Hi. I'm Mauro Porcini, PepsiCo's chief design officer.
Join me for our new series where we dive into the minds of the greatest innovators
of our time with the goal of finding what drives them in their professional journey
and in their personal life, trying to uncover the universal truths
that unite anyone attempting to have a meaningful impact in the world.
This is In Your Shoes.
"People think that design is styling....
Design is not style.
It's not about giving a shape to the shell and not giving a damn about the guts.
Good design is a renaissance attitude that combines
technology,
cognitive science,
human need,
and beauty to produce something that
the world didn't know it was missing."
I'm quoting the guest of today.
She's an Italian author, editor, and curator.
She's currently
the Senior Curator of the Department of Architecture and Design
as well as the director of R and D
at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City,
and she curated numerous shows,
lectured worldwide,
served on architecture and design juries,
taught at multiple universities
and received honors including the Art Directors Hall of Fame
and the 2015 AIGA Medal,
and was rated as one of the most powerful women in art by Art Review
and Surface Magazine.
Paola Antonelli, welcome to In Your Shoes.
- Thank you, Mauro. Thank you.
And Paola, in full disclosure, is also a very good friend.
- Yes. And it's kind of hard to speak in English in this podcast,
but we'll do our best. We can use our accents and just make it...
It's a video podcast, so we can...
- Yeah, yeah. - ...use our hands as well.
- Perfect. Okay. Good. Yay.
But, so, actually, let's start from that. We're both Italians.
- Yeah. - We both come from the province.
I come from Varese. You come from Sassari.
I don't come from the province. I come from Milan, honey.
- Well, but you... - Yeah.
- ...were born or family... - I was born in Sassari...
But I'm Milanese. I was born in Sassari, and I'm very proud to be Sardinian,
but I was there because my father was a university professor and a surgeon,
and so he had been sent to Sassari at that time,
and so I was born there very, very proudly.
- And when did you move back to Milan? Right away?
- Well, after two years in Sassari, we moved to Ferrada,
which is a great city near Bologna, and, we lived there for five years,
and my sister was born there, and then we moved back to Milan.
- How did you end up, then, in the United States?
Well, you know, I like to say that I never really made a decision,
it all happened, and it's true.

You know, the only decision that I truly made was to switch,
at some point I was at the Bocconi, I was doing economic and social disciplines,
and I switched to architecture. That was the only decision.
But then things happened really organically,
and I moved to the United States
because I was working on the International Design Conference in Aspen.
It was an issue, it was an episode that was about Italy, it was 1989,
and when I got to Aspen,
you know, there was the [AV?] guy that was a surfer from Malibu,
and so I started going to L.A.,
and nothing ever happened with the guy,
but I started teaching at UCLA, so it all happened very organically.
And, for about three year I was going back and forth between Italy and California
and then I got the position at MoMA, so I moved to New York.
How did it did it happen?
an-an ad in a magazine, something that to Italians is impossible to comprehend.
I saw an ad in a magazine, and I sent my application.
- Oh, really? - Yes, sir.
- I didn't know this part of the story. - Yes, absolutely.
I knew already the curators at MoMA because I had interviewed them for Domus,
but
I had no experience in museums,
I [hadn't?] curated exhibitions before, but, you know,
it was truly
answering an ad in a magazine.
- And why do you say that it's weird for Italian to consider this?
What is unique to America from that standpoint?
- Well, I don't know if it's unique to America. It might be unique also elsewhere.
But, there was no recommendation.
There was no previous knowledge,
or acquaintance, or, like, groups of friends,
or, like, a clique, or a clan,
or a court,
which is usually what happens a lot in Italy in,
And I'm-I don't mean to put down Italy, but
that's why when I say to Italians, most Italians are surprised.
Granted, sometimes also Americans, but
it's really,
it was based not only on merit.
It was truly the person that hired me, Terry Riley, that had a lot of guts
because I had never worked in a museum before,
I did not have a PhD, I had only Masters.
You know, it's... in architecture, not in-not-not in history.
So it was really he took a chance.
- What was your first project at MoMA?
- The first project, I was hired in '94, and,
the very first project was an exhibition that happened in '95
that was entitled Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design.
The idea behind it was something that you know very well in your field.
Up until the '90's, most designers, and architects, but especially designers,
had to accept as materials whatever was offered to them by the chemical industry
or by, you know, the timber industry, so there was no way to kind of customize,
and right around that time, with the advent of composites and with new resins
that could cure at ambient temperature, all of a sudden,

