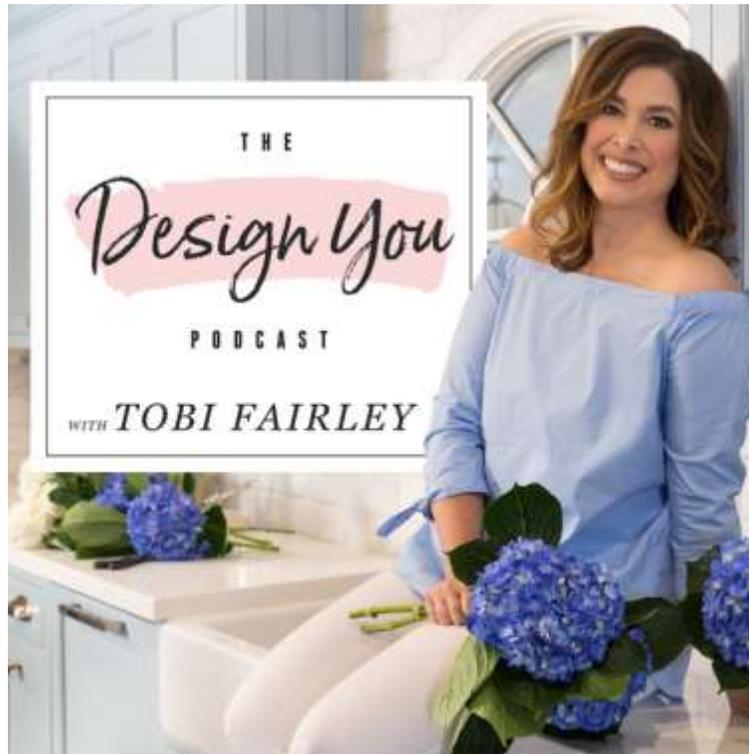


## Ep #102: Engineer Your Home to Spark Your Creativity with Donald Rattner



### Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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**Tobi Fairley:** You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 102.

**Female Announcer:** 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's your host Tobi Fairley.

**Tobi Fairley:** Hey, friends. How are you today? I am so good because it is getting to be springtime. As this recording is going live, we're like three days from daylight savings time here where I live in Arkansas, and I just can hardly wait for longer days, and warmer weather, and throwing up the windows for fresh air, and all the spring flowers, and all of the things that come with this time of year. That is something so exciting to me.

The other thing super exciting to me is today's episode. Today, I'm talking with Donald Rattner. Donald is an architect, and he has a recent book that's called *My Creative Space: How to Design Your Home to Stimulate Ideas and Spark Innovation, 48 Science-Based Techniques*. You know this is all up my alley because he's basically saying you can engineer your home to help you be more creative, to spark new ideas, and I absolutely agree with him.

Donald is all about helping individuals and organizations boost their creativity by drawing on the scientific research techniques that he has discovered out in the world of design psychology. So much fun. Little nerdy, super fun. The best of both worlds as far as I'm concerned. So, I hope you enjoy this episode.

When you're finished, I'll see you at the end and we'll talk about how you can go, not only get a copy of his book so you can know the 48 techniques because there's some really good ones in there, but also so you can start applying this stuff in your own home if you're ready to be more creative than ever. So, enjoy my conversation, and I'll talk to you in just a bit.

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**Tobi Fairley:** Hey, Donald. Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm so glad you're with me today.

**Donald Rattner:** Oh, thank you for having me, Tobi. I appreciate it.

**Tobi Fairley:** You're so welcome. Before we get started, I want you to tell everybody really who you are, what you do, what's important to you, because what you do and what I do are so related. What we're passionate about is really, really related and overlapping. So, tell everybody what that is and get them all on the same page with us before we run off with our conversation.

**Donald Rattner:** All right. So, I am an architect, but I would say I'm one with a somewhat unusual area of expertise, of interest, which is creativity and how we can use scientific research into the psychology of space to actually improve our creative task performance at home, at work, wherever by applying these findings to how we shape our physical space.

