

## Ep #68: Relentlessness in Creating Your Dream Business with Scot Meacham Wood



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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #68: Relentlessness in Creating Your Dream Business with Scot Meacham Wood

You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 68.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

I have a treat for you today friends. I have a treat. So I have my buddy Scot Meacham Wood and he is such a delight. And you're going to hear all kinds of things from Scot today. His life story, how he's done all the amazing things he's done, from having fabric lines and furniture lines, his own shop, his design business, what his background was, which I'll give you a little hint, a lot of his background was at Ralph Lauren, which you might suddenly understand if you know Scot and all of his love for everything plaid and tartan.

And so I can't wait for you to hear so much fun goodness from Scot, and even the reason why he loves to call everyone little cute pet names, all kind of southern little monikers like kitten and poodle, and a lot of other cute ones. You'll learn all the deets in today's episode so please enjoy my interview with Scot Meacham Wood.

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Tobi: Hey Scot my friend, my little bestie.

Scot: Hi my darling.

Tobi: I'm so glad you're here.

Scot: I'm more excited about just talking with you for an hour about anything. We can just gossip about the design world.

Tobi: Exactly. And I love it only if you call me all the little perfect pet names that you call people all the time.

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Scot: I'll give you at least a kitten and maybe two poodles. We'll see how this works out.

Tobi: Okay, perfect. That will just make me feel right at home. Okay, so I'm so glad you're here. This is one of the perks of having a podcast because I get to invite my favorite people in the world to come talk to me, which when we get to call at work, which is fun. But I think let's start out for those listeners is what I'm trying to say who don't really know you, if that's even possible. If they're on social they have to know you if they're in the design world. But if they don't, tell us about you because I'll miss some of the best parts because it's everything from southern meets California meets England meets all wrapped up and tied with a bow and the whole thing, so tell us what that is.

Scot: What is that great line from the Bible? Like all is legion for we are many, which I know is about Satan but that's about me as well.

Tobi: But hey, if she fits, right?

Scot: If it fits it fits. So I had a very odd upbringing. Let's start with my upbringing. We'll go way back. So my father was in the American Air Force in the military so I grew up a little internationally. Living in southern Florida, we lived in Japan and South Korea, we lived in southern California outside of LA. I think when I started the sixth grade I had been in eight schools. We were almost transient at some stage of the game. But my dad and his family back for like, 100 years is from this little town in Mississippi. So I was in the fifth grade when he retired from the military and we moved back to this little tiny town in Mississippi. So we moved from Los Angeles to Mississippi.

Tobi: Wow, culture shock.

Scot: Which was kind of a wild culture. Luckily, I was young and kind of pliable because we had moved so much. Two years before that we lived in Japan so we just were all over the place. So I have this very kind of weird international upbringing and then this very little town I grew up in in

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Mississippi was like 3000 people. We lived on a big cattle farm outside of the little town of 3000 people so it was very quiet, for lack of a better word.

Tobi: Rural, quiet, sheltered. All that stuff.

Scot: All those kind of good and bad things. We had this giant farm that my brother and I would play on for - we would be gone all day building forts in the woods and you know, playing with the cows. It was a cattle farm and I named the calves the first year and then I never named them again because we had to eat one of them.

Tobi: You're like, I'm not slaughtering Betsy this year. No sir.

Scot: I'm not getting emotionally attached to these cows. These are food. So that was all - junior high school, high school, college I did in Mississippi and then I think 72 hours after college graduation I was in my car and driving west. Spent a couple of years in Colorado working at a ski resort...

Tobi: Oh really? I don't know that I remember that part of the story.

Scot: I was the most employable human being on the face of the earth. With a military upbringing, I actually would go to work in the morning on time, which I think was a real anomaly. So I had manager keys three weeks into my first job because I would go. So I managed a chain of t-shirt shops, I played cocktail piano, I was a church organist, I did display windows, I waited tables, whatever I could do for money I would do and I lived there for a couple of years and really loved it.

And then through a very odd confluence of events, went to work for Ralph Lauren, which involved moving to California, which I did on honestly like, 12 minutes of notice and just put my things in the car and drove to San Francisco. So that was almost over 30 years ago when I first got to the Bay area in the late 80s. And worked for Polo for about 14 years. Some sales, a lot of it was in what was called their creative services department.

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So we would design and install all the windows and all the home collection installations. So it was a great part of design and styling, which has served me well in my current career, but also a ton of construction. We had to build all the window sets. So I learned my way around a drill gun and a tool belt really fairly quickly because we had to install everything. So that's been a real interesting kind of adjunct to what I do now as well because if the drapery installments don't show up, I can install drapes. It's not pretty. There's a lot of screwing involved.

Tobi: If there's a party happening six hours later, like you're hanging the drapes.

Scot: Yes. I'm a big guy. I can move furniture. Like oh no, I'll put that there, it's fine, I'll hang all the artwork. I love that installation part of projects.

Tobi: That whole thing blows my mind. I guess maybe, I don't know, I mean I could do some of that stuff because I mean, of the people in my family, I'm for sure one of the more handy ones. Like I make fun of Carter like I think last summer I wanted a power washer to wash our back area around the pool and while he laid out and drank a beer, I put together the power washer.

So of the two of us, I'm the handier one, but doing it on a job, I mean, I can't see myself - I think it was yesterday I was watching a Facebook Live of Libby Langdon and she literally had flown to Canada and the two accent walls she wanted painted hadn't been painted so she just went and bought paint and painted them herself. And I'm like, that's above and beyond what I could - not probably. That is 100% above and beyond what I would do.

