

ART AND VASTU SHASTRA: DECIDING THE CORRECT PLACEMENT OF MODERN ARTS IN AN INTERIOR

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Abstract

The term Vastu originated from the Sanskrit word – “*Vas Niwase*”, meaning a habitable place, such a place which can provide you abundance in terms of health, wealth, and happiness. Vastu helps us in manifestation by exploring the human potential through building and study of the impact of a built-up environment on life is called Vastu Shastra. Vastu works on the theory of Panch Tattva (water, Air, Fire, Earth, and Space). The concept of direction in Vastu is developed with the movement of Sun. The Mahavastu principles is the scientific research of Dr. Khushdeep Bansal, which is a modern, refined, and tested version of ancient Vastu Shastra. Where he decoded the surrounding activity, utility, and objects in terms of Five elements. Also, he developed an organised method to understand the influence of your home/workplace on your life. From ancient times humans are connected to symbols and designs. Paintings, Photographs, Sculptures and Symbols were used as Vastu tools for programming the space. It works on our subconscious brain and finally leading to the manifestation of desires. The correct placement of an artwork in a space helps in influencing the positive energy within the space. In this paper, Mahavastu Principles are followed to analyze the modern artworks of 20th century. The paintings are decoded and analysed on the theory of Panch Tattva, and the correct placement of artworks are decided as per the rules of 16 zones of Vastu.

Keywords: Vastu Shastra, Modern Art, five elements, Directions, Architecture

INTRODUCTION

The term Vastu comes from the Sanskrit word- ‘*Vas Niwase*’, meaning a habitable place that helps you to live with more love, happiness, and money. The knowledge of *Vaastu* had been well explored by our ancient sages, thousands of years ago, but at that time, this knowledge was strictly reserved for the kings. (**Vastu shastra Today, 2013, p.12**). Vastu is the science and art of exploring human potential through buildings. The application of vastu helps in achieving the purpose for which a building is made, and applies through the planning and design of the building to achieve the same. The Vedic study of the impact of a built-up environment on life is called Vastu Shastra. Literally, Vastu means ‘a suitable building, for dwelling’ and Shastra means study. (**Mahavastu Foundation course manual, 2019, p.13**).

In this contemporary world artworks plays an important role in an interior. Each interior is different and now the demand for contemporary artwork in the interior is increased. In vastu shastra there is no description of hanging certain paintings in a certain direction. Khusdeep Bansal, he discovered that even buildings could be programmed for the manifestation of desires. This is because your building affects your subconscious mind. (**Mahavastu Foundation Course Manual, p.24**). In this paper, the Mahavastu Principles are used to analyze and decide the correct location for the interior. Mahavastu is the real Vastu, as taught in the original Hindu scriptures. The founder of Mahavastu is Dr. Khusdeep Bansal, who derived the formula to accurately evaluate our surrounding space. He created a framework where we can decode anything based on Panch tattva. Here, the focus is given to the home environment, commercial interiors and spaces were not taken into consideration for analysis. 10 artworks of the 20th century are taken to analyse based on Panch tattva and the correct location based on the theory of 16 directions.

HISTORICAL REFERENCES

During the reign of Raja Bhoj, People who practiced the Vastu shastra without proper knowledge were given a death sentence. They were publicly executed (ref: Sangram Sutradhar). Only the most accomplished scholars were allowed to pursue their studies in these sciences.