**Tobi Fairley:** I love that because I think so often we have sort of an intuitive understanding of what's possible with our homes or what's causing us issues, but there's something about having the credibility of the science behind it that makes us actually trust it at a deeper level. So, I think that's really amazing.

Is that from the path you took in architecture, is that from additional education? Where does all of that knowledge and the combination of the science and the architecture come together to give you this other level of understanding about the home and creativity?

**Donald Rattner:** Right. So, for many years, I practiced in the conventional, traditional way. I eventually rose to partner in a dozen-person firm and one of several partners in a 50-person firm, but at one point in my practice, I got a commission to do a modular project.

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Modular construction for everybody listening, is where basically a building can be constructed as a series of boxes in a factory, and then trucked to a site and lowered by crane one box after another. They're all bolted together. They come with walls, floors, ceilings. Very often, the wiring is in the wall, the plumbing is in the wall, there might be sheet rock finishes and so forth. Windows are in.

They kind of attach them to each other, finish them off on the outside, and voila, you have a building which from the outside you would think would be built in the traditional, conventional way, which is piece by piece. Anyway, this whole new way of approaching design and construction, just opened my mind to this big, you know, the million-dollar question. Well, what is creativity? Isn't that interesting? You can take different forms.

It's like the difference between say having a piece of paper and a box of crayons and you can draw whatever you want on that piece of paper, and say Legos where you're given these set of units that you have to create with instead of something that you made yourself.

So, long story is I dove into that big question, and for whatever reason, I started to come across a lot of these articles and scientific journal pieces that connected our physical environment with the psychology of creativity. As I kept coming across more and more of these findings, this research, I said, "Holy moly, there's a whole field here that I think my profession."

Certainly, as an architect, we did not get training in this area at all. It's totally missing, I think, in interior design as well. I just said, "You know, I think my mission now is to pull this together and be a bridge between the scientific community, which you know, talks a lot to each other, which is important, but also to folks like us who are either design professionals or creative professionals, and how we can use this information a practical and actionable way.

**Tobi Fairley:** Yeah, I love that. I love it even crossing over just to the consumer where anybody listening that's saying, "Yeah, I might be in the

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design profession, but I also am a person living in a house who is not feeling creative, who's feeling, overwhelmed, or clutter is causing me an issue, or that I have too many distractions," or all the things that we live with every single day.

I think as we get into it, it's going to be interesting to see, but I suspect it's probably beneficial not just to being creative, but to being probably focused, and productive, and profitable, and all the other things that I love to think about that are along the same line. For me, I come from an interior design degree, and an accounting degree, and a life coaching certification.

Interestingly enough, they kind of all do what you're doing as well. It's like the creative piece, the financial piece, and then the how I want to feel or how I need to feel to get some kind of result in my life that I'm looking for. That's basically what you're talking about, right?

**Donald Rattner:** Well, here's a great piece of news because what I have also discovered is that whatever kind of environmental cues, elements in our physical surroundings boost our creativity also happen to help our health and our happiness. They almost all lie on the same spectrum. So, whatever helps or hinders the one tends to do the same to the other two.

So, yeah, not only are you going to be more creative, but you're going to be healthier, and happier, and more productive, and all the good things that come from that, and to be aware of the things that might be causing some stress or downsides and so forth. You can deal with the both ends.

**Tobi Fairley:** Amazing. Okay. So, let's get into that discussion. Why do our physical surroundings really influence how we feel, and how we think, and how we act every single day?

**Donald Rattner:** Well, I think we have to dial back about 200,000 years when the first human beings, homo sapiens, that's what we are, appeared on the African Savannahs, as it is believed. Of course, what kind of

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environment are they living in? In a purely natural environment. There's no built environment, of course.