Scot: So one of the skillsets I've developed is we do all these installations on travel is you have to learn how to pack tools. I can't take a drill gun in my carry on because it looks like a weapon, but you also can't put it in your checked luggage without - you have to take the battery out of it. Inevitably, I think every time I travel, we work on the project in Colorado, I think every time I travel, I get back and open my luggage, it would say like, you know, we opened your luggage. This is TSA, we left a note. We had to dig

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through this because I have boxes of drywall screws. I'm sure it looks like a bomb if somebody doesn't know any better.

Tobi: The guy in the plaid pants is carrying a bomb.

Scot: But you know, when we were - I mean, so much of this project I did in Colorado but we're so remote. I mean, there wasn't like there was a hardware store in Vale. I could buy a cashmere sweater on every corner but I probably couldn't buy drywall screws if I had to. So I just learned, I kind of packed this stuff in. And it got to a point, I would just leave all my tools at the house. Like a toothbrush and a drill gun at the house while it was under construction. It's like, oh good, all that stuff's there, I can just go.

Tobi: Right yeah, that's so true. I mean, that is what we do as designers. I mean, recently when I was going to Florida to a beach house install, we were doing the same thing. We were like, are we going to ship the steamer or is it for the bedding, or is it just cheaper to buy a steamer, do we rent a steamer? It's like, all the stuff you have to think about but we can't have wrinkled bedding so like, somehow, does the client have a steamer they can drive from their real house to the beach house? So many details.

Scot: And it's not like it's magic. Someone has to steam all the bedding. I remember we would take a list. You got to go to Colorado, I need you to steam bedding for two days, and that's why I'm taking you because that's going to be your job. Like, I'm sorry that it's not more interesting but someone's got to steam five bedrooms worth of bedding and it's not going to be - I got other things to do.

Tobi: Yeah, there are so many details to make everything come together. That's so fun. All of us who are in the design industry love saying that it's not quite as glamorous as people want to think that it is. It's really just a glorified personal assistant, housekeeper, delivery person slash gofer job.

Scot: Marital therapist.

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Tobi: Oh yeah, don't forget that. For sure. And then after you finish you need your own therapist. Well okay, so that's the story of how you got to Ralph Lauren and then what happened to get you over into the - what was the big leap from Polo windows to Scot Meacham Wood Interiors?

Scot: Honestly, it was 9/11. I think a lot of Americans just as a generation from that time period had a real kind of self-analysis of what your life was compared to the events of that day. And I just - do I really want my life on this earth to be about the greatest cruise windows in San Francisco, or do I want to do more than that? So I left Polo kind of right before Christmas of that same year in 2001.

Tobi: Which is like, a month and a half later or something you're going I'm out.

Scot: I'm out. Tap out. After having been there for almost 15 years. And went to my parents, stayed at my parents' house for almost two months, went to England for two months, and just toured the UK, all over the place. And just - I wish I knew what - like I don't remember it. Like a friend that I knew started - it seemed to just kind of present itself all at once. The whole time that I had worked for - when I was working for Ralph, inevitably clients would stop by like oh my gosh, I wish you would do this for my house. Like no, no, because you're crazy.

Tobi: You can't pay me enough to do this for your house. Carry on.

Scot: Yes, the sweaters are in there. But then I was like, you know what, what if I did do that? And so - this was back in the day, I'm going to say the most hilarious retro word. My Rolodex, I had old clients names and numbers in because I'd done - I would decorate houses for Christmas sometimes and I called this amazing woman who was just one of my best first clients and such a kind of patron of my work and I'm like hey Lisa, it's Scot, we talked a year and a half ago about me doing your house and I think - are you still looking? What's going on? How's your husband? How are your kids?

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And she kind of cried a little bit like oh my god, what have I called you in the middle of? She said I asked you to decorate my house, it's all I ever wanted, and you didn't come decorate so I remodeled instead because I had to do something, she's like, and the contractor just pulled out of the house. Like, driveway, 20 minutes ago. Could you be here in the morning? We need to hang artwork.

I'm like, yeah. So that was - I did probably four or five houses for them because they were getting ready to move to the east coast and so we did a lot of kind of projects on both coasts for that family and then I met some of her friends. She's so gracious to introduce me and help build my client base here in the Bay area and on the east coast.

Tobi: So was your work always - I mean, because you have a very specific look which I want to talk about and you really used it to create really a niche and a kind of foothold, especially in social media and in getting published and your persona. When I first met you through social media, it was tartan Scot and that was really...

Scot: Which you yelled at me about.

Tobi: Because I'm like, no one knows who the hell tartan Scot is. Use your damn name. Is that what you're talking about?

Scot: That breakfast that we had in LA. I'm like, I need to get a pen and paper because you were just vomiting ideas on me while I'm having my breakfast.

Tobi: Because if you're my real friend, I give you a lot of unsolicited business advice, right?

Scot: And I asked for it. She's like, what is wrong with you? I'm sorry, sorry about that, Tobi.

Tobi: But it worked. I didn't want you to throw out the plaid. I just wanted you to add your name to it, but that whole...



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Scot: It was career altering because - and people don't believe this. You may not even believe this. I'm actually an introvert who plays an extrovert on TV.

Tobi: Yes, I can see that. But I know you well.

Scot: So people always think that I'm this kind of loud, gregarious creature and I'm kind of not. I'm a little on the shy side. So being so bold and somewhat self-involved to publish my own work just seemed very strange to me. Until you almost gave me permission to do it.