This knowledge has been present for ages in several texts or granths on the Vedas, Puranas, Jyotish, Tantra, and Vastu Shilpa. An excellent sculpture compilation was done in the 12th century by Chalukya King Shri Someshwardev (III) (1126–1366) for his book Abhilashitarth Chintamani. This book also includes the Mansasoullas. Shri Bhuvenedev's 'Aparajit Prichcha' is a treasure of Vastu and architectural knowledge, or shilpa gyan. Mansaar, Agnipuran, Matsyapuran, and Vishnudharmottar Puran are among the works or granths that have a clear account of sculptures, or Shilpa, and sculptors, or shilpis. Virahsanhita and Vishwakarma Prakash are also great books on Vastu Shilpa Kala knowledge. Buddhist literature contains mention of the Vastu Shastra of monasteries and temples (viharas), semi-religious/semi-residential buildings (ardhayogas), residential complexes (prasadas) and larger buildings (harmyas)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critchlow's (1969) works on Islamic art show that artworks in the interior are not merely for the decoration of walls it also shows the cosmological laws of creation. **Khushdeep Bansal (2012)** provides technical diagrams, case studies, and practical remedies to correct imbalances caused by structures and hidden energies. It explains the effects of cosmic energies on human life and is considered a must-have resource for Vastu Shastra professionals. **Cox, Kathleen M, (1939)** shows the connection of the interior with the universe, as every form within the universe is nothing less than a manifestation of the different aspects of the Supreme Creator. **Sthapti, Dr. V. Ganapati, (1996)**, tells connections between Hindu philosophy of vastu and Chinese, and their difference on the basis of panchtattva.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methods to analyze and interpret the data. The exploratory method is used in this research where data is gathered through case studies, existing literature, and online sources followed by self-analysis. The Mahavastu principles and its steps were followed to analyze the artworks. The Mahavastu is a scientific process developed by Dr. Khusdeep Bansal, to better understand and apply the methods and theories of Vastu in a building. For this research primary and secondary data related to Dr. Bansal were given high priority along with ancient text on vastu and interior design. The artworks were first analyzed on the theory of Panch tattva and then based on 16 Vastu zones correct artwork placement will be recommended.

SYMBOLS AND SUBCONSCIOUS BRAIN

In Vastu Shastra, any artworks, i.e. paintings, sculptures, and photographs, we call them as symbols. The literal meaning of the symbol is that represents something else. It has some deeper meaning; they are not merely just splash of colors or a combination of different forms and shapes They have some message that is not picked up by the conscious brain but our subconscious captures that information very minutely.

According to **Khusdeep Bansal (2012)**, Symbols are powerful, possessing their own language and effects. They have been humankind's longtime allies, assisting and encouraging human evolution. Man's life has always been closely associated with and connected to symbols, even in ancient times. These have been treated with extreme caution since they are the formulators (sutradhar) of the conscious and subconscious minds. This was the knowledge that man had from the beginning of time, and linguists claim that language evolved from symbols. Even in the modern era, symbols play a crucial role in human existence and thought. The only language that the human subconscious mind, or inner mind, speaks is symbology. The expansion of the subconscious mind is in two domains—one, the subconscious mind (Inner mind) of the human being, and second the inner space of a building. The human mind gets programmed from the space where it lives—the space inside the building. The

philosophy of Mahavastu believes that Bhawna (emotion and intention) is the daughter of bhavana (building). Emotion and intention are the driving forces of your life.” (Mahavastu Remedies, p.15-16).

Among various senses that define the parameters of human experience, the ability to see is a tremendous evolutionary break through, because it allows the organism to gather detailed information about its environment without needing to be in physical contact with it. (Campbell 1976; Feldmen 1985) From scrolling phones to walking on the streets, our eyes always capturing data and giving signals to our subconscious brain. We are surrounded by symbols, shapes, forms, and colors.

ARTWORKS AND INTERIOR

From as far back as ancient times, people have used arts and artifacts to add (or subtract) a certain energy in a space. Nowadays, more people are fascinated by art, and this has reflected positively on the art industry; for homeowners, and interior and product designers alike, art is paramount, powerful and primary. (Anya Cooklin-Lofting 2018). The best buildings and the best interiors are those in which there is no obvious disparity between the many elements that make up the totality. (Arnold & George 2018).

From prehistoric times humans have making artwork on walls, we can find examples on the walls of prehistoric caves where they draw images of animals and other things, it is not just for the decoration of the walls but for them it's a kind of ritualistic images or memory keeper. Some say the images which they draw help them to hunt the animals easily. When we move further to Egyptian times the wall decoration is very systematic, they have societal traditions, and images are limited to certain parts of the society everyone is not allowed to draw on the wall. The images on the wall are very ritualistic, storytelling, very symbolic and it's like connecting with the outer work. When we see European architecture where the interior was decorated with Hellenistic sculptures, portraits, and figurations. So, artworks in any interior vary according to the demand and need of the interior as well as society and generation also influences the theme.