Really, what the whole story, or a large part of the story of evolution, is about is how do we as human beings survive and thrive in our environment, in our surroundings? Because there's no mediating elements, no mediating influences like we don't have a roof over our heads per se. We don't have heating, and air conditioning, and clothing, and insulation, and the steady supply of food. It's all about how do we adapt to our environment.

Through natural selection, and evolution, and hundreds and thousands of years, we've come to be very attuned to our environment, extremely sensitive to what's going on around us because, and here's the other part, even though we now spend about 90% of our time indoors, that has only occurred in the last 1% of our existence.

Because evolution moves so darn slowly, our brains haven't caught up to this fact. They think we're still out there on the Savannah out there by ourselves trying to live. So, we get all of these curious behavioral anomalies. We do things that would on the outside look very irrational, but nonetheless, are absolutely consistent with the idea that we're still trying to survive and thrive in a pure environment.

**Tobi Fairley:** Yeah, that's so interesting.

**Donald Rattner:** Really fascinating.

**Tobi Fairley:** I think about this a lot with regard to just our brain science in general, and the whole life coaching piece, and what motivates us to do things. Yeah, our brain still thinks we're running from a bear or a tiger, but we've actually just created that fight or flight with our thoughts and our feelings, and the way that we're showing up in a space, and that's what you're talking about.

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We don't have all the elements that we were having to deal with, but we also don't get all the benefits of the fresh air, and the sunshine, and the movement. We're not moving at all. We're sitting all the time, and we're on electronics all the time. I'm sure every piece of that is part of what you've studied and you talk about, right?

**Donald Rattner:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Tobi Fairley:** Yes.

**Donald Rattner:** Yes. Nature plays a huge role in a lot of the things that I've explored and that I've written about in the book. A really fundamental tenet for folks looking to create a more creative, healthier, happier environment is to bring nature in to restore that connection between inside and outside to as great a degree as you possibly can.

That could run from anything from obviously indoor plants to using natural materials. Even artwork that represents nature. We have found that human beings respond to representations of environmental factors as much as they do to the real thing. So, yes, restorative effect of bringing nature inside has a huge impact on our thinking.

**Tobi Fairley:** I love that. Okay. So, we spend 90% of our time indoors, which is kind of mind boggling.

**Donald Rattner:** Yes.

**Tobi Fairley:** If we guessed, we would probably say maybe 70% or 60%. We would not say 90%, and probably 90% of the 90% of the time that we're indoors is also spent sitting.

**Donald Rattner:** And sleeping.

**Tobi Fairley:** And watching Netflix.

**Donald Rattner:** Right.

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**Tobi Fairley:** Yeah, interesting. Okay. So, if we stay indoors all the time, then obviously, our environment is highly important. Not only do we stay indoors, so many people are actually staying at home now because there's a huge part of the population compared to not that many years ago working from home. I'm working from home. I don't know if you work from home, but that's the whole reason we don't ever go outside. We can go from our bed to our office, back to our bed, to the kitchen, and literally never leave the house.

So, that starts to make everything that we're surrounding ourselves with very important, and we have to start to become very, very intentional. How do we do that? How do we start to make our home this place where we thrive? As you write about in your book, which by the way, your book is called *Creative Space: How to Design Your Home to Stimulate Ideas and Spark Innovation*. So, getting us into that creative zone on demand if we want to or just boosting it all the time. How do we start to do that?

**Donald Rattner:** Well, by the way, I should mention the subtitle of the book is *48 Science-Backed Techniques*. I want to make sure that I keep reiterate that point that this material, as you started to say at the beginning, intuitive methods, things that you've done yourselves in the past, can be very useful. Of course, we wouldn't want to discard this, but what I've found is that going through the material, there are places where things are totally counterintuitive to what we might think is actually most conducive to productive activity, creative thinking, and so forth.