Tobi: Yeah, you were publishing - so you build this brand and it was all about you were the - what's the correct word? You love everything English or Scottish, so let me say it wrong because I don't know all of the historically correct terms. Let me get it right. Correct me if I'm wrong. But you built your brand around your love for things I guess English and Scottish and tartans and all of that stuff that goes with that look, which very much is a derivative of the - I mean, Ralph's look is a derivative of a lot of that as well, right?

Scot: And that wasn't real Ralph's. It was never Ralph's exclusive look but it was one of the first things that he did, even when he did all the tweed hacking jackets for men and ladies hacking jackets, and when he first opened up collection in '85, there was a big English collection that was part of that. So it's always been one of the many moods of Ralph and easily one of my favorites.

Tobi: Yes, that is who you truly are. That's who you want to be at home, that's how you live in your own house. And I think you love not just the design of it but even just sort of the lifestyle and the formality of some of those ways of life and the traditions and all of those pieces and parts, right?

Scot: And some of that's my southern upbringing. The south can be very formal. Probably sometimes maybe to its detriment, but it's still part of that culture that - I mean, my mother fluffed the living room cushions every day

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before she left. She's like, someone might come home with us and we need the living room ready.

Tobi: I agree with her. I do that too.

Scot: And I like that. I like that everybody I knew had a formal dining room in which they ate all the time, which is kind of an anomaly out here in the west coast.

Tobi: Right, and in general in 2019 for so many people. But you took that approach to your brand and you were talking about all things English, but when I gave you the lashing that you talk about, what was happening is you were really getting a good size and engaged following on social media, but you were primarily posting other people's work or something about the British royal family or Downton Abbey or something, which was all great, but I'm like, where the heck are you in this and get your damn work on that blog like, tomorrow.

Scot: It was two days later because we were still in Los Angeles for two days but I'm like, Tobi said. I know Tobi, she will fly here and spank me if I don't do this like she told me to. Which is what I adore about you. One thing, I mean, I always used to laugh that you were the most entrepreneurial woman that I knew.

Tobi: Thank you, that's kind. I'm so invested in the people that I care about or that I work with that I'm like, I want you to succeed, damn it, so go do this right.

Scot: Right. And sometimes you need someone outside your own head to give you the best advice because it is - I mean, in some ways the design world, depending on the size of your staff, we're a very small shop here. It is at some points a little on the monastic side where it's just you and your little lit candle while you're doing drawings at night. It feels very - like something from the 1400s because we don't get a chance to get together that often. There's those blog conferences and those design conferences

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and High Point and all those kind of big tent pole events, when you're not at those, you're kind of by yourself.

Tobi: You are isolated.

Scot: And you need someone outside your own brain, even if they tell you things that you know you should be doing, hearing it outside your own mind gives it so much more weight and validity than this maybe we should try this, I don't know.

Tobi: Well, and thankfully the social media world, which is where you and I really met each other, and I'll never forget one of the first times we interacted with each other. Do you remember what it was? Do you remember us watching the red carpet from like...

Scot: And I was painting my - Facebook or Twitter. It was the Oscars.

Tobi: We were on Twitter and we were like oh my god, that dress is ghastly, what the hell is she wearing? And then we were like oh, that's exquisite. It's just like, couture.

Scot: And while we were doing that I was painting my living room. What turned into my bedroom, which was when we got it - it got published a year later. I was in the middle of getting it ready, Room magazine was coming to do that holiday article on the house, which of course we shot it in August.

Tobi: That's such a great article. I still can picture every page of it. So good.

Scot: That was a great shoot. We had such a good time and Sage, if you don't know who...

Tobi: I do know.

Scot: Who's a doll and was in charge of that shoot, and she just came in and she was like, we're going to have a good time, and we brought photographers to document that. We're not going to try to photograph you.

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She goes, I want you to have a good time, we'll take pictures of you having a good time. It was such a fun party that then got documented.

Tobi: So cool. Yeah, that's when people were really starting to do things differently, and I think that's so fun now. Just based kind of on the hills of the conversation I had with Stacy Kunstel about self-publishing and really doing things differently now that magazines have changed, that was really kind of the beginning of magazines starting to need to do something different because blogs were coming on really fast and they were afraid of that and social media was happening, and I think that's really fun to look at some of those online magazines really were the game-changers for a lot of what we've seen over the last several years and what we're going to see. I mean that's exactly the type of thing we could do ourselves now.

Scot: And I can remember, we would do editorial shoots at my house for the blog. Like, we had models and catering and photographers and lighting and makeup to shoot things that I would just publish on my own blog. And Drew and I were talking about that the other night. I'm like, brace yourselves because that's coming back because I think reverting back to that self-publishing idea that you and Stacy spoke about, it wasn't like a panicky. The solution is right here. The solution is clearly available. We have all these social media outlets and why aren't we using them more proactively.

Tobi: Yeah, like you said, I gave you permission to publish your own work, I think just that whole conversation right now and we're going to get into that in a second about your collections that you created and fabric and other things, but I think just this idea of starting to give ourselves permissions to take matters into our own hands and it sounds silly and why wouldn't we already think we have permission, but I think there is a certain - I don't know if it's a reverence or a fear or what to the way design has always been and what's legit and what's not, and now that things have kind of gone even farther into sort of the wild west of publishing and products and everything else, I think everybody's realizing that if you don't take care of

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you, then no one's going to take care of you. Everybody's on their own kind of, right?

Scot: And I think that's always been true. It's just not been recognized.

Tobi: Or nobody wanted to be the first one or admit it or something. It's like yeah, well I know I need to do this for myself but would a legit designer publish their own work? Would a legit designer do this?