Critchlow's work on Islamic art patterns led him to conclude that Islamic art was not merely decorative, but that its abstraction is an affirmation of unity expressed in diversity, and that the geometrical patterns of Islamic art reveal the intrinsic cosmological laws of creation. (Critchlow, Keith. 1969.). According to Dr. Khusdeep Bansal (2012) “When we keep an object in a certain direction or certain zone of the Vastu, the object gets charged with that energy and its impact we can see in day-to-day life”.

THEORY OF FIVE ELEMENTS

The vastu shastra is based on the principle of Samkhya Darshan (Indian Metaphysics), which is the basis of all the Indian sciences like Yoga, Ayurveda, Tantra, and many more. According to the Samkhya Darshan, the Universe begins with a concentrated form of pure consciousness (Param Shiv) and the energy and the energy of bliss (Shakti). This Shiv-Shakti union is complete and whole in itself. It is the unmanifested form of the Universe. The Universe evolves in the form of ‘five elements’ from the birth-less, form-less Supreme Existence. (Mahavastu TM, P.02). There are five gross elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space and holds that all these five are present not only in the vast space of the universe but also in all the living beings and worldly objects. (Temple of Space -science, p. 39)

The human body is made up of all Five Elements: The bones are Earthy, the blood, lymph, and other fluids Watery, the digestive juices Fiery, the nervous system Airy, and the vacant spaces in the body (e.g., the interiors of the lungs, heart, and intestines, and the ventricles of the brain) are composed chiefly of Space. (Vastu Breathing into space, p.60). With regard to the theory of five gross elements, there are varied opinions. Certain traditions of the world accept only three gross elements - earth, water and fire and in place of air and space, they hold wood and metal. So according to these traditions, such as in China, the five gross elements are earth, water, fire, wood and metal. Likewise, contemporary science accepts only four elements, leaving out the fifth one namely akasa or space. The contemporary science based only on intellect and rational analysis, is not in a

position to accept the view of Indian spiritual science that space is the primal and foremost one among the five elements. (**Temple of Space -science,1996, p. 41**).

- **Water:** Water makes up one-third of the world, it deals with our bodies and emotions. Water can cleanse and has a natural tendency to flow. It stands for continuity, flow, and clarity. The element of water is predominant in the north.
- **Air:** The word 'air' is widely used to refer to the important oxygen provided by plants and trees, symbolizing life's growth. Movement, particularly rotating movement, is closely connected to the element of Air. As a result, it makes life more enjoyable, joyful, and refreshing. It molds the relationships you form and your place in the community. It is dominant in the direction of the East.
- **Fire:** People have utilized fire as protection. It stands for the passion, energy, and spark of life. Fire is the driving force behind all life processes; hence it is often associated with money in the modern era. With confidence and zeal, this component has the power to change your life. The fire dominates the south.
- **Earth:** The Earth element is responsible for providing us with stability, balance, tenacity, solidity, rigidity, infinite patience, and maturity. It governs the germination of seeds and gives us the capacity to give. It also governs the process of removing waste from our body, thoughts, relations, and life.
- **Space:** In Vastu, Space refers to something that has defined boundaries and offers a medium for connectivity. It symbolizes expansion, enhancement, extension, spread, communication, and thought processes (mental space). Space dominates the West direction. The Chinese refer to it as the Metal element because of its similarity to the perfect space configuration present in metals (in their atomic structure).

THEORY OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION

According to the theory of creation, one element helps in creating another theory of destruction. Water creates air because water helps in the growth of trees and plants and we get the air from the trees, the wood of the trees helps in fire. Then after burning the wood, it becomes ash, and it is converted into earth. All the metals originate from the earth and due to having a definite molecular spatial structure that's why they were named as space elements. And space is converted into water and this cycle of creation continues. In the cycle of destruction, Water destroys fire, air destroys earth, Fire destroys space and space destroys the air element. To create balance and harmony in a building we need to take care of this principle of creation and destruction.