So, my first basic tenet would be, familiarize yourself with what's out there. The ideas that are out there, the kind of things that I talk about in the book, and then see, "Okay, which of them are applicable to me?" You don't have to do all 48 to gain benefits. They have found even instituting one or two can make a world of difference in people's lives. Then start to see what are relevant to your environment and so on and so forth.

We talked about bringing in nature, for example. There are a whole bunch of techniques that are tied to a really fundamental idea and an interesting

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relationship between how we think and physical space, which is that the more open expanse of we sense our surrounding space to be, think about how we talk, the more open-minded, open to new ideas, open to new ways of looking at things we tend to be, which of course, is some of the characteristics of creative thinking.

Whereas the more hemmed in, closed in, constricted we feel that space, the more close-minded we become, which is actually good when you're doing say your financial reports because you actually want to be very left brain, very analytical, very good at math. You want to know the right answers. So, that sense of space is actually beneficial to left brain type of activities. Whereas if you want to brainstorm a new idea, or a business proposition, or a scheme for a space, then you want to have that more open-minded sense.

How do you achieve some of these things without knocking down walls and things of that nature? Well, obviously, having openings to the outside is a very good way, of course, of expanding your sense of space. Even things like I see a lot of people, a lot of creatives, really, anybody, have a habit of taking their desk and budding it against a wall. They're looking right at the wall.

So, they're 24 inches away, 30 inches, whatever it is. Right away, your sense of space is compressed. Whereas if you turn that desk around and look into the room, look into the space, suddenly your sense of space is quite different.

Now, there are times, I know, when people have put a desk under a stair or into an alcove where you may not have the ability to look into the space, but then this is where having 48 different tactics, different techniques, can really come in handy.

For example, you could put a mirror on the back of that alcove or what have you so you're looking back into the space, opening up that sense of enclosure. You could use recessive colors, colors that look like they're

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receding like blues, cool colors. You could have artwork up there, as we've talked about. All sorts of techniques to make the mind think your space is bigger than it really is.

**Tobi Fairley:** I love, love, love every bit of that, and I think you're so right. For me, I intuitively knew, and I've even heard, that creatives are not great in a room with no windows, of course. So, a lot of times we get to a conference or a meeting space, and we're in this room with no windows. We're supposed to be learning, we're supposed to be brainstorming, and it's exactly the opposite of what you just said.

In the space that I'm in, I face out into my room, and I have a window in front of me and a window beside me, and they both look down this beautiful tree-lined street. You're exactly right. It feels almost like I'm in a tree house up here, which is so fun.

I use this room for my podcasting and an office. I also have a yoga space in here, but I intuitively know how I feel in those spaces and what's most productive for me, but I don't think most people are stopping to think about that at all. So, I love what you're saying. It's real common sense. They're not hard things to achieve. Right?

**Donald Rattner:** Right. Some of them are zero cost. Turning your desk around doesn't cost you anything per se. Bringing in some flowers or a plant, very low-cost things. So, a lot of this can be done with very simple means. Then, of course, if you're building new or you're renovating a space, then, of course, you have more opportunities still to bring things in. It's interesting you said about some people not necessarily being aware of these things.

I gave a talk some weeks ago about the book, and afterwards, a fellow came up to me and said, "You know what? I never could figure out why having my back to the space looking at a wall was bothering me, but it was. Now that you've talked about it and explained what's going on there, I'm

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suddenly more attuned to it.” So, making yourself aware of these kind of issues and factors really can change the way you think about your space.

**Tobi Fairley:** Well, and I remember years ago, when I was in college and back then we had one of those huge drafting tables like I'm sure you have. I had it against a wall in an apartment, and I used to remember not only would I feel really stressed, but I would feel a lot of eye strain.

I would notice that I would be so focused, and then when I looked up, I didn't have anywhere to look to. A wall was right in front of me too, and I was like, “This is fatiguing me.” It's probably more of what you're talking about right now. I was kind of considering it like my view, but it was really me feeling closed in, which is fascinating.