designers themselves could design the material.
So it was really about moving the center of gravity of the design process
further up, you know,
a monte. You know, so it was really powerful,
and, I wanted to show how design was changing because of that.
So it was an exhibition that was divided in groups of materials,
you know, I had plastics, glass, ceramics, wood,
so the way you would imagine it,
and it was showing objects that were
either made with innovative materials
or that were using old materials in an innovative way.
- It was a very inspiring exhibit and...
- Oh, you saw it? - well, I...
...didn't see the exhibit,
but I'm gonna tell you a story that probably I didn't. I never told you.
In 1998, I was in Dublin studying at the International College of Art and Design...
- Ah, nice. - ...and it was, you know,
I was coming from Polytechnical, this big university.
- Yep, which I went to. - That one... Yeah, exactly.
So that one was a pretty small one, very small classes,
and this-I remember one day like it was yesterday, but for real.
I walk in the room, and there was the book of-you write...
- Yeah. - ...sitting there.
That's how I met you, virtually, for the...
- That's so nice. - ...first time.
- Yeah. - And I was fascinated by the cover,
by the title mostly, and...
...and I started to look at the book, and I learn about that exhibit,
about you, in that way. So...
- Oh, that's nice. - ...that was my first contact.
- Yay. - And then, later on,
one main [contact?] that you're aware of this time
is you had been-you work on another exhibit. Master...
- Humble Masterpieces. - Humble Masterpieces.
- Yes - And back then I was working at 3M,
the company of Post-it. Post-it was one-
- Post-it Notes... - Yeah
- ...were one of the products there.
But that exhibit is very close to my heart because, in a way or the other,
I found myself working all these years in products
that somehow are humble, are not, you know, high design, uh...
- Well, they are high design.
- But in a complete... - ...because...
- ...different way. - Yes, exactly.
They're not in the traditional definition of high design...
- Yeah. - ...but the definition that you have
- and that I have... - Yeah
- ...of high design. - Yeah.
- Can you tell me more about your point of view on this?
- Well, first of all, I just wanna tell you something funny about the Post-it Note,
because right now there's,
MoMA just published on the magazine a special article about the Post-it Note,
and it ends [LAUGH] with a picture that I took many years ago for an official,
I think it was Business Week, in which I am basically wearing,

as if it were a Pierre Cardin, all the Post-it Notes.
It's very funny. From 2005 or '03. I don't know.
So, it's hilarious.
But...
So my philosophy is this.
what could be more valuable than to make
a masterpiece that can be acquired,
bought, used by as wide a number of people as possible?
And that is elegant, and useful,
and
you can relate to it.
You know what I'm saying? That's, to me, the highest form of design.
It's very easy to make a curly Q chair, you know?
And to may-to ask 50 thousand dollars for it.
It's much harder to make something that costs one dollar.
So that particular exhibition,
which was called Humble Masterpieces of Design and Humble Masterpieces,
had, of course, the Post-it Note, but it also had-it had the aluminum can,
without PepsiCo on it, but it had the aluminum can.
It had jellybeans and M&M's.
It had, just
these gorgeous objects.
It had, the Chupa Chups. I mean, it had a lot of food also,
and the BIC pen, and the BIC lighter.
So all of these objects that are part of everybody's life,
and they're so ubiquitous that you don't even see them anymore,
but when you think about living without them,
they leave a hole.
- Yeah - You know? So
that's, to me, the most valuable design that there is,
- and... - Do you think
there is more awareness today about the role of design
both in the desi-... There are two communities.
The design communities, does the design community realize
what we can do, the potential we have?
And then there is the business community.
- Yes, there is more awareness, but it's not yet
really intuitive,
and, see, that's the problem. So...
It also depends on the culture. So if you go to
Italy
there is an awareness of design, but it's very much about style.
You know well because you've dealt with Italians.
There are these great companies that I'm so proud of and that do wonderful work,
but they always have to talk about luxury.
They always have to talk about, between quotes, made in Italy.
And it's a place where you have companies like Bialetti in the mocha,
or Alessi that has a line that is in all bars all over the world.
So they're very powerful in Italy about humble masterpieces,
but the humble masterpieces are a little bit hidden.
They only wanna show the so-called luxury items.
Then you go to the UK.
There's a lot of awareness of design,
and in a way, it's more towards engineering and that kind of innovation,

