

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.

"I think differently because I think like a designer.

We think that no matter how hard the problem, we're going to come up with a better solution.

We put ourselves in other people's shoes.

We see the big picture, the emotion, the physical, the intellect, the spirit of things.

We like to work together and ask "what if" questions.

It's all about having an open mind."

I'm quoting our guest of today from her 2017 TEDx Talk.

Named the most creative person by Fast Company, she's the author of Design the Life You Love:

A Step-by-Step Guide to Building a Meaningful Future.

She designs award-winning products with Fortune 100 and 500 companies including Amazon, Colgate-Palmolive,

Herman Miller, GE, IKEA, Staples, Toyota, and many more.

She writes a weekly post on innovation for Inc.com, she's born in Turkey, and she came to the United States on a Fulbright Scholarship and has a master from the Pratt Institute.

She's the recipient of numerous awards including Interior Design Best of the Year Award in 2018,

multiple IDEA and Best of NeoCon Gold Awards,

Young Designer Award from the Brooklyn Museum of Art,

and the Athena Award of Excellence in Furniture Design from RISD.

Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the MoMA,

Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, and Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Ayse Birsal, welcome to In Your Shoes.

Mauro, thank you so much. It's great to be here.

So, you are from Turkey.

I've been a few times, just in Istanbul.

I didn't explore all the country, but I've been fascinated by the different cultures that converge in the city, and you can see it in the architecture, in the art, everywhere.

I mean, it's really a fascinating country.

But you don't come from Istanbul.

You come from another city that I'm not familiar with called Izmir.

Am I pronouncing it right?

It's Izmir.

Izmir.

So, tell us a little bit about the city. I'm very curious.

And then how did you arrive from there all the way to the United States, to New York?

Tell us a little bit about your journey.

Oh, it's a long story.

But, yes, I was born in Izmir, Turkey,

and Izmir is in Mediterranean, Aegean, actually, Sea.

It's by the Aegean Sea, and it's a beautiful little city.

When I was growing up, it was a sleepy, seaside city,

and it's grown since then, but that's where my heart beats from.

And I grew up in a family of lawyers.

Almost everybody in my family is or was a lawyer,

and my brother and I took a different route,

so he became a journalist, and I became an industrial designer.

And that happened literally because, we have this tea tradition in Turkey,

we love drinking tea, and when I was graduating from high school,

a family friend came to tea, and I had already decided

I didn't want to become a lawyer.

I wanted to become an architect.

And he asked me if I knew anything about industrial design,

and I had never heard of industrial design before, and he said...

actually, he used a tea cup.

I wish I had a tea cup to show you.

But he basically said, "Look at this tea cup.

The edges curve so that it can fit our mouths better,

and it has a handle so that we can hold hot liquid in our hands

without burning ourselves, and it has a saucer so that if you spill your tea,

you're not gonna ruin your mother's beautiful tablecloth."

And in that moment, Mauro, I fell in love

with the human scale of industrial design, and I thought this is for me.

No more architecture.

And luckily, at the time, there was one industrial design school

that had just started in Ankara at the Middle East Technical University.

And my grandma lived in Ankara,

and my parents were like, "Okay, well, go to Ankara.

Live with your grandma."

And so, I went to school there, and as I was graduating,

I really wanted to come to New York, and my parents were kind of doubtful.

Like, they've always been incredible champions of me,

and they had always told me, you should do your masters in the States,

but when I said New York, they got really nervous.

And this was in the '80s, right?

Towards the end of '80s.

And I was like, "Hold on one second.

If this is gonna be a problem..."

And I applied for the Fulbright Scholarship,

got the Fulbright Scholarship, told my parents I'm going,

and all of us came to New York together.