Scot: Does it diminish my brand that I'm going to put this huge project that we just did on my little blog when I could get it published? That was the whole thing back a decade ago. The watchword from all the publishing houses was like, we don't want you to show anything. And if you've shown something, we're not going to publish it.

Tobi: Exactly.

Scot: So for a decade, that was how we spoke about it. Like, we're going in but I can't show you the inside because I'm saving it for publication.

Tobi: And now that's not even really an option unless it's maybe local and there are some great local and regional publications still, but for the most part, using your best work to become somebody because you were nationally published, that's just not the name of the game anymore. So now it's like okay, all the things we wished we could do back then when somebody said oh no, no, you can't put that out, now we have free reign and we're all like freaking - now what? We're actually supposed to do the stuff we thought about doing? Okay, what does that look like? Interesting.

So let's talk about that with your - so the progression of you having your firm and then you started building this brand online, all about tartan Scot, which when you really did transition into Scot Meacham Wood and you're very much known obviously for who you are, but still you have a very specific presence and look and you - I mean, plaid really is kind of your favorite thing. When I think tartan, I think of you, which was your whole point and intention I'm sure.

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But the you started looking at okay, I'm getting nationally published, I have great projects, I want to go to the next level, I want to do product lines. Let's talk about what that whole process looked like because I love the fact that in the same kind of vein of what we're talking about publishing and self-publishing, you're self-producing your own product line. So tell us how that came about and what that progression kind of looked like.

Scot: So let me think of the shortest version of a very, very long story. I had been in communication with a major fabric house for years. I had gone into their showroom and one of my dear friends who used to be the manager of the showroom here in San Francisco and I bought tons of merchandise from them, and I looked at her, I'm like, I want to have a licensee fabric collection with you. What do I need to do? What's step one?

And she looked at me, she's like, you need to be about 800 times more famous than you are. I'm like, okay. I started blogging that night. That was November the eighth of 2008. So I'm like okay, I'll take this on. I can put myself out there. We started building something like a brand. We worked probably for the next six or seven years putting a collection together. I had the great chance to travel to Scotland, I met with some mills, kind of figured out who I might want to work with, who I definitely wanted to work with.

And kind of put a whole presentation together, sent it off to the design team like here it is with a box of Scottish breakfast tea and you know, a CD of music to listen to while you look at my presentation. And there was a part of me, like I begged them to let me present it in person so that I could really be the face of it because nobody sells me like me. They wouldn't let me do that because that was not how that process was done.

So sent everything off, waited a couple of weeks, got an email back from a good friend of mine who worked for the fabric house and it was the most gushing like, oh my god, everybody loved the collection, everybody loves it. It's such an original point of view, and on and on and on and on until paragraph 19 where it said but. And I was like, damn it. They were like, we need to focus more on our own brands and our own collections. We feel

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like we're getting over-licensed and on and on and on. I'm like well, that unraveled quickly.

Tobi: Yeah, and I think a lot of companies thought that too because all of a sudden licensing was the thing, especially with social media and licensing and then all of a sudden all these companies were like okay, never mind, we're spending too much on the licensing, partnerships, and we're not doing our own thing, and I think that started...

Scot: I was in that fulcrum point and you get to run your own business. I mean, I was annoyed for probably a year but like, it is what it is. So I pulled back and looked at the collection and talked to the mill, like what would it cost, what do we need, what are my minimums, and we put together a budget to open the collection and it was more money than I had, frankly. And the odd part of this was my - and you know this - my mother passed away. This was probably five years ago. And I got the statement from the lawyer for her estate and what I had inherited. It was almost to the penny what I needed to open the collection.

Tobi: That gives me chills. That's awesome.

Scot: Even thinking about it now I'm like, oh my god, my mother would love this. She would love every...

Tobi: Yeah, she's like here's your collection baby, go do it.

Scot: So my mother passed away in early November, I was in Scotland by early December, at the mill finalizing the collection and then we launched it the next late summer of the next year. So it happened...

Tobi: I love how every time you have a major life event or tragedy, within a month you're on a plane to somewhere making something major happen.

Scot: Kind of.

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Tobi: That's awesome. That's perfect. You can sit in wallow in this or you can change your entire life for the better one month later. It's perfect. Love it.

Scot: So we - yeah, and that was exclusively tartans, all milled in Scotland, in a mill that's been in the same family since the 1700s. All of it was such a good story, we had such a good time. And we were launching at a showroom here in San Francisco. This was before I had my own showroom and I remember my friend Jeff, who runs the showroom - because I would go over every couple of days like, it was only fabric? It was only fabric? What's happening? And he's like, we're not going to sell them for a year so relax. And I'm like no, I'm me, I'm tartan Scot. Let's sell this right away. It was almost to the day, it was a year later where we started getting any sort of major...

Tobi: Why was that? Is it because of the - the original things were all wool, they're just exquisite. I just did a happy dance when I saw them in the most vibrant colors you've ever seen, and nothing is like it on the market. But is it because of the investment and it's very specific? Was it that it just takes that long for people to have something in their workroom before they decide to use it? What is that life cycle?

Scot: I think it's more of that - and I think about it even now in my own design projects is sometimes that kind of gestation period is so long between when you're shopping for a project and you're pulling fabrics and putting together concept ideas, and then you've got to present it to the client and they've got to fund it and then you've got to place - it's such a long period that if I sent a fabric to you today, like oh my god we're going to use that, I won't get an order for six or eight months because that's just how long it takes to get all the wheels spinning.