Well, a couple of things here. I also love that I thought at first you were saying, “Okay, open room, open-minded.” I was like, “Oh, no. Don't tell me we all have to have all open floor plans because those drive me crazy at times.” Yes, you want some open spaces, but it became such a trend a few years ago to just knock out all the walls, which I think is not always the best solution for a lot of reasons.

Everything from being able to see visual clutter, and there's no noise control, and all the things that we know that come with that. So, I love that you went on to say, “Yes, you want some open spaces, and yes, you want some closed spaces, and there's a reason to have both.” Walls aren't a dirty word, and it's not about living in one huge, open loft. It's about understanding the types of spaces you have and what purpose you use them for.

**Donald Rattner:** Exactly, exactly. You do want to sense some enclosure, especially in the home because the home is meant to be a safe harbor, a place of refuge, and that's very important. Interesting fact, which is we tend to actually be our most creative at home. One of the reasons we are is because we have the sense of autonomy, of freedom, of being in control of our own environment.

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Because think about creative risk-taking, whether you're starting a new business or trying something that hasn't really been vetted or tested yet, you're putting yourself out there a little bit for failure, for ridicule, for getting shot down. Whether this is in a workplace or at home, but at home, by having that sense of being within your defined space, gives you that relaxed mindset that is absolutely necessary for creative undertake.

**Tobi Fairley:** Oh, that is so good. I tell a story a lot that before I moved my office back home about three or four years ago when we renovated our home, I had had an outside office for 17 years. At one point, I had 12 employees. I do now, but they're all virtual.

At that time, I had in a physical space, and I had the 6,000 square foot, foot space, and I would find myself every day going, "Oh, my gosh. I would literally pay someone like \$1,000 if I could just stay home today, and work, and not feel like I had to leave my bed, or like not be able to sit by the fire with a cup of tea," because I know that was when I felt most productive, most creative.

I love that you're validating that because I'm always telling people. Not that everybody needs to work from home, but I think there's a lot of benefit to working from home depending on how you design and control some of the distractions and issues in the home. I love knowing that there is actually information that backs that up because that's very much been true for me. So interesting.

So, what about the counterintuitive ones? You alluded to the fact that there are a few that we would really be surprised about and that maybe we're all doing some things wrong. Are there two or three key ones that we really need? Of course, we're going to pick up the book because we want to have all 48, but what are some of the most surprising that maybe even surprised you that have really changed the way you use your space?

**Donald Rattner:** Yeah, there are a couple of goodies here. First one I had mentioned has to do with shape. They've actually done a series of studies,

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series of experiments, and this is the way this is typically works. They'll set up a condition in a space, and then they'll bring in a whole group of subjects, people, who then generally, or at least in a laboratory environment in a university setting, will take a series of creativity assessment tests, as they're called. We probably have taken them ourselves.

If you have any kids or you yourself have ever applied for a gifted and talented program. Those kind of tests are actually designed to measure creativity. So, they run, 30, 50 whatever the number is, people through in that space, and then they change something about that space, and then they run a fresh group of people through and give them the same exact exercises and evaluate the scores with the two groups.

What they invariably find is that some environmental inputs, or what I call design triggers, will actually boost creative thinking for one group and may boost analytical thinking, that left brain thinking, for another depending. So, getting back to all that, they actually studied the difference between rounded, curved shaped furniture and furniture that tends to be more rectilinear, more straight lines, and crisper.

What they found was that the exposure to rounded furniture tended to boost creativity, creative task performance. Whereas exposure to the more rectilinear, the straight lines, the sharp corners, tended to improve analytical thinking.

First of all, why would this have any impact on us? Second, why that particular impact? By the way, they also did the same for the shape of the space itself. So, spaces that are rounded, circular have a lot of curves and bends, produced the same effect as the findings with the round furniture and the same with more boxy spaces.