They wanted to see where I was going to live.
And I started at Pratt Institute, and at the time Pratt Institute...
well, Pratt Institute is still in Brooklyn.
It's in Bedford-Stuy.
At the time, it was probably
one of the worst places to leave your 20-year-old daughter.
And I remember my father, the first day when they were leaving me,
he disappeared, and then he came back 20 minutes later
with this bouquet of flowers in his hands.
He wanted to leave me in my room with the flowers,
and his face was all upside down
because he had seen the neighborhood,
and he realized, this is not a good idea.
But anyways... that's how I started in New York,
and, of course, it's now,
Bedford-Stuy's one of the chicest, nicest neighborhoods,
but at the time it was not safe,
But anyways, that's my kinda voyage from Izmir to New York.
You say something very interesting and so true.
It's not just your case.
It was my case as well, and the one of so many people.
In high school, many people don't know what design is.
We have no clue.
But still today it's a problem because then
when you realize what it is, you get in love with it.
I mean many people get in love with it.
That happened to you, it happened to me,
but there is not awareness about design,
so what can we do to build more awareness?
There are so many people that could be
amazing designers, amazing problem solvers.
They could add so much value to the society we live in,
and they don't become designers
because they have no clue what design is.
What should we do, what the society should do,
what we personally should do to increase awareness about design in the world?
what you are saying is so true.
To this day, if somebody asks me what I do,
and I'm sure it's a similar thing with you,
even though you're Mauro Porcini, everybody should know what you're doing,
you tell people, "I design stuff," and they don't understand,
and they have this blank kinda look in their face.
And a lot of people tell me, "Oh, so you style things," or "You draw things,"
or maybe, "You engineer things," and I'm like, "No, no, no."
So, but here's the interesting thing is you know that I started
teaching people how to design their lives using design process and tools,

and as soon as I say... and that's now my trick,
to kind of short circuit the conversation.
I just say, "Oh, by the way, I also teach people
how to design their lives," and in that moment, they understand that.
That there is this really crazy organic link
between design and our life that everybody gets,
and the next thing I know they're like, "When is your next workshop?"
Like, "How can I design my life?"
And we have a great conversation.
So, I think maybe that is the way to teach people, and in fact,
that's one of my kinda secret thrills
is being able to teach people how to design,
basically design process, using a project that we all have: our life.
And I feel like that's my secret mission is to teach everyone and anyone
how to think like a designer, but I don't tell them that.
I'm like, "Do you wanna design your life?" and, that's.
I mean, it's not that secret because you wrote a book about this.
Yes, yes, yes.
By the way, I love, love, love the title of the book.
There are three keywords that I always use that I really, really love.
I have it in front of me.
Design the Life You Love: A Step-by-Step Guide to Building a Meaningful Future.
There are three words that I really like.
Obviously, design. The idea that you can really
envision, dream, and create, your life.
The second one that I really love is the word love,
and that often is not used in corporations
or in the business world, but the reality is what moves everything.
it's really what moves everything.
And then meaningful.
The idea of meaning, of purpose, that today is a trendy word
that is used instead in the world of marketing and branding,
but the combination of design, love, and meaning is so, so powerful.
So, can you tell us more about this book?
How did you decide to write a book like this?
And then, as you said, you're teaching this.
You do classes.
You're really evangelizing about this
- all around the world. - I love that.
Oh, I love that you say that.
I am truly evangelizing design and thinking like a designer
because what I've learned through the process
is that people are extraordinarily creative,
and it's almost like our whole educational system...
Do you think everybody's creative?
I'm gonna interrupt you because this is a...

Everybody's creative, or there are different levels, or...?

- What do you think? - Mauro, look.

I've taught people across the globe how to design their lives using this process, the same process we use with our Fortune 500 clients, it's a design process.

And people as young as 13 and as young as 90 plus, like people in their 90's, 92, 93-year-old, and everybody in between, I've never come across somebody who stalled or said I can't do this, and I've always again and again been amazed by the quality of the thinking.

And I think there are two things to it.

One is giving yourself permission.

Often, we don't give ourselves permission.

I see so many people who think just because they haven't drawn since first grade that they can't think visually, and, of course, design is thinking visually, but once they start using the tools, they realize it doesn't matter whether you draw beautifully or not.

It's simply being able to translate your ideas into maps, and kind of geometry, and lines, and shapes,

I had this quote the other day from a four-year-old

that described drawing that I loved,

and it says, "Having an idea and throwing a line around it."

- Isn't that beautiful? - I love it. I love it.

So that's the first piece of it, that giving yourself permission, and two, you can't leave people just, by saying, go and imagine.

Like, you and I have a process.