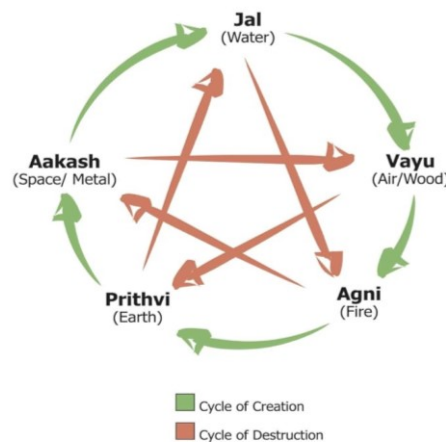


Fig: 1 Cycle of Creation and Cycle of Destruction, Image Source: Mahavastu TM by Khusdeep Bansal (2015), p.20

VAASTU ZONES AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES

Every emotion and thought that appears inside you is generated by the 16 Mahavastu zones (in your home). The kinds of objects placed in a zone, and the activities that occur in a zone decide how that zone affects your corresponding emotions. (Direction of Alchemy, 2012)

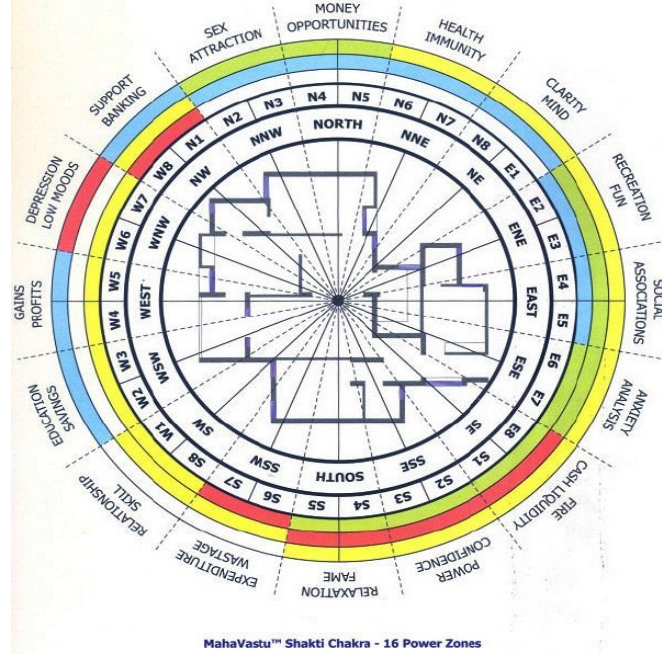


Fig: ii) Mahavastu Shakti Chakra, 16 zones of Vastu, Image Source: Mahavastu.com

ईशान्यां देवतागृहं आग्नेयां पाक मुच्यते ।
नैऋत्यां तु शस्त्रागारं वायव्ये भण्डार संस्थितम् ॥

North-East (Ishaan) should be used for making the place of the gods (Devtas), South-East (Agneya) for cooking, namely, kitchen. South-West (Nairitya) should be used for keeping tools and, North-West (Vayavya) for storage.

पूर्वस्यां तु सभागारं दक्षिणे शयनं तथा ।
पश्चिमे भोजनं चैव उत्तरे निधि संस्थितम् ॥

East is recommended for a conference room or meeting room, South for sleeping (bedroom), West for meals (dining room), and North for keeping valuables.

Till here, Lord Vishwakarma has given instructions for directions and sub-directions. The successive sutras are very important for two reasons. First is that sixteen directions are considered as the base for designing and planning buildings in Vastu Shastra (by Lord Vishwakarma), not merely the eight directions. The second important reason becomes evident when we do the detailing of these sutras, then we come to know that Lord Vishwakarma is indicating the area (zonal area) of directions. (Directions of Alchemy, P30)

आग्नेय पूर्वयोर्मध्ये दधिमन्थन मन्दिरम् ।
अग्नि प्रेतेश्योर्मध्ये आज्यगेहं प्रशस्यते ॥

The East of Southeast (ESE) Zone is meant for churning (in old times a place for churning curd to make butter.

The south of Southeast (SSE) is the Zone for keeping ghee, which imparts strength to the body.

