Keller-Williams Peninsula Estates in Burlingame, Calif., retains Mr. Cho on an annual basis to do feng shui recommendations for her listings in the San Francisco Bay Area.

“At least 80 percent of our homes are vacant and staged, and we do an optimization plan with David,” said Ms. Sharp, who also uses feng shui principles in her own home. “We don’t advertise the feng shui, but brokers and buyers always say, ‘I love the way

it feels in here.’ Space, layout, energy and flow really influences people’s buying decisions.”

Virginia Paca, an architect in Pasadena, Calif., who has worked primarily on historic houses and gardens in Albany, N.Y., and Southern California, said: “People are affected by the spaces they’re in, so improving your life by altering your living environment makes sense to me. There are elements of feng shui that feel similar to the way Western culture uses astrology. Some people take it very seriously. Its principles can be interpreted on a simple level and on a much deeper level.”

For the last 15 years, Wei Dong, a professor in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

has taken students to China on an international study abroad program that examines the concepts of feng shui.

“Feng shui is a philosophy of life,” Mr. Dong said. “Good feng shui means being in harmony with nature, or your environment, your mind and your soul. We are all searching for something beyond functionality. I use feng shui to teach art design, painting, drawing and how to live your life.”

For example, he said, if you are stressed, in feng shui terms, you have too much fire in your life, so don’t eat spicy food when you need to calm down. Water puts out fire, so seek out the tranquillity of nature and water. “If you’re stressed out, go jogging in the park,” he said.

M. Carol Assa, a feng shui consultant in Los Angeles, explained that one of the 12 Chinese astrological animals and an element (fire, earth, wind, water or air) were combined annually to determine energies and directions for that year. These animal-element combinations occur in 60-year cycles.

“This means that the energy of 2019 will be comparable to the energy of 1959, a year of transition that led into the cultural revolution of the ‘60s,” Ms. Assa explained. “Right now, everyone’s upset, and things are fomenting. So 2019 is a great year to put ideas together for launching in 2020.”

She said that today, there is chaos in every corner of life — human rights, economics, politics, the emergence of “fake news” — but she predicted that next year would begin a new revolutionary cycle.

Ms. Assa, who has been practicing for 25 years, has studied with Chinese feng shui masters from England, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Taiwan and combines elements from three schools of feng shui thought — Flying Stars, Imperial and Da Gua — in her consultations. In 2019, she said, “afflictions are located in the west, northwest, southwest and southeast.”

Her tips for this year:

- Don’t dig, cut or renovate in the northwest corner of your home. Try to avoid having your home office in this sector, and don’t sit facing the northwest.
- The southwest will be the worst sector of a home. For good luck, you can place a set of six Chinese I-Ching coins tied with ribbon, or a six-rod hollow metal wind chime in that area. Alternatively, place a picture in a metal frame there, as it’s the intention that matters.
- The constant opening and closing of a front door can disturb the energy of a home this year if it is in the west, northwest or southeast. If your front door is in that sector, avoid slamming the door.



Letter from the Editor

By the time I turned 17, my family had moved nine times. Every few years, our possessions would be packed into moving vans or U-Hauls and driven cross-country — south to north, east to west — or loaded onto a boat for Hawaii, where we returned again and again.

Because of that, I've always defined home not as a physical space but as the things that fill it. I would know we were home when my mother had unpacked the inexpensive ceramic ramen bowls that she and my father had bought before I was born; when the 19th-century Korean rosewood chest with its mother-of-pearl inlay had been positioned in the living room; when the willow branch baskets my father wove when I was 6 had been placed atop the corner cupboard. Then there were my parents' collections of books and Japanese and German prints, American quilts and vintage

fabrics, petrified stones and hunks of coral. Curiously, in all those moves, nothing ever seemed to disappear — each time, whatever space we occupied, be it roomy or cozy, seemed to accommodate everything we had.

The burled-ebony veneered walls in the living room of Ramdane Touhami and Victoire de Taillac-Touhami's Paris home were engineered so that they appear to peel away to reveal the moldings underneath. The sofas and ottomans were designed by Touhami.

So it's perhaps no wonder I have a special affinity for the houses featured in this issue. All of their owners are unabashed collectors, all of them take delight in objects and all of them find value in integrating their dwellings' past lives and occupants into their present.

But the house — and owner — I relate to most is the Lake Como residence of the former textile designer Giorgio Taroni, which is stuffed from floors to rafters with collections: oil paintings of the environs; ceramic parrots; old manuscripts; ephemera; 18th-century watercolors; and, best of all, more than 30,000 mounted stag beetles. The palazzo is a museum of its owner's many fascinations, and the things within it — collections too fragile or vast to ever be moved — an announcement of ownership just as much as his name on the deed. "When I took over this place from my father in the '70s," Taroni says, "it was gloomy, very 'Addams Family.' I needed it to come alive." That it did — a home needs objects but, moreover, it needs personality. Otherwise, it's just brick and wood and plaster; it's the occupant who gives it life.

- Hana
Yauagihara