Tobi: To develop the design and the whole project and if it's a whole home and then the - yeah, you're right. And then there's construction a lot of times and you don't order until month six or nine or 12 or whatever. You're right. It's a process.



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Scot: And the other thing that was really interesting was the idea of our sample library because everyone was running samples and I didn't worry about it because we had to order fabrics from Scotland and make samples and it was just such a long, tedious process. I'm like oh, we're out of samples. And then I'm like no, but you have to have them. The sample has to be in the presentation. If the client doesn't see it, they're never going to buy it.

So I'm like oh, you need four samples? I will send you eight because maybe we'll get this too. I just want to make sure they were always trying to make sure we were part of that conversation. So we've got someone here in the show whose main job is just making sure the sample boxes are always full, just because it's...

Tobi: I mean, you have to sell. It's not like you can just be creative - and that's the thing about us creatives. It's like if you build it, they will come, but it's not like that. We hope it's that way but you build it and no one knows about it unless you work your ass off to sell it to them and have it in front of them constantly, which is a whole other job and a whole other hat to wear on top of already the other things you're doing, right?

Scot: And god bless Instagram. I mean, we do more business over - not really over Instagram but I get more requests for samples from - I'll post a picture of a pillow or post a picture of the fabric collection like, oh my god, what's that? Oh my god, you asked me what's that, you'll have the sample in two days. I will send it out. Where do you live? What's your address?

Tobi: Don't even say hi because you will get a box of samples.

Scot: Don't say hey pretty because I'm like, I will send you that sample. It comes in four colors, I'll send you all four of them.

Tobi: That's great though.

Scot: We do a lot of business now, that's how business gets done.

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Tobi: I love it. I mean, the power of social media, the power of these platforms, it's so amazing. And one of the things that you've done now that I especially love and I got to see it at High Point Market just a couple months ago is that you have also now done a kind of second tier to your collection that's printed and a lower price point and...

Scot: It's a lower price point. We're actually doing digital printing here in the US. We've had the hammer of Brexit hanging over us for how long? A year and a half? However long. I'm like, what I don't need to have is an entire collection that is all being imported from Scotland. As much as I love that, we need to diversify just in case that - not that that well is going to run dry, but if it gets complicated, let's have some other players in place.

And we were buying lots of prints from other vendors and I have this huge collection of antique fabrics and I was like, why don't I just make this myself? Which is probably half - that's the beginning of every business in America. Like, why don't I just do this? So I partnered with a couple artists who were interpreting and reimagining some existing patterns that I had, some antique fabrics, and so that started a small group of botanicals that now has grown into - I think we've bought maybe 30 or 35 digital linen prints of - again, it's mine, it's over-scaled, it's a little on the dramatic side, but that's kind of what I do.

Tobi: Yeah, and it's right up my alley. Huge plaids and chinoiserie and oh my gosh, it's awesome. So I think...

Scot: One of our chinoiserie patterns, like I said we lived in Japan when I was growing up and my mother collected antique chinoiserie fabrics, and so I just - they were destroyed by the time that she passed away but I was like, let's just hack this up and send some of these motifs to my artist and we'll just make a new pattern out of all of these fabrics that my mom collected when I was a little kid. So there's a great way of kind of honoring her memory and also bringing something - hopefully something new and different to market.

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Tobi: So I think I love all of this whole story, and I love that you're so - I mean, you said it when you started telling about moving to Colorado. You're just resourceful and you're willing to do the work and you'll put yourself out there even though you're an introvert. You'll go and make yourself famous or you'll pitch yourself or - none of that stuff - just because you're an introvert does not mean that you're not willing to put yourself out there. You just may do it in a little bit different way, but I love that. I even had a whole podcast about being an introvert with Rachel Cannon, which people just went crazy over.

But I think that what I want you to speak to for a minute is what is that - not just technically like, going and pitching yourself and you call up somebody and say I want to meet with you. But just that process of how you decide you're going to do something yourself and how you just start that process.

Because so many people would think well, I want to do that but I wouldn't even know where to begin. So is it just - was it your personal contacts? Did you just - do you Google things? Do you just make it happen? How do you go from I want to have that and I'm maybe either not famous enough or there isn't really - there aren't a lot of deals out there right now for people to get licensing agreements? How do you just start doing something on your own?

Scot: Someone once asked me what was the impetus of opening up my own design business and I really said it was a happy combination of arrogance and ignorance. I just blindly assumed I could do this. People do this so why can't I? There's also kind of a gentle mix of kind of ambition and competition, which is part of what affects me today. I'm like well, they did that. I could do that.

Or if we have this, let's do more. I love designing fabrics. I didn't know how much I loved it until I was right in the middle of all of it. We had so much fun working with the design team and the print team and it's the fact that I can sketch things or describe things or find vintage pieces that at some point in

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the future come rolling on a bolt in my office is the strangest and most delightful experience. I am never as kiddy as I am.

Tobi: Yeah, so I'm sure you're like me because I'm the same way. You just literally start talking to people. You just start having conversations and ask people you know. So you ask an artist or you ask someone who is in the fabric industry. You just literally piece it together to figure out how to make something work like that.

Scot: And yeah, there has to be - no matter what you want to do, someone that you know knows how to do it or knows someone who knows someone who's got a connection who's got a person who works at a mill and wherever. You have to kind of...

Tobi: Ask questions and not be afraid to...

Scot: Right, and let your own support group that you know so well, let them help you. You can't just struggle in obscurity and quiet.