so they're very proud of their cars... well,
so are we, but they have a different kind of, attitude.
so are we, but they have a different kind of, attitude.
When it comes to the United States,
you still have to really pack it-package design
for the business community.
you have to show examples like PepsiCo. You have to show examples like Apple.
You have to show exam-like 3M.
You have to tell them design is important for business.
They do not accept design as a cultural value
that is essential to the destinies of society.
You have to filter it through business.
And my ambition, it's always been that way ever since I came here,
is to make design normal. You know, Inormal.
And that's... Sorry, I'm talking too much, but...
...you know, every country or every place has a strength.
So if you come to New York, it's contemporary art.
I came here; I had no clue.
I had studied architecture at the polytechnical like you.
We stopped at data. After data, there was nothing.
And all of a sudden, I come here, and even my friend's son who was, like
three and a half, four, received children's galleries' invitations, right?
in Latin America, in many parts of Latin America,
the normal is great modern architecture.
So you go to any architect or geometra,
and they design for you a little home that's perfectly modern.
In Italy, it's design. So
these are the different strengths that are normal, see.
- And then fast forward into today.
...last year you imagine and produce an amazing,
beautiful exhibit on a human crisis, Broken Nature.
It's a theme that is very close to our heart in PepsiCo.
We are investing a lot, especially in the past few years with the new CEO,
in sustainability. Can you tell us more about Broken Nature?
So, Broken Nature was, the 22nd Triennale de Milano.
The Triennale de Milano is both a building and an institution.
it's the 22nd edition,
so it's been going on for a really long time,
and it's also the building where I started my career,
so it was very emotional, with my parents alive that could see it. But
enough of personal history. Let's go to the exhibition. So,
as the title says, it's about how we have broken, nature,
and, it's about the concept of, when you break something,
you own it, number one, and number two, when you break something,
it will never be whole again, and it will be something else,
so it is at the same time pessimistic and an optimistic exhibition.
It, relies on the fact that as a human species we will become extinct. We will.
we have a little bit of control on the when,
and we have quite a bit of control on the how.
- How can you be so sure that we will?
Because that's what happens to all species. That's what happens to all beings.
There's entropy in everything and everybody dies.
Not-so even a species dies.
So what we should really do is knowing that we're mortal as a species,

not only as individuals.
We should do what individuals do.
We should think about our legacy,
and we should design a beautiful extinction
so that the next species will remember us with a little bit of respect,
not as complete morons, right?
So, so the whole exhibition is about the idea of restorative design.
It's about awareness, it's about beauty, it's about sadness,
but also about love for other human beings and other species,
and it gathers examples of design and also of art that speak to that.
It was, it was a really, great experience.
It was the first exhibition outside of MoMA that I did in 25 years,
so
and also it was the first exhibition that I did in,
in an institution that is only about design.
'Cause, you know, being at MoMA is,
is a blessing because 80 percent of the people
that see my shows don't even know about my shows.
They're there to see Matisse and Picasso, and then they stumble upon them.
And, but at the same time, because it's not only about design,
you don't get enough of this audience that is there only for that,
and in Milan, of course, you get so many.
- And you often talk about,
the purpose of design,
and you, always,
focus on a variety of different cultural tension.
You have been working on the role of design in safety,
violence.
What is for you the purpose of design in this society?
Can design design a better society, create a better-better society?
- Sure. not by itself.
You know, I think-I believe that only interdisciplinary teams and,
different cultures coming together
can do-really can really activate change,
but design can do a lot.
And the way I use it, I use it as a lens to read society.
So when you talk about design in safety,
that was an exhibition in 2004,
but the interesting thing is that it became-it began in,
at the end of 1999 as an exhibition called Emergency,
and I was working on it, like, really
intensely when 911 happened.
And all of a sudden, I found that all of the objects that I was studying
f-for an exhibition were deployed around me to go and find corpses or,
to help people, so it was really triage centers.
So I had this kind of shock reaction, and I decided I didn't wanna do the show anymore.
I just threw everything away, started working on another show, and then,
in time, I thought about it as-from the other side of the metal.
So instead of talking about emergency and response,
let's talk about,
safety, and therefore, like, before the fact, right?
So-so that was a reaction to what happened in reality,
and pretty much every exhibition is like that.
So design is a way to read society and what goes on in society.