याम्यनैर्ऋत्योर्मध्ये पुरीषत्याग मन्दिरम् ।
नैऋत्याम्बुपयोर्मध्ये विद्याभ्यास मन्दिरम् ॥

The South of Southwest (SSW) Zone is meant for disposal and toilet.

The West of Southwest (WSW) Zone is meant for study area.

पश्चिमवायव्योर्मध्ये रोदनार्थं गृहं स्मृतम् ।
वायव्योत्तरयोर्मध्ये रतिगेहं प्रशस्यते ॥

The West of Northwest (WNW) is the zone of detoxification.

The North of Northwest (NNW) is the zone for placing a bedroom to enjoy sex.

उत्तरेशानयोर्मध्ये औषधार्थं तु कारयेत् ।
नैऋत्यां सूतिका गेहं नृपाणां भूतिमिच्छता ॥
आसन्नप्रसवे मासि कुर्याच्चैव विशेषतः ।
तद्वत् प्रसवकाले स्यादिति शास्त्रेषुनिश्चयः ॥

The North of Northeast (NNE) zone is for keeping medicines. For easy and safe delivery, the expecting mother (pregnant lady) should sleep in the southwest zone, at least, in the last month of the delivery. Decide rest of the things according to the will of king (the owner of the building)-Vishwakarma Prakash (2.93-2.99)

DECODING AN ARTWORK ACCORDING TO PANCH TATVA

While decoding an artwork first thing we should keep in mind that each element has their own colours, shape, form and Bhava.

	Colours	Shape	Bhava (feeling)
Space	White, grey, metallic silver	Round, Dot	Sadness, emptiness
Water	Black, Blue	wavy	Fear, care
Air	Green, Brown, Sea green	Rectangular	Happiness, movement
Fire	Red, orange, reddish purple	Triangle, sharp	Anger, courage
Earth	Yellow	Square	Worry, heaviness

Fig: iii) Colours, shape and feel of each element

While decode any artworks, it can be sculpture, photographs, or painting or any kind of design element. We need to understand certain things as described below:

I) We need to decide the shape of any artwork first and the shape in the artworks leads to its elements.

The shapes and forms present in the artworks will guide us the correct element of the artwork.

II) The colours in the painting, photographs and sculptures or any artwork

Here we need to decide the domination of colours in any artwork, if any artwork is mostly in red and has some blues and green also so here, we need to understand which colours has highest domination.

III) Another thing is we need to understand what kind of feel and emotions is any artwork is showing.

If any artwork shows anger it belongs to fire, fires give aggression, any artwork shows motherly love it's a nature of water element that gives caring. So, every element has its own nature.

IV) Also, each zone has its attributes, like SW is the zone of relationship so if anyone wants to keep family photographs, then he can hang the family photographs.

V) power of creation and destruction, like water destroy fire, so we cannot keep any water related artworks in fire zone, but water supports air so we can keep any water related artworks in air zone.

VI) Each element has some properties of some other elements. No element is complete in itself.

The water has earth in it, the heaviness is the earth in water, water when evaporates it becomes gas i.e. air, now due the surface tension these vapours when released turns into fire, too. As it goes in the space and merges with it, it's now associated with space too.

So, when deciding the correct element of any artwork we need to understand precisely, what overall it signifies. When we follow the details in any artwork then we can easily decide the its correct location in our interior. First, we should decide its elements according to the shape, colours and emotions, the element will tell you it's direction. For example, if we take any yellow colours dustbin painting, the painting colours is directly showing yellow colours which is of earth element but in earth without knowing the attributes of zone it will be difficult. Here the dustbin is an object of disposal so it can be kept in SSW which is the zone of disposal. This dustbin we cannot keep in SW which is the zone of relationship. If we keep this dustbin in the zone of relationship then the final outcome will be relationship will get disposed off.

DECIDING THE CORRECT LOCATION OF 20TH-CENTURY ARTWORKS IN AN INTERIOR

In vastu, there are some artworks which are available in the market with suggestion to keep in certain direction, like love bird for southwest, and waterfall in the north. But we are living in the world of visuals and every day we are creating some visuals. In contemporary art it's very difficult to select the correct artworks for our interior. According to vastu all artworks are not made for home. Here I am decoding artworks for the home interior, in the home we need relaxation and peace. So, I am taking those kinds of artworks which are suitable for the home interior. The painting which shows pain, grief, anger, depression and anxiety works are not suitable for the home environment according to vastu. Those works we can keep as private collection or we can keep in the museums but advised to keep in the home.

