



SHAMBHALA OFFICE OF CULTURE AND DECORUM

Shambhala Centre Decor Guidelines

Shambhala Centres often ask for suggestions about the interior design of their centres. We hope the following guidelines will be helpful, and answer some of the questions that we hear regularly from centres. Please feel free to implement these guidelines in a way that feels timely for your centre.

Our Shambhala Centres will naturally vary in their style and architecture depending where they are located, but some aspects should be consistent. In this way, the Sakyong has compared our centres to embassies:

“An American embassy in Kenya will be very different from an American embassy in Paris, but in either one – you will see a portrait of President Obama and probably George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, as well as the American Flag. In this same way, when you walk into a Shambhala Centre in any part of the world, you should know where you are. You should know that you have entered Shambhala.”

-- The Kongma Sakyong II, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

Through the visible and felt atmosphere in our Shambhala Centres, we can communicate much of what our shared vision. If we create spaces that help people to experience their own dignity, and our collective potential as enlightened society, then we add another element that will help to further Shambhala vision. Our centres can be a reflection of the Kalapa Court, the domain of the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, that extends hospitality to our members and guests.

Guidelines

Official photos

If possible please display two official photos in the entry/reception area of your centre. Both are available from Shambhala Media as well as the small plaques to display with them.

The official photograph of the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo

This portrait should be hung in the place of prominence.

Beneath it, please place the small plaque that reads:

*The Kongma Sakyong II, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche
and the Sakyong Wangmo, Khandro Tseyang*

The official photograph of the Druk Sakyong, the Dorje Dradul

In the same reception area, there should also be a substantial photo of the Druk Sakyong. An official portrait is available from Shambhala Media in two sizes.

With this photo, the Sakyong thought that it would be very helpful to have a small engraved plaque, since "new people will not encounter the Druk Sakyong - they should know who this is." This plaque reads:

*The Kongma Sakyong I, Dorje Dradul
Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche
Founder of Shambhala*

Shambhala Media has these official photographs and the brass plaques to accompany them available online. <http://www.shambhalamedia.org>

General Décor

"Our centres should be a combination of traditional and modern aesthetics. They should be free from clutter and personal stuff"

-- The Kongma Sakyong II, Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche

General Environment and Décor

Our Shambhala Centres should be elegant, warm and approachable. We want our centres to convey the dignity and kindness that are inherent in the Shambhala teachings so that visitors feel welcome. Please keep the space clean, and in good repair. Try to fix things in a timely fashion, and touch up paint, replace tiles or clean carpets so that the environment is fresh and dignified. Please try to maintain a feeling of spaciousness, free from clutter. Please avoid having people use your centre as a place to display personal knick-knacks, or a storage space for personal clothing, shoes and belongings

Recently, the Sakyong mentioned that we tend to delay updating and upgrading our Centres in the hopes of a major renovation or relocation to come. He asked, instead, that we maintain our “embassies” in good order as long as we are using them and inviting people into them. As we all know, our environment can impact our awareness and the experience of others, so we might occasionally reflect if our Centres communicate enlightened society *today*. Many upgrades can be relatively easy and inexpensive.

Iconography, Flags and Banners

It is so important that we have a genuine connection with the iconography used in our environments. Our flags and banners are used to invoke particular energies into our spaces. The Shambhala Office of Culture and Decorum is preparing an Iconography Bank that will have explanations of many Shambhala symbols, which will be available to view online. Please place banners and symbols thoughtfully, and care for them respectfully.

It would be wonderful to fly Shambhala flags outside of your centre. Typically, a centre would display the Shambhala Standard flag, and the Kasung Trident flag if possible. Many centres also fly the local provincial or state flag. You can purchase the Sakyong’s or the Mukpo Family flag, but these are flown only when the Sakyong (or member of the Mukpo family) are present. Flags should be lowered in the evening and raised in the morning, and should be stored in a “lha” place. All of these are available from Shambhala Media.

Shrines

The most current information about shrines is available on this link, which is maintained by the Shambhala Office of Practice and Education:
<http://shambhala.org/members/ps/manual/Shrines.php>

Chairs and thrones in the shrine room

The teaching chair or Sakyong’s chair should be an elegant wood chair with arms, and an upholstered seat. This would be covered with a brocade when he is present. When he is not present, it is appropriate to place a white khata (offering scarf) across the arms of the chair. If you have a larger centre, you may choose to build a throne for the Sakyong to use when he is present. The design for such thrones is currently being determined.

