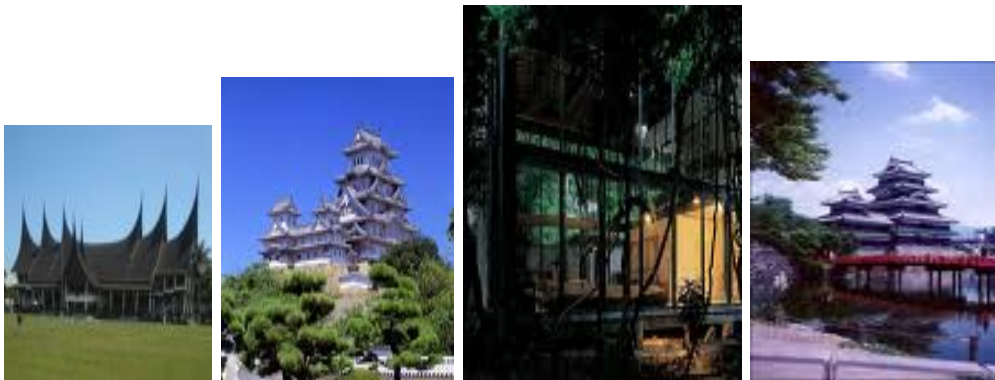


Asian style design & colour

elements

With countries as diverse as Japan, China, India, Thailand and Malaysia, the elements of Asian design are equally as varied, and usually reflect the use of natural elements while also linking back to cultural and spiritual influences from the past.

- **Air** - the use of space and light.
- **Earth** - materials from the earth such as clay, stone and plants.
- **Water** - use of water inside and outside the home.
- **Fire** - 'fired materials' such as glass, metal and ceramics.
- **Wood** - bamboo, rattan, textiles, timber furniture and paper.



evolution

Early Asian architecture illustrates how the buildings were made from whatever the earth had to offer - mud, clay, straw, wood or stone - evolving organically to meet practical needs, social aspirations and religious beliefs. Modern buildings incorporate uncluttered living and technology, to satisfy sensual human needs through the continued use of natural construction materials and organic forms.

This style creates a tactile living environment, reinforcing a connection with nature by use of warm sandstone, smooth teak, coconut wood, shell and bone alongside harder surfaces such as glass and metal. Yin and yang - opposite elements are inextricably linked and together create harmony.



history and culture

Countries have produced interesting contemporary designs for living, including Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. Designers in Japan and China draw on principles that have worked for generations - The Chinese courtyard house (four sided enclosed courtyard) and the Japanese use of flexible partitions to divide space (sliding screens). Traditional Indian homes designate a space in their homes for the gods, decorated with religious images such as flowers, incense and oil lamps.

While Asian countries are rapidly changing, everyday living is imbued with spiritual mysticism, ancient religions and traditional beliefs - Confucianism and Taoism in China, Shintoism in Japan, Buddhism and Hinduism, which have spread across the continent from India.

Seasons, climate and the cycle of life play an important part in these beliefs. In Bali, cleansing rituals are performed to protect a new house from ominous spirits, in Chinese culture home-life revolves around the central shrine, and traditional Thai houses were built with the main entrances facing south as it was believed that ghosts came from the west.



landscaping

The Asian garden is seen as an outside room, a natural extension of the interior of the building. This connection is strengthened by the use of timbers and earth colours. There are two types of Asian garden that come to mind - the Japanese dry rock and gravel Zen-garden, and the lush bamboo and tropical vines and orchids found in Balinese gardens. Water features are popular as water is a symbol of purity in many cultures - it is calming, soothing and meditative.