Design and Violence was
a great project online
that first was proposed as an exhibition.
It was rejected as an exhibition, so together with my co-curator,
Jamer Hunt, we decided to put it online,
and it was even better, but it was prompted by the 3D printed gun.
So when the 3D printed gun, news hit the Internet,
I was so shocked by the fact that a technology like 3D printing that
I had invested in intellectually and curatorially, all of a sudden
could be used for evil, that I decided to do a whole project on it
to understand what happens when good design goes bad, you know?
And, Broken Nature is another examples,
and, everything is,
when you deal with contemporary design,
everything comes from reality.
You read it, and design helps you understand reality better.
And so, you think what can we do as a society, designers,
business people,
the government, you know, the different kind of entities,
to make sure we're gonna design a better world,
a world that is not gonna be broken until we will extinct-
- will be extinct? - Yeah. Well, we will. Yeah.
But there's a lot that we can do.
And it's funny 'cause just this morning I was thinking about it intensely
because I'm writing an essay for the next biennale of architecture in Venice,
which has as a title, How Will We Live Together,
question mark, which is so interesting. So how are we gonna do it?
And I was thinking about this how, and of course, you know,
business people can do something, designers can do something,
architects, artists, you know,
bankers, everybody can do something,
but nothing is gonna happen if we do not change
individual,
individual awareness and individual intellectual autonomy.
it's so easy that
I think that the real key to changing things is education.
It's educating every single human being to be
his, her, their own thinker
and not take anything for granted or,
believe in anything until you prove it.
So I'm going back to this kind of enlightenment attitude,
and I'm sorry it's a little bit anti-religious,
but it's really what I think is the only solution,
for every single human being to think for her, him, themselves.
- I totally agree. In a world where we are so bombarded by information,
especially if you think about new generation, kids, young, individuals,
that they didn't develop yet those filters to interpret this information,
to educate them in the right way and give them the tools to
understand what's going on and interpret the information and the data
that they have to create something positive, and purposeful,
and meaningful for the world is gonna be key.
- I know. I think that, however, that the problem is not really the kids.
It's the adults that have that think they know.
Those are most problematic.

and I was watching this fabulous television-British television series
called Years and Years.
It's really excellent.
It looks at a British family, kind of a dysfunctional
and wonderful British family,
in the future, over 15 years,
starting today with everything that's happening,
more nationalism, more hatred, more environmental crisis,
but at the same time the advance of technology that helps,
instead bridges these gaps.
So, it was quite beautiful.
And, and there's particularly this figure
of one of the daughters that wants to
implant all of these different chips and ways of communicating and
and being online into herself and become transhuman, and it's beautiful,
I mean, because you can see that the next generation, by using technology,
but still having a mind of their own, can do much more than we can.
- actually,
we often talk about the negative of what's going on right now,
but there is so much positive...
- Yeah. - ...as well.
if you think, for instance, about the fact that anybody today
can come up with an idea and get access to funding very, very easily compared...
- Yeah. - ...to the past.
- Yeah. - From kickstarter dot com
to the proliferation of all these funds all around the world hunting for ideas.
Cost of manufacturing is going down, driven by...
- Yeah. - ...technology.
You can go straight to consumers with e-commerce.
You can build your ecosystem of communication through social media.
So, essentially either
these big corporations create something that is
extraordinary for people,
meaningful for people,
or if they don't, anybody...
- Somebody else will. - ...can go compete with it.
- Hopefully. - So this is,
you know, I call this age we're entering the age of excellence,
a world where either you produce excellence,
or somebody else will do it for you.
- So that's the counterpart to... - Yeah.
...the digital media platform
that are giving,
a stage to the most basic visceral instinct of humanity.
There is also this positive moment that...
- Yeah. - ...we are entering.
- It's a really interest-... - What do you think about this?
- Oh, it's a really interesting moment. I completely agree with you.
But I am like you. I don't know what's gonna happen,
but I believe that the more fluid and open things are,
the more there's going to be the self-adjusting system.
So I am for information wants to be free, of course.
I'm still, thinking of the idealism of the 1960's and 1970's
as the best, way forward.