Every creative person has a process,

whether they do it intuitively or they follow a process,

and to be able to design and think creatively, you need that process.

So, all I'm doing is showing people an accessible process,

and then I just sit back and enjoy how they think,

And can you tell us a little bit more about the process?

For instance, I've been reading about this construction and deconstruction is...

Can you tell us more about what is that process?

Sure. The process is called deconstruction reconstruction,

and it's something that I did intuitively,

that I've learned over time I guess.

But at one point... and really the reason that we're here is because there was a point in 2008 when the economy crashed, I had no work.

And I had, a lot of time in my hands.

And I have to tell you, I had never been in that situation before or since,

and I don't want to be in that situation.

But it was this kind of like a time window opened in my life, and I didn't know what to do with it until a very dear friend of mine,

Leah Kaplan, who's one of my oldest collaborators, told me,

"Ayse, why don't you use this time to think about how you think? Because you think differently." And when she said that, all I heard was "You think differently," and I was flattered. And I wanted to really take her up on that and spend almost a year kind of going into myself, into my head, trying to understand... like, I had at that time already designed office systems and, concept cars, you name it, computers, but I didn't have a process. And so, I used that time to go back on those projects and think, where did I start? How did I go from what I know to what I can imagine? And from that developed deconstruction reconstruction. So, it has four steps, in a nutshell, and the first step is you deconstruct and you see what something is made up of. So, this is really a step to both simplify the complexity of any problem, but also when you pull something, break something into its pieces, you're breaking your preconceptions about how things go together, and once you do that, it's almost like if you were making food. It's kind of like making an ingredients list. Rather than thinking about the end results, you think of the ingredients. So, anyways, I'm going into too much detail. - There's a second step... - No, no, no, no. It's very interesting. The second step is point of view. Once you have the ingredients, you try and look at them from different perspectives and think about, are these the things I want to use? Where can I gather inspiration from? should I use French ingredients or Chinese ingredients? Turkish ingredients? And then that's point of view, and you can be very flexible in there, very creative, and then the third step is reconstruction, putting it back together, and there you really need to recognize that you can't have everything. You're going to make choices, which, design, most of the time, is about making the right choices that together create something more valuable. So, you make your choices. So, you might say, okay, you might choose chicken, or if you're a vegetarian, you might leave the chicken out and use another protein. That kind of thing. You reconstruct it. And then the last bit is expression. So, you put it together, your ingredients have to come together to represent a form, and the form can be, in our work, it could be a prototype, it could be a strategy document, it could be an idea sketch, it could be the end result, and if you're making soup, it will be the hot soup, or, the cold soup, or how you put it in a bowl, what you experience drinking it, how it makes you think of your family, or how you can share it with your friends.

So that's the expression.

I love it. I love it.

So, how are people reacting when they engage with you in this methodology?

Do they understand?

It is easy for them to understand

how to apply to their life and their work and what they do?

Absolutely. Like I said, the idea of design your life comes natural to people.

And I frame it in the design principles of optimism and empathy.

You're when you enter the space, when you want to design your life,

you start it by thinking positively, because our life is complex.

Most design problems are complex, but we have, as designers,

the optimism that no matter how hard the problem,

we're going to come up with a better solution.

And, your work is all about that.

You, yourself, Mauro, are the embodiment of that optimism.

But that's really important for people,

especially when they have hardship in their life.

setting the baseline at that optimism is really important.

Empathy. So, you go ahead, then I'll tell you about empathy as well.

No, no. Go ahead. Go ahead. I agree so much.

I mean, I think optimism is so important, so powerful.

It's really a beautiful word to define what innovators do in general.

Designers for sure, but innovators in general.

And I met in my life people that were strategic, they had very high empathy,

they had an amazing aesthetic sense, they understood the business.

They had it all, but they were not optimistic,

and they were missing that drive, that energy, to change the world

and to really leverage all the other characteristics that they had.

So I really love the fact that you emphasize the characteristics so much.

And then you were going to empathy.

Tell us about empathy.

Exactly. So, I just wanna come back to optimism for a second, if I may.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Only because I live this with my family.

I was telling you every one of them are lawyers, and lawyers are not optimistic.

They're quite pessimistic.