So here is my attempt to analyze some famous 20th-century contemporary artworks and decide its correct ideal location in the home interior as per rule of Vastu Shastra, I have chosen 10 famous artworks and decoded them according to 5 elements and by understanding the attributes of 16 zones I have decided its location.

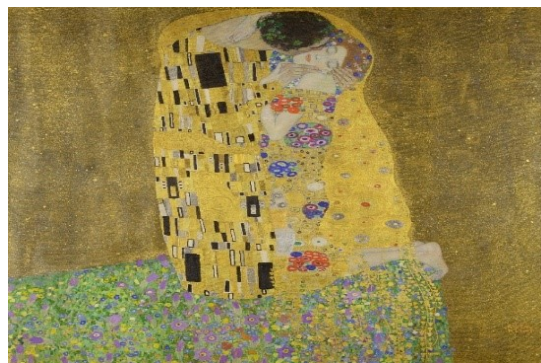


Fig: iv) Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss (in German Der Kuss)*, oil on canvas, 1907 and 1908, 180 cm × 180 cm (71 in × 71 in), Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: The emotion and feel of the painting are very loving and intimate. Here the major colours of the Painting is mostly golden Yellow. By looking the colours we can get idea that its belongs to the earth element. While deciding the zone for this painting, love and intimacy comes in North of North West, which is a natural zone of sex and attraction. But we cannot place there because it has yellow color domination of earth element. But the Southwest is a zone of relationship, it also governs intimate relations and love. So, the ideal placement of “The Kiss” by Klimt is Southwest.

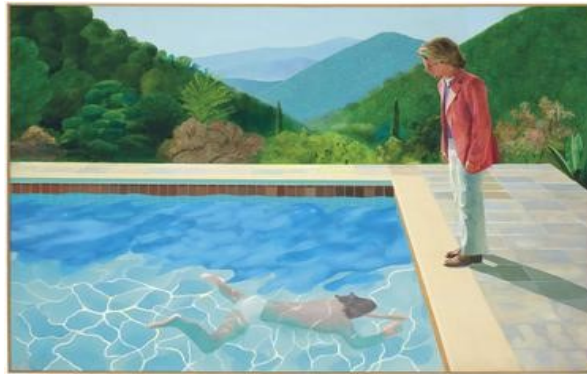


Fig: v) David Hockney, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, acrylic on canvas, 1972, 7 ft × 10 ft (2.1 m × 3.0 m), Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: The painting features wavy shapes in a pool, which represents the water element. The colors blue and green dominate the artwork, with the direct representation of trees and a swimming pool. The painting's dominant element is water, but it can also support the air element based on the theory of creation. Ideally, the artwork should be placed in the ENE direction, which is associated with recreation and fun in Vastu Shastra. The water element in the painting supports the air element, and ENE is also the zone allocated for bathing in Vastu Shastra, which cleanses and refreshes us. We can also place this artwork in the Northern direction.

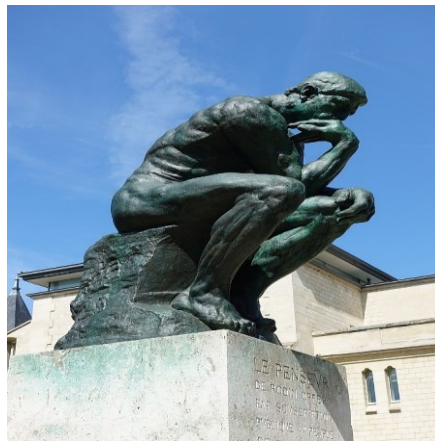


Fig: vi) Auguste Rodin, *The Thinker (French: Le Penseur)*, Bronze sculpture, 1904, Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: One can commonly associate this work with the zones of clarity and idea in the Northeast or the thinking power in the West. However, neither of these directions is suitable for this sculpture. One research study suggests that the pose of the sculpture is best for promoting bowel movement, as we tend to assume this posture while sitting on the toilet and thinking. Therefore, the best location for this artwork is in the South-Southwest direction.