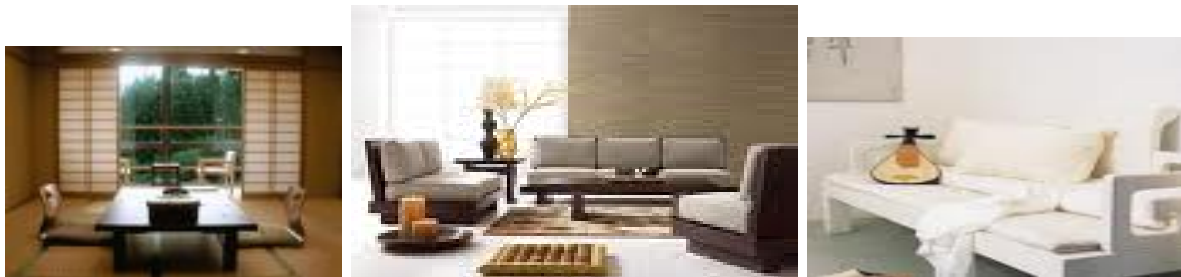


modern architecture

The buildings below are examples of contemporary commercial and residential design, all quite rectangular in shape, a series of stacked cubes. Asian architects have developed a kind of new modernism that references the appropriate elements of their traditional designs.

Traditional elements such as sliding screens and glass panels, open walkways and pavilions divide spaces and create harmonious transition between rooms. Asian people usually prefer to separate public and personal spaces in their homes. At the entrance there is a step up into the home, and at this stage guests remove shoes and put on slippers before moving further into some homes.

Sleeping, bathing and cooking spaces are kept separate from the spaces where guests are entertained. The seating and dining furniture is often arranged in the centre of the room, whereas in our homes we often place furniture against the walls in living rooms.



living spaces

Low and linear - clean and uncluttered. The Zen principal of 'exclusion of superfluous things' unifies Asian design. Concrete, like stone, brings the textures of nature into the home and is often whitewashed, both on floors and walls, to form a backdrop to the objects within the room.

These lighter washes are teamed with pale timbers, bamboo screens, lots of glass and natural light. Translucent materials such as fine cotton and muslin, paper or woven cane allow the light to pass through the spaces, often a clever play of light achieved with shadows cast onto solid walls.

Natural materials in a clean, white, space soothe both the soul and the mind, providing an essential sanctuary away from the chaos and hectic pace of busy lifestyles. Mirrors are used to reflect stale energy trapped in a tight corner or cramped space, but avoid allowing the mirror to reflect a door.



living spaces

Not all living spaces are spartan and devoid of colour. There are many sources of inspiration from colourful and noisy cities and history of the traders across the Asian continent. Spicy colours, jewel colours, metallic finishes and exotic patterns.

Wallpapers with floral patterns or tropical birdlife, brightly coloured silk curtains and cushions, bronze and gold, saffron yellow and pink, jade and turquoise.

The eclectic collection of objects to the left from all Asian cultures make a eye-catching display. The room in the middle comprises of rattan furniture from India with brightly colour silk cushions embroidered in gold metallic thread. And the room to the right is characteristic of traditional Vietnamese style.



interior styling

The Orient brings to life endless colours, flavours, aromas and sensations. Asian communities are present in the main cities of the Western world and their customs and cultures are infiltrating Western lifestyles e.g. yoga, meditation, medicine, fashion, interior design and architecture.

An Asian style is often created with the clever use of accessories - cushions, candles, wooden chests, lacquered boxes, ceramics, porcelain and artworks. These can be found in second-hand and antique furniture stores, as well as the many imported items that are available today that reflect this style, such as bamboo and paper lanterns, woven mats and shoji screens.



Asian accessories

Other styling objects include wooden or concrete sculptures, rattan and bamboo furniture, ceiling fans, bed canopies, stone pots and ceramic vases. Art such as temple rubbings or banners of printed silk add to the décor.

Design motifs include dragons, elephants, teapots, dolls, tropical flowers, exotic birds and butterflies. Textiles may be intricately embroidered silk or woven batik, or simple white cotton and generous drapes of muslin, they all help to bring the theme together.

Palm fibre or silk slippers, colourful silk umbrellas, kimonos on the wall, and lots of tropical flowers and plants complete the 'look'.



cooking

It is important to understand the culture and design preferences when it comes to kitchens and cooking. Horizontal and square lines dominate simple cabinetry which conceals the ingredients and equipment used for food preparation.

In contrast to the Japanese simplicity, ornate objects and exotic materials from ancient times of China, India, Bangkok, Korea and Thailand may be referenced to express customs and culture. Brightly coloured enamels inlaid with decorative metal and shell, or lacquered glossy finishes in red, saffron yellow or black depict the richness of Oriental design. Teak slatted shelves or carved and decorated cupboard doors give a feeling of "yesteryear".