They think of the worst-case scenarios all the time.

So in a way, I think part of the reason

that I chose design is I was so drawn to the optimism,

and it's really important to recognize,

you can't design something if there are no problems.

So we are very much about solving problems,

but once you see the problem... and deconstruction is,

in a way acknowledging the problem and its parts and pieces.

But then when you get into point of view,

all the tools are there to inspire you towards solutions,

and there is a both in the design process
that we have with our clients, but also with individuals.
The temperature of the room changes as you move from deconstruction,
where people recognize their challenges to point of view, and it's very intentional.
I set it up so that after point of view,
you're just energized by the possibility of your ideas, and it takes off.
But it first goes down.
Deconstruction is kind of a downer, I have to admit.
It's like,
And with our team, we're always like, "Okay, that was the deconstruction."
And then it takes off after that.
- So... - I love it.
So, the empathy is... well, it's the name of your podcast.
It's being able to stand in other people's shoes,
and this is really important.
And in designing your life, you also have to have empathy for yourself.
and often I find we don't practice that that much.
But you have to kinda be kind to yourself and acknowledge, life is complex,
and your work is complex, and our life and work are, all parts of this design,
but have empathy for yourself
and feel those feelings, connect with your emotions, and then think about,
"Well, how can I turn this towards something I love?"
And that's where the word love comes in because
it's about going towards something that you will enjoy more.
Earlier you were talking about 2008
and the year in which you had the time to think.
We are in the middle of one of probably the biggest crisis
that this generation has been witnessing with COVID first,
and then also the civil unrest connected to racism, Black Lives Matter.
Did you have time to think in these months,
and what did you think about if you had the time to think,
like it happened back then in 2008?
Now, that's an excellent connection,
and I often think of that, that this is similar but harder.
And what's interesting, Mauro, for me now,
this time I'm living through the crisis with other people.
Not by myself.
So, if the 2008 was truly a journey alone into myself, I'm living
the COVID crisis intentionally in collaboration with so many other people.
And I'm finding that incredibly helpful, and I think
one thing that will be different for me coming out of this period is
how much more I believe in the power of collaboration.
The reason for that, again, I mean, one is today I have a process.
People, more than any other time, are interested and need to design their lives
because everything we know has been broken down.
I mean, it's like the virus has deconstructed our life,

whether we wanted or not, right?

Yeah.

So now we have to reconstruct it, and to do it with optimism, and empathy, and through collaboration is key, and these are the foundational elements of design.

So maybe there's never been a better time for design in your life and work because you can't escape it, And it's not just in my neighborhood.

It's across the globe.

And in a way, we do need that optimism because there's so many things that, if we let it, that can just bring us down, and when you're down, it's really hard to think with imagination and hope.

So, definitely, that's what I've been doing.

So, almost as soon as we started sheltering in place, I set up a virtual tea, Design the Life You Love Virtual Tea, which is every Wednesday at five o'clock, and reached out to my community of people who have shown interest in designing their life, and I said, "I'm doing this."

"Would you be interested?" and, "What would you like for us to do together?"

And people showed up, and I think we started with 30 people, and I was like, "Do you want us to just talk and share,

or should we use an exercise every time we meet from the book so we can together design our lives?"

And basically, we decided together that we should design our lives together, and that's what we've been doing every Wednesday.

And, I have to tell you, it's the best thing I've done.

Fantastic.

I love this idea of connecting and collaborating in moments of crisis, in general.

It's very inspiring.

Then, you are, by the way, a designer that works a lot, that have been working a lot over the years, on the way people collaborate in offices, in working spaces, with your work with Herman Miller, for instance.

And you have been investigating this tension, if you want, between being all together in an open space and collaborating and connecting, but then also the need of focusing on concentrating, of having personal space.

And in your design you see the solution to that tension and the evolution of those solutions over the years.

How do you think the working space will change after COVID?

So, the space itself, the furniture, and then the way of working of people.

So, I have three different questions in one, but you may have three different answers.

But working space, and then the furniture itself, and then the way of working of people.

It's a very relevant question for us.

We have hundreds of thousands of people in PepsiCo that we go back or are starting to go back to the offices, and we are really literally right now every day trying to figure out exactly what will be the new way of working back in the office or that hybrid way of working between the office, home, digital world? What's your point of view?