Fig: vii) Vasily Kandinsky, *Circles in a Circle*, Oil on Canvas, 1923, 38in x 37in, Image Source: Philamuseum.org

Data Analysis: The painting features multiple circles and technical lines enclosed in a black circle. It is best placed in the western side for the space element and the northern side for water element. As circular element is related to space element and space supports water so it can be placed in both directions.



Fig: viii) Claude Monet *Reflections of Clouds on the Waterlily Pond*, Oil on Canvas, 1914-1926, 200 × 1,276 cm (6.5 × 41.8 ft) Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: This painting showcases a beautiful reflection of clouds and trees in water, dominated by blue, green, and white shades. The water element is prominent, with wavy brushstrokes supporting it. As green plants in the North promote growth with the help of water, this artwork is best suited for a North location.



Fig: ix) S.H. Raza, *Gestation*, Acrylic on canvas, 1989, 69 in x 69 in, Image Source: auctions.pundoles.com

Data Analysis: This artwork has black, brown, and green shades with some yellow highlights. The formation of a triangle is evident, which represents the Fire element. However, due to the dominant black color, we cannot place this artwork in the Fire zone as black weakens the Fire element. Instead, the triangular element is balanced with the brown and green colors, which support the Air element. Therefore, we can place this artwork in the eastern side of the Air element without creating any imbalances according to the Vastu principles.



Fig: x) M.F Hussain, *Three Horses*, Acrylic on Canvas, 1960, 40in x 59in, Image Source: online.bidandhammer.com

Data Analysis: The horses, which have been used as a symbol of power and strength since ancient times. Additionally, horses are associated with activeness. The dominant colors in the painting are red and yellow. Due to the attributes of the earth not aligning with the image, it is not recommended to keep this artwork in that zone. However, it can be placed in the south of the southeast zone, which is associated with power and confidence. The red color of the horses will inspire confidence, while the yellow color will balance the excess fire and prevent someone from becoming overconfident.



Fig: xi) Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm 30*, Enamel on Canvas, 1950, 105in x 207in, Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: Here the painting shows lots of movement and action. At the same time, this work is in itself entangled and confusing. Here lots of things are going at the same time. It attracts viewer to come and interact with the painting. Here the colours domination is of black color. But we cannot keep this artwork in water zones. Because here the feel or Bhava is not related to water. If you want to keep this artwork then best location of this work is in East South East the zone of anxiety and churning. It will help the excess churning.



Fig: xii) Pablo Picasso, *The Old Guitarist*, Oil on Panel, 1903, 48.4in x 32.5in, Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: The painting shows a monochromatic blue color man, which shows water elements, playing guitar. The overall blue color scheme creates a melancholic tone that accentuates the tragic and sorrowful theme. According to the principles of vastu, only one direction supports the sorrowful theme, which is the west of the Northwest. The blue color in this direction works according to the theory of creation and invokes the attributes of its zone. Therefore, the ideal location for the painting is the West of the Northwest.



Fig: xiii) Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, Gouache-painted paper cut-outs stuck to paper mounted on canvas, 1952, 45.7in x 35in, Image Source: Wikipedia.org

Data Analysis: This artwork can be easily decoded. The dominant blue color represents the water element, which can be divided into four zones - north, north of northeast, northeast, and north of northwest. The figure depicted in the artwork is nude, which is associated with sex and attraction. Based on the principles of Vastu, the ideal location for this artwork would be North of Northwest.

DISCUSSION

When incorporating modern art into your interior according to the principle of Vastu, its essential to strike a balance between aesthetics, personal preference and guidelines of the Vastu to create a space that is visually appealing, energetically balanced, and conducive to the positive flow of energy. Avoid displaying artwork that depicts negativity, violence, or loneliness in areas like the bedroom or dining room. Instead, use soothing pieces to promote relaxation and harmony. while following the principles of Vastu, one should not neglect their

personal preferences when it comes to arranging their space. After all, it's your personal space and you have the right to arrange it as per your liking. However, it's important to maintain balance and harmony in the arrangement to manifest your desires effectively.

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