Of course, it's not that easy,
but I am hoping that kids will make it happen.
They're really quite amazing online,
and, you know,
and the character in this television series was just fantastic.
- It's also probably a democratization of the innovation and design process.
Essentially, anybody, no matter your background,
you could be a man or a woman, different kind of
religion or
- Yeah - political...
- ...interest, you know, the-anybody can create...
...something and take it to market.
And if the idea is strong and meaningful,
- it will win. - Absolutely.
- So you often talk about diversity, for instance.
You're a woman in that position.
I remember, I think in your Broken Nature exhibit,
all your team was women, if I'm not wrong.
- I mean... - Yeah,
- ...most of the time you have many,
many women in your team and women from different kind of nationalities,
different kind of backgrounds.
What do you think is the role of diversity in innovation?
- It's fundamental. I cannot begin to say. You know,
it's like people say that biodiversity is necessary to the destinies of the world,
and cultural diversity is necessary to the destinies of society.
And cultural diversity is what
colors, backgrounds, languages are.
You know, it's not anymore about the physical, but it's about the cultural.
And, you know, I run these salons at MoMA.
There's this R and D department that consists of salons about topics
that are about reality, so we do salons about protest and, about anger.
Sometimes we also do nice ones, like about angels. But
but,
whenever I compose the people that are gonna speak,
I'm sorry, I'm just very careful
about representing.
And it's not only because we wanna be politically correct or woke,
because
that's not even the point anymore. It's beyond that.
It's because I want to have a meaningful conversation.
If you don't have diversity, the conversation is not meaningful.
It's like you were asking me before can design design a better future?
Not by itself.
Only if there's a disa-diverse fan of disciplines
coming together can you have a meaningful,
project or a meaningful conversation.
So diversity is just key to everything.
- I totally agree.
Even just if you think about the innovation process, the design process,
it's all about
looking at the world, looking at reality,
looking at something that everybody,
millions and millions of people

around the world, are looking at,
but having the ability to have a different kind of point of view,
a different kind of perspective and see there something that...
...nobody ever saw before.
So diverse points of views and people with diverse points of views
talking with each other and building on each other point of views
gives you the possibility to change your perspective...
- Of course. - ...and finally drive innovation.
It's so at the base of what we do as innovation
and design people that it's crazy to think
of somebody can imagine innovation without diversity.
Yeah, I agree.
- You mention this salon, and, you know, as a designer
I totally understand why something like this is hosted by an art and design muse
but many people that don't belong to the design world
[well?] may think
why an art and design museum is hosting those kind of salon,
those kind of topics.
- Well, the whole department of R and D
was born out of the financial crisis in 2008.
Because as,
culture person coming from an economics university,
I've always had a chip on my shoulder because politicians and econome economists
always think that the financial sector is necessary to the destinies of society,
together with the industrial sector, so if there is,
the big crisis, it needs to be rescued.
Instead, the cultural sector, oh my God. So superfluous.
There's a problem, we cut the budgets.
No responsibility from the government. Who cares? Right?
And instead, I've always thought that culture is...
well, I'm not the only one.
I mean, there's a whole history of people that say culture is what makes nations
and people worth defending, right?
So 2008, I thought, great, the financial sector revealed its true colors,
so now
we need to show that museums are the true R and D of society,
that culture is what can save, everyone.
So I went to the director of MoMA, I proposed it,
but at that time we were all taking pay cuts not to fire anyone,
'cause it was really a crisis. So
we waited a few years, and then we started this department,
and it's a lot of R and very little D, but the purpose is really that,
to show
that a cultural institution like a museum is not just a place where you go
and look at pictures and paintings, but it's a place where
you go and, discuss how to live in the world.
So you can go to a museum and talk about death,
and really talk about death in a personal way.
You know, it's like how do I deal with death?
And we had a wonderful salon about that.
Or you can-you're puzzled by algorithms,
so there was one salon about the way of the algorithm.
You know, so
it really is about showing... and at every salon there's,