Tobi: Or think I don't know that or I can't do that. I think that's the difference for those of us who go and create things or build things or make things, we literally don't - first of all, like you said, we don't know that we can't. We believe we can, so that's the first thing, and then we literally just start asking someone because that's how I was before I had my collection with Duralee, I made my own digitally printed fabrics and I just literally just started asking people questions. I'm like, I can do this. How did you do that? Where did you print that? What did that - I was on Google.

Scot: God bless Google.

Tobi: Yeah, and if you talk to enough people, somebody will say oh, I used this thing or this company or whatever and you're like sweet, I didn't know that. You get these nuggets and these gems of information of literally just I think having conversations. If you just have tenacity and you just believe you can make it work, and I know you so I know that's how you probably did a lot of that.

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Scot: We're doing a showcase house in High Point in October, which I'm very excited about. And so I just - couple weeks ago, I put out an email to a couple people who I knew who are designers like hey, do you have a receiver? Do you have a wallpaper hanger? I need an electrician. I need these people. Of course, they're going to help you. Of course, they're going to loan you a resource. You know, this is a great guy, he's really hard to schedule so make sure you get on his calendar immediately.

Just really - I think the design industry because it is so kind of localized and individual, I think whenever there's a chance for you to help someone else or be part of a community or solve someone else's problems, I've rarely not been bombarded with solutions by people that I've asked for help. I think that's part of our industry.

Tobi: I think that's changed for the better too since social media. I think pre-social media, a lot of people were kind of like, keep my sources closed and keep your eyes on your own paper. And not just social media but the internet. After there were no secrets anymore, I think everybody kind of like, well I can try to hide this but they'll just use image recognition on Google and about 30 seconds know where this came from.

So it took that whole proprietary piece away and I think - there was downsides to that of course, but I think there was a lot of upside to that as well because I think it started to make us more unified as a community and as an industry that wanted to help each other instead of us against each other. It kind of became like, we've got to help each other if we want to stay viable, if we want to grow, if we want to become progressive. So I've seen that change a lot in the last probably 10 years.

Scot: Yeah, there was a real paradigm shift right around 2010. That's when some of the digital design magazines first started coming out, which was a huge game-changer because things were getting published. Not lowercase published but uppercase published that could be live in four days after the photo shoot. Like, the gestation period got so much shorter for when you would photograph something as to when you would see it in print or online.

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So things were - it just kind of revved up the - it made the engine turn faster, possibly to its detriment because now you know, we're getting so much not fast fashion but fast design where you can have some sort of trend like, come and go in six weeks because everybody's seen it, everybody - it's like you know, they've turned into fruit flies instead of these long tortoises that took forever to turn into something.

Tobi: Right, that's funny. It's true though. Yeah, so let's talk a little bit about - you mentioned shop, or showroom, so you have your own showroom to sell your fabrics and other things. What's that like? Every single creative I know, interior designer or decorator that I've ever met has always dreamed of having a shop. I had one. I thought it wasn't all that I thought it would be. It was hard. My design business carried it, but yours is a little bit different because it's small and it's where you sell your fabrics from. So tell us about your shop and what kind of part it plays in the whole Scot Meacham Wood Interiors and fabric kind of house that you have.

Scot: So the dirty little secret about my shop, which is a dirty little secret if you don't understand it, people think I have a shop on like, a storefront on a street because of the way that it photographs. It's actually a showroom within the San Francisco design center. When we first moved in, I think it was about four years ago, it was just the office, and that's where the team worked. It was all desks and giant shelving units full of fabric binders and project files.

And about a year into my being here in the design center with our offices here, I had a chance - I built a little window out front. Like I changed sometimes because I used to do windows. It's what I do. It made me happy. And about a year into that, we had a chance to have a pop-up shop on Sacramento Street, which is a major kind of retail street out in Pacific Heights here in the city.

So we did this - and I just cobbled things together. I borrowed things from antique stores, I made pillows out of old fabrics, I just was like, I mean, you know, 500 square feet of merchandise and I needed it in a month. So we

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just cobbled it together. It was the cutest little shop. We tented the entire thing in blue gingham. It's adorable. And we had a great month. We did really good business in the shop. We did really great business in our e-commerce site just based on photography and just kind of being there in the churn of it all the time.

And I was like, well, I have almost 700 square feet at the design center. What if we just brought the shop back here? What would that look like? Where would we put everything? So we just closed the shop for almost six weeks to do some construction and just to move 10 years of files into a different space. And opened it up as the shop, as the studio, but here as a long-term thing.

Tobi: Love that you tried the pop-up shop too because that's such a current and trend forward and progressive kind of idea to try a pop-up shop. I love that you did that and that this is where your idea came from for the regular shop.

Scot: And it worked. And I have enough of a retail background to know like, I can set up a shop. That wasn't an issue. So just kind of playing with - and we got some good reactions from the public. They thought it was so cute, they all brought their dogs in every day. We serve tea every Thursday at four. We just started building all of these kind of social aspects to it, which we still do here in the showroom.

But I like dealing with the public. The public is a blast. Most of our kind of public interaction is through our e-commerce site. There's not that many people come into the proper studio just because we're in this building that looks like you can't come into even though you can. But it gives us a place to do photography. When we launched our wallpaper collection, they gave me 12 walls I could hang wallpaper on and show the collection off.

When we launched a kind of capsule furniture collection last fall, and we had been kind of endlessly buying antiques and recovering them and selling them and that kind of antique churn, and I'm like, let's just - what if we designed our own furniture? What if we just designed our own furniture?

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And I said that out loud one day. Who do we know? Who do we know that can make my furniture?

And got that deal put together and interestingly enough, we were talking to another vendor who was going to bring in pieces and that fell through and I got so mad I made my own collection. So that's - some of it's driven by anger sometimes but...