**Tobi Fairley:** Interesting.

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**Donald Rattner:** So, here, we got to go back another couple of hundred thousand years and think about nature. There aren't that many straight lines and sharp corners in nature, but the ones that are out there, they tend to hurt. You think of like the incisor teeth on a wolf, or the straight row of teeth, or thorns, or rock outcroppings with straight edges. They all hurt.

So, the theory is that human beings who realized, "Oh, back off when you see things that are straight, and pointed, and come to corners," they survived. Whereas those who didn't get it, they died off. So, it's the gene pool of those survivors, of course, that we carry within us. We have a negative reaction. We back off. We get a little bit stressed, a little bit trepidatious, in the presence of very straight dominated environments and furnishings.

So, we shift into that protective, left brain analytical, logical mode because that's the best way we're going to get out of our predicament. Now, of course today, no piece of furniture is ever going to hurt us, but nonetheless, we have that deep down, emotional, intuitive reaction that nudges us into a mindset that may not be more conducive for creativity.

Another one I love is the question of sound, of noise. If you ask most people, you walk down the street and ask them, "So, what's your ideal noise level in a creative environment when you're trying to get something done?" I think most people would probably say, "Oh, well, quiet, of course. Isn't that just the best for getting stuff done?"

Not according to the research. According to the research, there's a sweet spot. It's about 70 decibels where creativity peaks. Just to give folks a point of reference, if you walk into your local coffee shop or Starbucks on a moderately busy day, and people are chattering, and doing stuff, and talking on the phone, that's about 70 decibels. It's also about what your shower is probably registering at.

So, this is totally counterintuitive because we all think quiet has got to be the best, but there is some possible explanations. One of which is that

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having a little bit of background noise, and that's key. It has to be unintelligible white noise in the background. You're not really listening to it, but it's just enough to take some edge off your focus.

Focus is that heads down work, that analytical work. Whereas creative you want your brain to sort of wander, and be a little dreamy, take a big picture view beyond focus, or as the scientists like to say, defocused of that bit of noise, just enough to nudge us into a creative mindset.

**Tobi Fairley:** I love, love, love all of what you just said. Some things that stuck out for me, especially thinking about the rounded spaces, I also think a lot of us feel creative when we feel inspired or when something's beautiful, and I think a lot of things we see in nature are not straight. The mountains, the horizons, the trees, the rolling hills. All of those things definitely are more undulating or curved.

So, I can see that connection, and I find it fascinating that the trend right now in everybody's home is boxy, straight, modern, clean-lined furniture, track arms on the sofa, all very clean and simple, which is interesting. Then we're like, "I just don't feel creative. I don't know. I don't know why. Everything is painted gray. I don't know."

I know what I think about gray, and the color psychology of gray, and what it does for you, which is not inspiring, and it doesn't boost your mood, and it doesn't make you excited. So, we build these gray boxes that we think looks sleek, and cool, and say something about our ego, and then we're wondering why we're not getting the results.

**Donald Rattner:** Time to row the other way.

**Tobi Fairley:** Exactly. I love the noise conversation because when I talk to other people, I've had this exact conversation with people who are saying, "Well, I just don't feel like I can really work effectively in my house." I'm like, "Well, where do you feel like you work the most effectively?" They always say Starbucks. Everybody likes Starbucks.

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**Donald Rattner:** Exactly.

**Tobi Fairley:** I think it's probably that there's a home environment there, that there's that noise factor. I love that you pointed that out. I think for me, also when it's less quiet, just a little bit less quiet, you don't feel quite as vulnerable in a sort of way. It adds like a coziness and like nobody is listening or watching what you're doing. You can be a little incognito, and when it's completely quiet, I think it feels the opposite of that, which is interesting. Those are both really, really good.

So, what do people, besides getting the book, what do they need to do to start moving in this direction? Does it start with awareness? Does it start with deciding what they want? Does it start with deciding what they don't think feels right about their home? How do they move through a process of starting to change this?