four to six speakers,
and at least one of them is an artist,
and the others come from all kinds of different disciplines.
You know, sometimes they are scientists, sometimes they're journalists.
I mean, all kinds.
The audience also comes prepared because when they say that they are coming,
I send them a reading list,
so they know that we've done our homework,
so you better be serious. And there's a very,
very mature kind of vibe.
There's sense of humor,
there's everything, but there's a very mature level of participations.
I mean, New Yorkers are amazing.
They come to the opening of an envelope. You know, so...
A-and even if there's, like, a storm, a hurricane.
Once there were-trees were falling in Brooklyn,
and they were-and the theater was full.
So I'm always moved by the enthusiasm.
But people want to
talk in New York City, and they're not afraid of culture,
and they know the cultural institutions are
places where you can have serious conversations.
I wish that we could
irradiate the rest of the country.
That's not really the case, but maybe one day.
- How can we do it?
- I don't think it's easy
I don't think it's easy. I think we can do it only if we
start showing respect
for people that are not like us. It's as simple as that.
You know, it always comes down to respect. Everything.
Design, politics, science.
Everything comes down to respect.
I remember the New York Times, a few months ago, did an experiment,
and they put together people that were really, really
diverse culturally,
coming from different parts, different, political parties.
They put them together for five days,
until in the end,
they were all friends.
Evangelicals and, and queer
democrats from, you know, San Francisco,
they were all talking.
So how do we make that happen?
That it would take a real
it would take a real,
invention of a new way of communicating and of a safe space,
and I don't know what that safe space can be.
- I agree with you.
recently I was in Israel where we recently acquired SodaStream,
and it was very interesting because the company
is been investing to build a very,
very diverse base of associates, of employees,
so you have people with different kind of religion background,

all kind of diverse background,
all working together, friendly, hand in hand. I mean, it was amazing.
I mean, you think about Israel, Palestine and the situation there,
it's just what you say. You put them together,
few hours, few days, and they will find a way to connect and communicate.
And the problem in Israel, like here, is the extreme wings.
Those are the ones that really pull everybody apart,
and those are the toughest one to have communicate because even in Israel,
you know, how many Israeli designers are friends with Lebanese designers,
but they meet at the salona in Milan?
- You know what I'm saying? - Yeah.
- They cannot meet in Israel, or in bay in Tel Aviv, or in Beirut.
They meet in Milan.
- Art...
...and design could be a way to connect people,
- They always are. They always are.
- Yeah. - You know, they always are.
- And talking about this through the salon and in general,
art and design is always inspiring for society, for people.
You have been inspiring so many people with your work over the years.
- Thank you. - What inspires you?
I feel sometimes like a vampire.
you know,
sometimes I have some moments in which I'm
very down, and what picks me up in a second,
like a tonico in Italian, is somebody else's creativity.
It could be a fabulous television series.
It could be an exhibition. It could be a studio visit.
I love studio visits.
So that immediately gets me going.
I am so
always flabbergasted by other people's creativity
and quality of production that
that immediately picks me up. Of all kinds.
I don't think-I'm not a very acoustic person.
You know, I'm not-I'm right-I'm recording a podcast,
but I don't listen to podcasts.
It's terrible. But anything else
- pretty much goes. - You are curious, right?
- Or a grea-... Oh my God
Or a great restaurant. I mean, anything.
- What is your relation with the world of food?
Did you write a book about food or...?
- Well, I wrote several articles, and I've been writing a book about foods,
called Design Bites, for about 15 years.
That's the problem. When you have your own project, you don't do anything.
My relationship with food is like, oh my God,
I love it, and,
I am very curious with food.
I pretty much eat everything.
- What do you think is the role of design in the world of food?
- Oh, it's... - From consuming food,
designing food...
It's humble masterpieces.