Yeah, isn't it incredible?

I mean who would've thought that our notion of work would change so radically?

And it has.

I think there's no going back.

Work is hybrid.

We're going to work from home, and we're going to work from the office for different reasons, and one of the trends that we were seeing in the office was the office was becoming like your living room, right?

And that has been going on for the last 10, 15 years.

And you walk into any corporate environment, you see sofas, and poufs, and soft materials, and pillows, and, kitchens. So that was already happening.

What's happening now is... that was the office becoming the living room.

Now our living rooms are becoming the office.

And so, it's this yin and yang that's happening, and with that,

I think it's going to be really important for corporations to provide the right environment for people in their home environment, but at the same time give them the flexibility of, their choices.

Because in the office, all my work with Herman Miller, we've been collaborating for 20 years.

One of the interesting things about designing office systems is that as a designer, you always think of the end user, but when you design an office system, it's not the end user who makes the choice.

It's the corporation, the architect, the facility manager who makes the choice.

And one of my friends at Herman Miller, Jim Long, who is the head research, would always tell me I should remember when you design an office system, it's one person who chooses for thousands.

And that's an interesting distinction because you want to make sure that no matter who that person is, that they make the right choice, the honorable choice, for the end user, that they take good care of the end user.

Now it's different because at home we make our own choices.

One person makes a choice for two, three, a family, for example.

But we still need, I mean, there is an ergonomics component to work.

You still want to be able to sit in a good chair, have good posture, have a good table, have good sound,

so the experience of how to be productive at home needs to be designed, and that's both the experience of it and the furniture of it.

So that, I think, is going to be the...

I'm trying to find the right word for it.

It's like the office-civilization of your home.

And even the school side of it.

I mean, it's not just the office, right?

If you have kids, it's also your living room is the school.

And so that, I think, is that balance where the design of both is going to be really important.

Yeah.

And when I say design, I, you know this, but it's not just the design of the product.

It's also the design of the experience.

We need a lot of guidance there.

I think also, many people don't have big spaces.

We live in New York, for instance.

You don't have a lot of space in your apartment.

So also how the same environment can change during the day.

Your living room may be the office in certain times of the day and become a space to entertain people another time.

And then, too, another time, it's dedicated to your family and sharing time with your family.

So that's another theme that I think is very interesting.

During COVID, you go eventually in houses, and you see all this office equipment and tools in kitchen, in bedrooms, everywhere, and it is what it is.

I mean, that's the space that you have.

So how can we think about bedrooms that change shape to become offices at a certain time of the day, and the same, eventually, a kitchen?

Is it something you have been investigating? Or not yet?

I've been absolutely investigating that piece of it.

And again, what I'm really drawn to is two things.

I think there are two hybrids.

One is the hybrid between life and work, and like you said, to be able to go from having a work environment to having dinner with your kids and family, right?

And many things in between like exercising and doing a Zoom call, working, four people in the house.

In our house, for example, my husband and partner, Bibi, working on one side.

I'm working on the other side.

Kids, we're all on Zoom.

So managing all that, that's one hybrid is the balance of life and work.

But I'm really excited by that.

And I think it gives us opportunities that we didn't have before to have much more original and organic lives.

And the other hybrid is the hybrid between, analog and digital, and this constant back and forth of, I'm here in my physical environment, and now I'm in the Zoom environment.

I'm out of the Zoom environment.

I'm in my physical environment.

And, how do you manage those dualities is really...

And I don't think we have an answer yet.

It will probably take a couple years for the right solutions to emerge.

It's gonna be very interesting to see

how the different furniture companies are gonna move,

the different brands are gonna move in the space.

Because you have the office furniture companies

that could come into the home space,

and then you have the home furniture companies

that eventually can rethink the space with an office approach.

So, the two industries or the two sisters in the industry

somehow are gonna start to overlap and meet.

Yeah, it's going to go... and, the home office notion is not new.

But most corporations really didn't invest in the home office,

and that's going to change.

And then the other thing that's gonna change is how we use our time.

this notion of, again, nine to five was already disrupted,

technology companies disrupted that.