Tobi: Which is perfect, but I love that in so many ways, you're so rooted in tradition and everything we're talking about you doing is so progressive. I mean, yeah, the pop-up shop, you make your own collections, you figure - you get a no from somebody, you're like, we'll do it ourselves. And the photography and the social media, you've actually been very progressive pretty much in every part of this. And I like that and it does take money. It takes money. You can't do it for nothing. It takes money and time, right?

Scot: Right. And luckily my time is free. If I've got to spend all weekend putting stuff on Pinterest or loading stuff, I'll just watch TV and bomb through this.

Tobi: Let's talk about that because if you're putting your own stuff on Pinterest, which you are a lot of times, let's talk about that because that's the other thing that I think that people don't understand. They're looking at somebody like you and going like, oh my gosh, he must have a staff of 20 because he's got all these product lines and he has this shop and he travels everywhere and he does all these things, but you said you've tried big and small teams, and you really don't like a big team, right?

Scot: I don't. I really like - there was a point a decade ago that you would wake me from a dead sleep and ask me where the trim for the third pillow on the second sofa in the study, where is that, and I would know where every single piece was. And then we got a bigger team going and I didn't know that anymore. Not that that's good or bad, but I like - we're down to a smaller team again. We're probably a little too small. I think if we get one more good, spanking design project I'm going to need more manpower.



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Tobi: So are you two or three people?

Scot: We're three, and I'm running a lot of it myself. Just kind of because. I'm not a control freak but a control enthusiast.

Tobi: I love that. I'm going to get us t-shirts made that say that. That's perfect.

Scot: Control enthusiast. It's from an English comedian named Sara Millican who's hilarious so I need to give her props on that. I did not make that up. That's from Sarah Millican.

Tobi: Perfect. That's going to be my new motto. I'm a control enthusiast.

Scot: I remember someone - I think it was back in my old Polo days where I would just get all bent out of shape because things weren't where - things hadn't arrived when they were supposed to and we need to do this in the way it needs to be done and I don't like when the carpet gets here before it's supposed to and all this sort of nonsense.

And my manager pulled me aside, he's like, we're all brilliant and we can run with this. You don't need it to happen the way that you think it needs to happen for it to be okay, and I kind of learned that lesson - we're going to be here all night but it's going to be perfect when we're done and it's not - and you have to kind of let...

Tobi: There's more than one way to do this and it doesn't have to all be on your plan.

Scot: On your schedule. We need to have a schedule because it can't just all happen willy-nilly. But if something shows up a day later, then it goes in a day later and no one's going to die. It's just furniture. Usually people who are control freaks, control enthusiasts, their thing is they don't know how to respond when things aren't the way that they want. And he's like, you'll respond, you'll be fine. It won't matter. And I kind of let that go.

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Tobi: Yeah, that's true. And you have to be that way in design because there's so much stuff we don't control, even when we try to control.

Scot: Way too many moving pieces.

Tobi: So tell us how much - because this is what everybody always wants to know. So they think you have a giant team, you must because you're doing all this stuff, and then they're like, oh my gosh, there's only three people, so how much do you work? Do you work all the time? Do you take time for yourself? Do you take care of yourself? What does it look like? Do you work because you want to? Do you work because you have to? Both? What is that schedule?

Scot: I work because I have to. I work because this pays my mortgage. It's not a vanity job. When I first moved back in the dark ages when my office was like, the desk in my kitchen at my house by the beach, when we did a huge project, actually for that first family, when we did their big house in East Hampton, that financed me getting an office because there's too many pieces of paper and too much nonsense to have all in my house for me.

And when I first opened up the office, I told myself as I speak to myself very often, take everything out of the house that's the office. Not a printer, nothing. Because I'm like, when you come home, you're not going to work. You have to get up in the morning, get dressed, go to the office and work, and then come home and not be at that office.

Tobi: Okay, did that work?

Scot: Yes, I'm really very diligent about it. I, about a year ago dismantled the email program on my phone so I can't get emails on my phone.

Tobi: Wow, that's good.

Scot: So if I'm out, I don't know. Unless the studio burns down, like someone will call me.

Tobi: Exactly.

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Scot: So I've been very - a little more diligent about my not being at work time because I just need to spend time with Drew, I don't want to be home and just my head buried in the computer for four hours because I got to get stuff on.

Tobi: Not to say that we're old, but the older I get, if I work until bedtime, I can't form a sentence the next day.

Scot: Right.

Tobi: I'm like, my brain, it just shut down. It's like my phone when it no longer wants to work or my computer crashed. At some point, and I even think a lot of times I'll work today until 6:30 or 7 because I need to after work review some things that people have waiting on me, and then I start reading something at that time of day and I'm like no. I'm already done. I don't even know what that last paragraph that I just read even said.

Scot: I'm really good first thing in the morning. I often will leave things like, if I've got to do invoicing or math I'm like, I'm going to do that in the morning at eight o'clock when I'm bright and fresh. I usually - speaking of self-care, I do get not crazy about my workouts but moderately crazy about them because I have...

Tobi: You run.

Scot: Well, I've been running. I work out with a trainer during the week. We run at the stadium here in the park but he had to take the month of June off. He was working with a high school basketball team that was doing summer training, I don't know what all of it was. But he's like, I'm going to be gone for the month so figure something out. So I started swimming again, which I've not swam in probably a decade. So the last couple mornings, last two weeks, getting up every morning at 6:15, kind of in the pool by 6:45, swim for 30, 40 minutes and come back. I'm so much more refreshed.

