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# David Oakey Heralds the Return of Nature in the Workplace

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With more than 54 percent of people in the world living in urban areas and the majority of us now spending close to 90 percent of our lives indoors, it's little wonder we long for nature and the outdoors.

For some time, research has been pointing to the link between bringing the outdoors indoors or natural-inspired working environments and employee productivity and engagement. Yet for some period of time, many high profile work spaces themselves didn't support the findings.



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“Interiors became dominated by very bright, vibrant colors and open spaces,” said David Oakey, principal of David Oakey Designs (<http://davidoakeydesigns.com/%20>) and head of product design for Interface (<http://interface.com/>) . “There’s a ‘wow’ factor there, which is what we thought was needed to attract and retain sought after young talent. But we went too far.”

Long an advocate of biophilic design (<http://humanspaces.com/%20>) , Oakey believes what people seek and even need in their workplaces are design palettes that mimic savannah earth tones: “These are the colors people feel connected to over sustained periods of time.”

But Oakey hastens to add that color is not receding from the workplace entirely—nor should it. When the impact of color is fully understood—such as the calming effect of pink and the stimulation of yellow—using it judiciously or for areas with specific purposes can create flexibility and variation in a space.



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Oakey sees further momentum in the return to nature as inspiration and connection beyond color and into form, pointing to the resurgence of two iconic chair designs as examples—Hans Wegner’s Round Chair and Naoto Fukasawa’s Hiroshima Chair—each with almost bare, natural wood finishes and distinctly simple curves that mimic branches or the curve of tree trunks.

As for Oakey’s own work, his passion is thematically evident in three of his hallmark collections for Interface— Near & Far ([http://info.interface.com/new-collections?newsletter=interiordesignem0915#near\\_far](http://info.interface.com/new-collections?newsletter=interiordesignem0915#near_far)) , inspired by the driftwood and stone of Big Sur; Equal Measure ([http://info.interface.com/new-collections?newsletter=interiordesignem0915#equal\\_measure](http://info.interface.com/new-collections?newsletter=interiordesignem0915#equal_measure)) , echoing the common cobblestone seen around the world; and Narratives (<http://info.interface.com/new-collections?newsletter=interiordesignem0915#narratives>) , with inspiration from Asian Zen design.



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