So the kind of design that I'm really interested in is,
the kind of food design that I'm interested in, are not ornate plates.
They are the basic units,
the humble masterpieces.
So I just did
a little video for TED because they do this, like,
object based videos.
I did one on pasta,
- And talking again about design and innovation,
we know that to innovate,
to create something that is unique and was never,
invented before, you need to experiment,
and you need to make mistakes, and you need to fail eventually.
Isn't that the base of innovation I think is one of the biggest challenges
for, especially for big corporations that need to deliver,
to share all those. You need-you knew-you need to...
- Yeah, exactly. It's true. - ...do everything right.
You cannot make mistakes.
It's difficult, but you need to make mistake and manage death,
over the years in your portfolio.
So in your life, in your professional journey, did you make mistake?
What are the failures that taught you something, that you remember,
you're like, "Well, I did that, and I learned that,
and something else came out of it?"
- Very few of note.
Probably so many,
but, I am not very much for the mythology of failure.
You know, especially in Silicon Valley,
there's this myth of failing well.
Failure is not that nice.
You know what I'm saying? It's like in the few times that I remember,
I keep them private.
Like, there are some things that are not even on my resume because,
they were not failure on the outside, they were more failures on the inside.
Times when I did not-when I was not happy
of what I did.
but otherwise, I cannot recall anything.
I also have this great, mechanism.
I forget things that are not pleasant, or I remove them.
A therapist would say, like ready to explode like a bomb.
I'm trying to think. There were...
No. And... No. No failures.
Not failures to notice. What about you?
- Or no failure you want to disclose.
- Well, no, yeah, but it was not even a failure.
It was an exhibition
that was a big success, but I didn't like it because I didn't have fun.
It didn't enrich me.
So, but that's not a failure, you know? So...
- Well, I mean, you asked about me. - Yeah
- I, first of all, every time they ask me this question,
I am in the same situation because it's not easy to focus on something...
- I know. - ...notable or some...
- I'm not being quiet. I just really don't know. Yeah, no.

- Yeah, yeah.
No, it's a difficult question.
I, you know, in my case,
we did so many innovation projects,
both at PepsiCo, at 3M, that nobody ever saw.
- They stayed... - Yeah
...behind the scenes.
And, you know, they are failure because they never arrive anywhere
because of a variety of different things didn't align.
Even though many of those ideas, I think, would be phenomenal for the society,
for people, the world needs it,
but they didn't get there for many different reasons.
- Yeah, like the Post-it Note.
Like, the Post-It Note is one great example. Yeah.
- And I was to get to market in that case, for instance.
- Yeah. - So
it's,
you know, it...
looking back, in my case,
and you can call them failure, mistakes,
things that didn't work out,
looking back on those projects and events
and figuring out
why I was not able to take them to market
is often a way for me to really understand
how to proceed in the future and different projects.
- Right. Did you see General Magic, the documentary?
- No. - Oh, it's great.
So this is a documentary about the company
that was a spin-off of Apple
that basically developed
the smartphone,
- but way too early... - Yeah.
- ...so nothing happened of it, right?
So was that a failure? Yeah, maybe, but then,
you know, Tony Fadell went on to do the iPod.
You know, it just, like, everybody did something.
So
they talk about it as a failure
in the documentary, which is really fantastic, but
I don't know. Or my doing two years of economics,
was that a failure, or was that a wasted time? Not at all.
You know what I'm saying? I just
I don't really know what failure is, unless somebody dies,
or unless something truly
negative happens on a human level.
of course, you need to have the luxury to be able to fail, right?
- Yeah - In my case I had
I had parents that afforded the Bocconi,
which was private university, for two years,
and then afforded by going to
the polytechnical, so, you know, I had that luxury.
So if you have the luxury to fail and nobody gets hurt,
no problem.

- You make me, remember,
a conversation with our common friend, Karim Rashid, .a few years ago.
- Yeah. Karim.
- He was telling me
imagine our life is like a
CD, or a floppy disk back then.
You know, 20, 30 years ago there were floppy disk.
You remember when you were formatting the floppy disk?
- Yes - And the computer will show you
all the data there were, but there were a lot of empty spaces...
- Yes. - ...and then you are compacting...
- Optimizing it. - ...everything, optimizing everything.
And he was using that as a metaphor for life, you know,
and how, you know, if you are focused on the right thing...
but probably all those empty spaces are actually they were necessary
to then understand how to manage the rest and be more effective, more productive,
or better in what you do in life and your work in the future.
it was a very interesting analogy.
So this podcast is called In Your Shoes, and today
we were able to enter in your shoes and enter in your mind
and understand a little bit of your point of view in the world.
- So we have our shoes. - Oh, no. You have a pair of shoes.
- Yay - Well, actually...
- That's great. - It's just a pair of
- Slippers
- There's also this beautiful bag - Ooh, thank you.
for the people that are looking at the podcast.
- Well, Paola, thank you again - Thank you very much, Mauro.
- for taking the time out of your busy schedule.