At this point, the Sakyong Wangmo has asked that we do not place a seat for her in our shrine rooms unless she is present. If the Sakyong Wangmo is visiting, you can place a chair with brocade for her to the left of the Sakyong’s throne or chair. (right side as you face the shrine.) Typically, brocades with softer colours and more delicate patterns are used for the Sakyong Wangmo.

Gomdens, zafus and zabutons

There is now an official colour for the gomdens, zafus and zabutons in all Shambhala Centres: dark navy blue. The Sakyong is encouraging the use of this colour as a distinctive feature of Shambhala. It is welcoming, powerful and holds up well. You do not need to rush to change your cushion colours; but if you do need to purchase new cushions or covers, this is the recommended colour.

Covers in this shade are available from Samadhi Cushions:

<http://www.samadhicushions.com/> or Drala: <http://www.dralala.ca/htt>

Color and Trim

At present there are no "official colors" for our Centres, other than those related to the Rigden Shrine. At the same time, Rinpoche, in general, is moving away from things that are too 'monastic' looking, instead encouraging a more contemporary, but uplifted feel...clean and bright and spacious. For example, the Boulder Shambhala Centre used a light creamy color for all the walls ('Mayonnaise' from Benjamin Moore) and a white trim. They also used 'Devon Cream' for the shrine walls, another warm white that was used in the Court in Halifax (also Benjamin Moore), and they introduced some other colored accent walls based on a feng shui report done for their space by Dr. Eva Wong.

Color is very personal and powerful, and it can bring out the unique light, feeling and other special qualities of your Centre, and your local environment and culture. Explore and enjoy, and keep us posted with photos and updates as you refresh your Centre.

Email: info@shambhalaenvironments.com

Art and Decor

Our Shambhala Centres can be spaces that reflect the multicultural dimension of our tradition, and the universal vision of basic goodness. In order to make our centres much more welcoming and accessible to a far larger range of people, and to express our appreciation for a wide spectrum of cultural forms, the Sakyong has suggested that our centres should not rely strictly on Tibetan or Asian art and decorative elements, though "some influence is natural and is part of our heritage, our city centres should not look like monasteries." You are therefore completely free to experiment with displaying other visual art forms that invoke drala, including regional style and modern art, including contemporary art, photography, calligraphy and works by local artists of good quality.

Thangkas

Please ensure that any thangkas displayed in your centre are of deities and protectors directly associated with the practices that we do in Shambhala – such as Varjasattva, Tara, Dorje Trollo, Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, Rigdens, regional protectors and so on.. The Sakyong said that we "should not invite them in if we aren't going to relate to them!"

Photos of visiting teachers and leaders

The Sakyong has suggested that we create a spot in each centre where we can display a nice photo of any rinpoche, lama, acharya or Shambhala leader who might be visiting the

centre soon. (This could be in a nice frame, for instance.) Beneath the framed photo, you could display information about the events or program that will be offered. When the event has passed, the photo could be replaced with a photo of the next visitor.

Sustainability

The Shambhala sangha has made a commitment to reducing any negative impact on the environment. Whenever possible, we are encouraged to make sustainable choices in our centres. Please try to use CFL light bulbs, low VOC paints, recycled paper products, biodegradable cleaning products and natural soaps whenever possible. Keeping your centre and appliances in good repair will also help to reduce energy usage. Also, please take advantage of recycling or composting programs that are offered locally.

Design team

So much of what creates elegant spaces cannot be prescribed, especially from afar. It is about trusting ourselves with what feels harmonious and uplifted to us, and following examples that we have experienced in other spaces.

If your centre is renovating, redecorating or wants to have an ongoing process of uplifting your Centre, we recommend that you create a local design team. Three people seems to be a good number to work with. This could include the Centre Director, but does not have to. There should be at least one member with design experience, and all three members should have a passion for, or some experience with, decorating and local resources. If your centre has a Representative of the Shambhala Office of Culture and Decorum, they should be part of this team.

For major renovations or new buildings, it is our hope to establish a process where centres can work with a member of the Sakyong's Advisory Panel on Shambhala Environments as a consultant throughout their renovation. We will keep you posted about this process, but please contact the Sakyong's Advisory Panel on Shambhala Environments info@shambhalaenvironments.com with any needs that arise in the meantime.

We have found it helpful in several centres to take an occasional walk-through with fresh eyes, to start at our front door and walk through the centre to experience the space as our members and guests see it. Sometimes this process has led to seeing small repairs or easy upgrades that we can implement to keep the environment fresh.

Ongoing updates

The Shambhala Office of Culture and Decorum will continue to post new information regarding centre atmosphere and décor on the Shambhala Network.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions wendy@biscuitland.net