**Donald Rattner:** I think we're all united by common goals. We want to be more creative, we want to be more productive, we want to be successful in our business and our personal lives. Of course, I think that's fairly uniform. So, if you want to think about your environment, I would do personal, sort of self-assessment of your space and really think about, "Okay, what's working for me and what isn't?" Really try to be conscious of places in the course of the day or in type of task you might be undertaking where you feel like you're rowing against the tide here. You're trying to climb a hill. Start to write down some of these things, and then think about, "Well, what happens if I turn my desk around, or I change my paint color from gray to blue and green?" By the way, those are the two colors that the research shows does boost creativity. Start thinking about alternating some of those conditions to the extent that you can do what's called AB testing. So, you compare one set of data to another, and then do some research. If you want to get my book, that's great, but there's a lot of stuff on the internet. Just say, "What kind of colors boost creativity, or what kind of ceiling heights? How low ceiling heights influence creativity." They've even done

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studies on that. Just try to dig into it. As I say, making a few changes, one or two or three, can make a huge difference.

**Tobi Fairley:** Yeah, it's so, so good. Okay. Well, anything else people need to know before they get started on this? Anything we forgot? Any of your favorite nuggets or things that you want to leave everybody with because I think this is so fascinating? It's exactly in line with everything I believe. I love now that I can say, "And I'm backed by science." All my intuition is now backed by science, and I knew it was to a degree. Anything else that you want to leave everybody with?

**Donald Rattner:** Well, just because I think the kind of folks who listen to your show, Tobi, I think already realize it, but beauty as a concept we tend to think of, "Okay, that's a nice thing to have," and we enjoy it, but that's kind of the end of it. Well, here again, this research has shown us some interesting things. They actually did a fascinating experiment.

It was a fellow named Abraham Maslow. People might recognize this kind of father of positive psychology back in the 1950s. You don't hear about this particular experiment as much as you do as some of his other works. He ran this fascinating study where he had three rooms at the university where he worked, and he decorated one actually with his wife as apparently an amateur designer, and she decorated one as what they called the beautiful room. It lived up to its reputation. Nice furniture, floor coverings, window shades, very nice space.

They did a second room they called the average room, and that was the kind of furniture you would take out of the university stock rooms. Perfectly okay, but nothing special one way or the other. Then they did a third room, which they called the ugly room. That was down in the basement, and it had torn mattresses, and broken furniture, and unemptied ashtrays.

Once again, what they did was to send in students to take these kinds of tests, these thinking tests, in each one of the spaces. So, obviously, the environment plays a huge difference. Even though they're looking at

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exactly the same material, what they found was that people came out of the beautiful room in a much more positive frame of mind, and being in a positive frame of mind means you're going to be more creative, means you're going to be more productive. For obvious reasons, you're much more motivated.

Whereas the people, and this is where it gets really interesting, in both the average and ugly rooms scored low or very close to each other, which is to say that it's not enough just to be average in your space to really strive for something that is exceptionally beautiful. There's also a practical reason, which is that you're going to want them to spend more time in it.

You're going to want to spend more time in your workspace, in your creative space, in your idea space. You'll go there again and again, and you will reap the benefits of it. So, beauty is not just a kind of gloss on top of which we layer our design inputs, but something really integral to our environment.

**Tobi Fairley:** Oh, I love that so much. Well, first of all, I just love that you validated so much about the way I love to live today. You basically just gave credence to my whole hotel snob philosophy because if we're going to travel. I think about when we travel maybe with a group for my daughter's volleyball team and we stay in kind of an average or not so average hotel. I'm like, "I can't do it. I just can't."

I don't even enjoy the weekend. I wish I would've much rather been in my own home, which was so beautiful versus spending the money to be in a space where I feel inspired. It actually changes me. Of course, I know I'm creating those feelings with the thoughts I'm thinking about the space, but how do you not think those thoughts, especially if you've been exposed to beauty and you know how it feels.

