

'Psyche up' before trying to redecorate the home

By Barbara Mayer
All News/features
staff writer

When you're ready to redecorate, don't put yourself at the total mercy of an interior designer — even if you think you don't have a creative bone

In your body.

"Don't say I am not creative, so I can't decorate my own home. Say I'm not sure, but I will try," said Professor Morris Stein, a psychologist at New York University who specializes in human creativity. Stein said there is no proof that

creativity is an innate quality or a learned skill, but it is known that motivation is a powerful stimulus. Therefore, get moving: act as if creativity can be increased. It might awaken what is there or add to your store.

Stein said you can get your creative juices flowing by starting with a metaphor. Inventors often use metaphors in their quest for something new. The metaphor of the human liner car ultimately led Alexander Graham Bell to the telephone. The Wright Brothers studied buzzards before coming up with the airplane.

Some metaphors liken the home to a castle, palace, museum, cave or shell. A room suggested by the opulence of a castle is going to be quite

different from that suggested by a cave, a dark refuge.

The metaphor of a cave might be translated into a bedroom with low light levels, enveloping window coverings and a bed draped in fabric and piled with pillows.

PEOPLE WHO spend most of their time and energy away from home might prefer the impersonal surroundings like those found in a first-class hotel — comfortable yet easy to care for.

For some, home is a place where worldly success can be reflected with possessions on display, rich fabrics and plenty of room for entertaining.

Stein made use of a metaphor when he designed his weekend home.

"I grew up in a tradition in which the kitchen is warmth and family," he said. "So I can feed 20 people in my kitchen."

He said the kitchen is the social center of his home. When friends come for dinner, they pitch in and help with the cooking because the kitchen encourages working together while socializing.

Creativity is enhanced by knowledge, so in addition to metaphoric thinking, Stein advised exploring the marketplace.

"Let your looking stimulate you to write down ideas," he said.

Another way to stimulate the imagination, he said, is to change a noun into a verb.

"Don't think about the bedroom — a static concept. Instead, think of bedroom, kitchening, dining and instead of a shower, think of the meaning of showering."

For example, if the meaning of showering is rejuvenating, you will naturally be led to think of whether controls are in the right place and if there should be more than one shower head.

Not only should spaces and furnishings support your specific activities, you should also try to involve all the senses in your design. Too of-

ten, people emphasize the visual and auditory senses and minimize touch and smell. Very few people pay attention to the kinesthetic sense, which is the body sense that operates when you sit in a chair and it feels good, said Stein.

STEIN'S VIEWS on creativity are shared by Ted Pappas, a decorator from Westport, Conn., who has been teaching decorating skills for about 14 years.

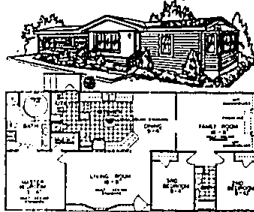
"Everyone has an innate sense of style and design about what they like," Pappas said. "Some have to work a little harder and others are more adept, but anyone can learn how to decorate a home better."

As an instructor in adult education courses in interior decorating at the New Canaan YMCA, Pappas covers how to lay out a floor plan, window treatments, furniture styles, how to combine furniture and accessories from more than one period and how to shop.

To help students understand what he calls their well-formed but unarticulated personal tastes, he has them create a picture book of colors, room arrangements and furnishings they like.


"You would be amazed at how different each individual is," he said.

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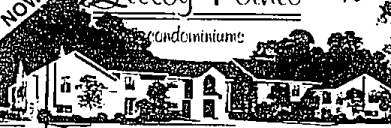
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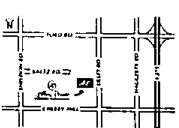
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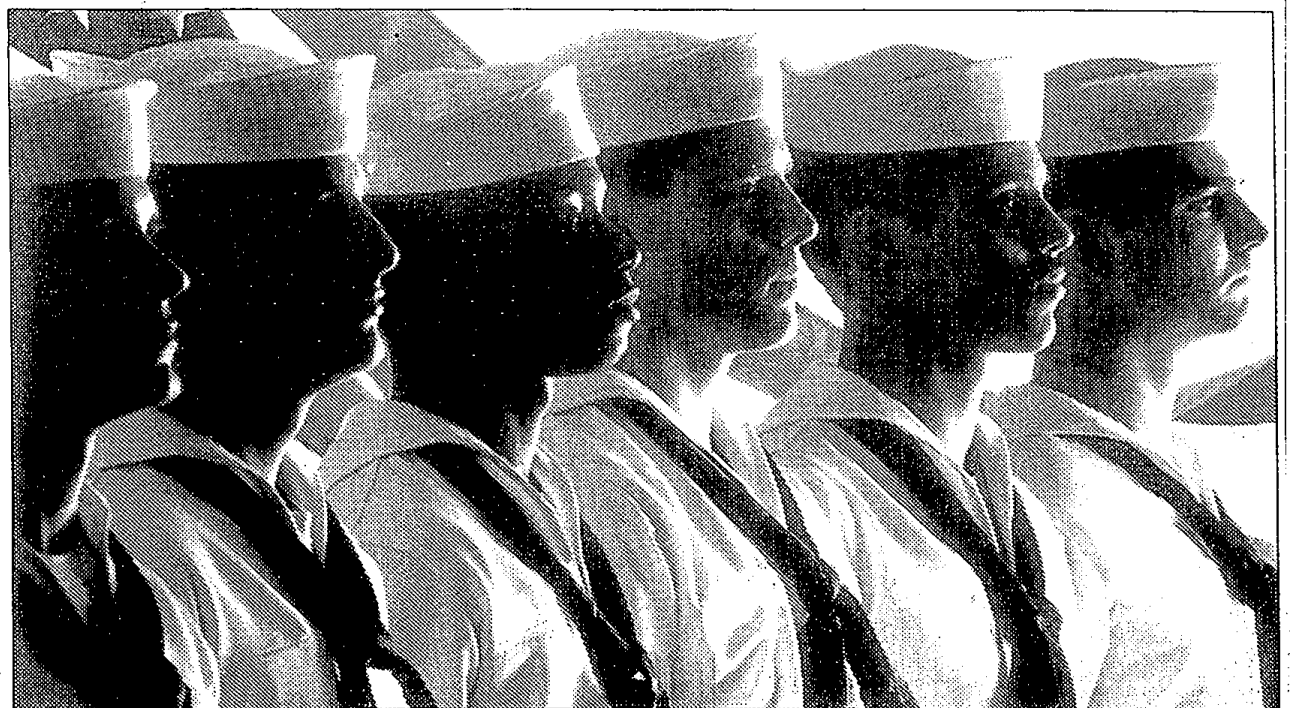
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