Feng Shui is often applied in space design, harnessing the positive energy of the environment for happiness, prosperity and good health. The five symbols for the kitchen are:

- Fire (stove, lamps)
- Earth (ceramics, pottery, granite, marble)
- Metal (sink, tap, chrome, white items)

- Water (black items, motifs of the sea such as fish)
- Wood (cane, boxes, cabinetry, trays).

The stove/cooker should not be placed next to the sink or refrigerator to avoid creating a clash between 'fire' and 'water'.



bathing

The ritual of bathing is for delight of mind and body, as well as hygiene. Where there is water there is life, people are drawn to water for its curative powers. Semi-outdoor bathrooms are often seen in hotels and spas. Bathroom in homes are getting larger - a new luxury and status symbol.

Traditional and modern Asian styled bathrooms use materials such as concrete, stone, marble, timber and copper which are more tactile than porcelain and chrome.

Pearlised, pastel coloured paints work well in a bathroom, and the toilet doors should be kept closed and the toilet lid down, according to Feng Shui principles.

A whole culture has grown up around the art of bathing in Japan - from traditional communal bath houses, open air bathing in hot springs and domestic bathrooms which may overlook the garden.

Bathroom accessories to add to the style include a loofah with bamboo handle, natural sea sponges, brushes, pure white soap, smooth stones, shells, white cotton towels, ferns, orchids and tropical foliage.



sleeping

Bedrooms are usually uncluttered, clothes kept stowed behind moving screens or rolling doors and little other furniture in the room apart from the bed. Colours are subdued with white or natural coloured linen. Lighting may be diffused through shoji screens, frosted glass or muslin curtains.

In some Asian homes, the thin mattresses or futons are rolled up during the day so the bedroom space can be used by the family members for other functions such as talking or reading. Today the Western comforts are being introduced into bedrooms - elevated beds and ensuites.

To achieve an Asian style in the bedroom, bed canopies are often used to set the scene, especially in hotels. These may be draped with mosquito nets or white muslin curtains. Teak furniture was used because it repels insects in the tropical climate. And reed mats were used under mattresses as they 'breathe' and minimise perspiration on humid nights. However with air conditioning some of these practices have now been superseded.



furniture

Furniture was made of teak and other wood and inlaid with decorative patterns and materials. Many replica pieces are available today, as well as some of the old chests and boxes that contained tea, rice and other staples in former years. Their use in furnishing rooms creates drama, style and conversation about traders and travels.



art and textures

The inspiration for art, textiles and colours so often comes from nature, whether it is the surrounding vegetation, flowers or foods of the various countries.



living spaces

The conservatory shown is furnished with rattan seating, and the tropical vegetation and potted plants and flowers offset the spicy-mandarin coloured walls. The room in the middle is basically comprised of black and white and red, popular colours in Asian decorating. The coffee table is low and square which 'centres' the seating area. Polished concrete floors, whitewashed walls and timber ceiling form the backdrop to the stronger decorating elements. The room to the right looks exotic with old chest, paper lights, rattan chairs and animal-print upholstery. It tells a story of travels and adventure in the tropics.



Asian colour palette

- Spices - curry, saffron, turmeric, paprika, tea
- Metallics - gold, bronze, pewter, copper, brass.
- Jewels - jade, turquoise, emerald, ruby, sapphire
- Neutrals - black, charcoal, chalky whites, calico creams, chocolate brown
- Warm colours - red, mandarin, ochre yellow, maroon.
- Top row: Resene Buddha Gold, Resene Fuel Yellow, Resene Tahiti Gold, Resene Sushi, Resene Verdun Green, Resene Jewelled Yellow, Resene Citron; Middle row: Resene Jewel, Resene Jeepers Creepers, Resene Sunflower, Resene Windsor, Resene Red Berry, Resene Brown Bramble, Resene Mandalay; Bottom row: Resene All Black, Resene White, Resene Lily White, Resene Iron, Resene Havoc, Resene Pursuit, Resene Candy Floss

compiled by

- Colourwaves - Jill Carroll

Resene

the paint the professionals use