So, I love that you're giving validation there and giving people permission to think that it's important to spend some money on some things that really are going to be in their space because so often, that's not where we're

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spending money. The things that really matter, getting a good night's sleep, feeling inspired and seeing beautiful things every day. I can absolutely attest that it makes a huge, huge difference.

**Donald Rattner:** Yeah, absolutely. It has what you would call a high ROI, a high return on investment. For the money and the resources that you do put into that effort, you're getting back that much more, I think.

**Tobi Fairley:** Yes. Just an added note, we renovated our home about three or four years ago, and I've talked about this some in relation to this same type of information. When we bought our house, I was going to renovate like six months later, and I got really busy. I signed three or four national product lines. I went to work doing other things.

So, two and a half years later, we renovated this very dated house that I had accidentally lived in for two years. Looking back on the toll it took on me, I was almost embarrassed to say like, "This feels kind of really silly and almost like I'm just a spoiled little brat who doesn't like to live in ugly, dated paint colors or a kitchen that didn't work."

Then I started digging into it, and I was like, "It actually mattered that I literally went through some depression during that time, and seeing dirty, stained carpet that needed to be replaced, or feeling embarrassed to have people over." It literally took a toll on me.

After the renovation, it was so interesting to see the difference. So, again, I love that you're giving me permission to be absolutely as invested in spending money on my environment as I ever believed it was important. Thank you for that. That's just a little nugget of, again, I've lived a lot of these things as actual case studies, and it's been so true.

**Donald Rattner:** Yeah, absolutely. It's interesting in terms of your state of mind because what they also found in the Maslow experiment I just mentioned, the proctors, the people who administered the tests, those who had to deal with the ugly room down in the basement, they actually were

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observed to become much more irritable, much more snappy and anxious, which they had not even intended to look at. That was just people who were ushering the kids in and out of the space.

**Tobi Fairley:** That's so fascinating. Okay. Well, thank you so much for sharing this very, very valuable information. Whether you're a creative or not, especially if you're not a creative professional, you may not know how to do this for yourself. All the more reason why this is very important to you, and I think they'll want to run out and get the book or do a little research online, like you said, because they're probably holding themselves back in ways they can't even imagine. Some small tweaks can make such a difference. Yeah.

**Donald Rattner:** Exactly.

**Tobi Fairley:** Okay. Well, thank you so much for being here, and I look forward to continuing this conversation. We'll see what kind of great questions we get out on the internet, on social, and maybe we'll have to have a part two sometime soon.

**Donald Rattner:** Wonderful. Thank you for having me, Tobi. I enjoyed it.

**Tobi Fairley:** You're so welcome. Okay, pretty cool. Right? So amazing that we're learning all of these techniques here on *The Design You Podcast* of how to just create the life we want, the home we want, the results we want, the mindset we want. Seriously, there is nothing that is outside of our reach anymore when we are this intentional about the way we live and the way we show up.

So, I hope that you loved this episode. Everything we talked about with Donald will be all in the show notes. You can figure out how to get this book. We'll be talking about it, of course, all over Instagram. Let me know what you think because I think it's really, really cool, and I'm starting to try some of these techniques in my own home. I'll report back soon and let you know how they work.

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Oh, and by the way, if you loved this episode, or our 100th episode, or any of the recent episodes, I would love, love, love for you to head over and give me a rating and a review on iTunes. Search for *The Design You Podcast*, click ratings and reviews, and let me know what you think. I hope you give me five stars and tell me all the details about everything you love, everything you've learned, and everything you want to hear more of.

So head over to iTunes. I can't wait to read everything you have to say about *The Design You Podcast*. I'll see you again right here next week with a really cool episode that's also very related to the home. You'll have to show up to find out what it is, but we're going to have a lot more fun with this idea of making your best self come to light with the things you do in your home. So, I'll see you next week. Bye, for now.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. If you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life thing you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program, [designyou@tobifairley.com](mailto:designyou@tobifairley.com).