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Tobi: They say that there's something really positive - I don't know how cold the water is, if it's cold or not, but there's something that's supposed to be really good about that whole cold water thing too in the mornings.

Scot: Yeah, and my hair is a mess but my skin is amazing, so that's...

Tobi: I get to see your adorable hair when you're walking to work and you have us on your Instagram stories and you're like, here's what's happening today and your hair is - I mean, you have great hair anyway, so now it makes more sense if it's like wet from your swim.

Scot: It's either swim wet or gel wet. Those are the two options.

Tobi: Okay perfect. I'll try to start paying attention to see if I can tell the difference.

Scot: And then on Saturdays I've been working out with an outdoor boot camp group. I started working out with them like, maybe in 2009. Maybe 2008.

Tobi: Yeah, I've seen you. Down by the bridge or like in the park or something?

Scot: We go to Baker Beach every Saturday morning and they have - and god bless those folks. God bless them, every one. They are probably some of my best friends in the world because we get - I used to workout with them during the week and then I had to give that up. So I still go to the Saturday class and after we get finished, we run like we're being chased by pterodactyls for an hour up and down the hills, up and down the beach, up and down the ladders. It's dreadful.

And then we all go to brunch, and we'll go to brunch at times for like, three hours and just - almost like pass the talking sticker around the table. And there's something about people who are actively trying to improve themselves and I think people involved in fitness are like that. That are just really fun, interesting people, so I've fallen into this little crowd and we just -

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they're some of my closest friends. I have many close friends in the design industry, but I'm glad that I have a really good group of close friends who just find immense and endless humor in what I do for a living.

Tobi: Yeah, they would really find it humorous if they really - I guess you do give them all the deets though. You give them the backstory.

Scot: Yes. They know a lot of it. They know all my customers.

Tobi: Well, that's so cool. Well, thank you so much for joining me today and I love getting - I mean, I know a lot about you already but I didn't know everything that we talked about today and it's so much fun, and thanks for sharing and just being open about that because I know - I try to bring guests to the podcast that are going to really help people understand how they do things and how they made stuff happen, and I know people will love all of these stories and just the permission to make your own path and not wait for someone to give you a deal or publish you or any of that stuff. You don't have to wait. You can make it happen. So I just appreciate all of that.

Scot: I sound so ambitious. I love this.

Tobi: Well, you really are and you always have been since I've known you, and it's kind of - we get so busy I think doing the things that we do that all of a sudden we turn around and we're like, oh my gosh, I accomplished a lot in those last 10 years. I was just kind of doing and all of a sudden - and that's how I feel about you when I look at you because I've known you and I've known you every step of the way.

But when you turn around and look back and you're like, oh my gosh, he has furniture collection, fabric collections, he has a shop, he did a pop-up shop, he's done all the social media stuff and all the times you've been published. I mean, it's a lot of stuff and it's amazing but I love to just remind everybody that like, a lot of that stuff really is just happening from one guy with an idea and some people that he surrounds himself with. It's not like, this can't happen for other people too. It's not...

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Scot: Absolutely. It's not like it's magic. It's just work.

Tobi: Yeah, hard work, but work still, and having the guts and the ambition like you said to go make it happen. So thank you for sharing that. I know so many people will be inspired and...

Scot: You're so welcome.

Tobi: And it's always lovely to talk to you and I can't wait...

Scot: I know. I assume I'll see you at High Point in October if not before.

Tobi: Yes, and get a hug and I'll get a couple of poodles and kittens while I'm there.

Scot: You'll get a total poodle.

Tobi: The other day I was listening to you on Instagram stories and you used one of the funniest ones I've ever heard and I don't even remember. It was like snuggle muffin or something, I don't know.

Scot: Oh god, what is that?

Tobi: It was hilarious. I was like, that is so Scot, I can't wait, I want to be called that.

Scot: I think it's noodle muffin. I have a couple of those. It's primping in the south for too long and this is something I'm admitting here. I am so horrible with names. I remember faces. I'll remember the name of a fabric from three decades ago, but I will not remember people's names. I'll remember that I've met them, that I've talked to them, so I have this little list of little diminutives like, I will just pull these up just to make sure that I can call you something that isn't the name that isn't yours.

Tobi: Well, that's really smart. And see, it's so endearing and people just think oh, he loves me so much, he just called me poodle and it's actually code word for I have absolutely no idea what your name is.

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Scot: My secret is out.

Tobi: I love it. Okay, well poodle, I loved having you here today and I can't wait to see you soon, and I know that our listeners will love it too so thank you so much for joining me.

Scot: You're so welcome. Love you too.

Tobi: Okay, see you.

Scot: Bye.

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Okay friends, is he not the cutest? He is the best and so sweet and I adore him as a friend, but also as a creative. He's done so many amazing things and I'm just so proud of him and how he has been really brave and resourceful and just created the life that he's wanted in the creative field that he's in. So I hope he inspired you today to go out and create the life that you want and the business that you want so thank you so much for listening to Scot and to me.

And you know what, if you really loved this episode or any of my episodes, would you take a minute and head over to iTunes and leave me a rating and a review? So you can just go to iTunes and search for the *Design You Podcast* and click on the little tab that says rating and review because I would not only love to get a rating but I would especially love for you to leave me a review in the form of a comment and tell me what you like, what episodes have been your favorite, what you want to hear more of because that's really how I know what's working and what's not working on the podcast here, and it helps other people know that they should listen to the podcast too.

So head over and do that for me, and thanks again for listening. I'll see you again really soon with another episode. Bye for now.

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