But the notion that we work side by side with our family, for example,

that never happens.

the notion that you could, in the middle of your day,

like this morning I worked, and then I stopped

and I exercised with my trainer over Zoom, and then I came back to work,

But it was all in the same space.

and this afternoon I might take a nap,

and then work 'til 10 in the evening.

- But that, that kind of... - You mention exercising.

Recently, I started to exercise with Quests, with virtual reality.

So I do exercise in virtual reality.

That would be very interesting as well in the future.

Imagine you are in a space eventually,

and you're gonna start working with people in virtual reality,

and then you can design your space as you want.

You can work, work eventually out of a forest in the Amazon,

in your virtual reality world.

It's gonna be very interesting.

That's another territory that we'll investigate I think in the near future.

Look. During this crisis, during these months, there was COVID on one side,

and then, as we all know very well, especially in the US,

but with repercussions and manifestations all around the world,

there was the Black Lives Matter situation, and in general,

over the years, if you think also about Me Too before,
this new attention to a more diverse society
or this new need to have a more equal, inclusive, and diverse society.
You've been spending many years, your life,
in designing lives and designing with love.

What is the role of design in this changing moment?

What is the role of design in designing a more equal society,
the role of design in this diversity opportunity that we have?

Yeah. It's such a great question, and I feel like
my own design of my own life

has been design of diversity in a way because Bibi is French-Senegalese.
I'm Turkish.

We fell in love, and now either we're living in New York...

Bibi was living in Paris and designing automobiles for Renault when I met him.

And I was designing a concept car for Renault, and he became my mentor,
and then we fell in love, and then we had our kids,

who are biracial, and, two daughters.

And to see those daughters grow up in New York

in a multicultural environment, coming from all these different cultures.

And then now, live through, together with them they are 15 and 16,

Black Lives Matter, it took our life to, and our dinner conversations,
to a place I never thought we would go.

And now when I think of it, I look back and I feel how naive I was.

I thought that, Bibi and my love for each other and for our children,
as two human beings, was going to be... that that's how everybody was.

That, that today, in our world today,
that was totally possible and understood,
and to feel today that it isn't so.

we have so much progress to make.

So, anyways.

One thing that I have started doing with that,

my viewpoint, and, I think yours too,

is to look at almost everything through the lens of design

because that's how I see the world,

that's how I solve problems.

Whether it's, working with a corporation,

or working with individuals, or working with my family.

So I'll kind of sit and deconstruct things.

And so, one of the things that I've been doing is deconstructing diversity,

and we created a new program, Design the Diversity and Inclusion You Love.

And it's about deconstructing racism,

which is one of the most difficult things I have ever done
because there is no love in it.

But from that, reconstructing love and looking at

how can we get people to, of all opinions,

to reconnect with their values around love,

and inclusion, and community, and, equality,
equity, and, kindness, and generosity?
And then from that, build a new point of view.
You have been deconstructing racism.
You say something very important.
There is no love in it.
What drives racism?
It's fear? It's what?
What? It's ignorance?
What is driving racism?
I think all those things, but at the very, maybe,
at base of it, it's forgetting that we're all human beings.
Yeah.
It's as simple as that.
And so, when people think that they're different
because of their color or gender, we're forgetting we're humans.
We're people.
I am re-reading for the second time recently,
Sapiens, the beautiful book. I don't know if you read it.
But there are many books on the topic on the fact
that we are all coming from one area of Africa,
and then, over hundreds of thousands of years we just spread everywhere.
But we're all coming from, one region, one individual or a few individuals,
that then gave... and then, the human race,
started to spread all around the world.
And with evolution we started to have some differences,
but we're all, as you said, humans.
Even the idea of countries and borders and everything is all artificial,
something we created to organize ourselves better,
to be more productive, to defend ourselves,
to make sure we could progress and grow as a species.
But, right now, probably too many times we forget where we come from
and who we really are, and, yes, it's mind-blowing.
And, I love that, and by the way, Sapiens,
I only read it one third of the way.
I just need to get back.
But you're making me think.
I was listening to a podcast about Ruth Bader Ginsburg.
And her notion of gender was the same thing.
That equality between women and men mattered
only because we're people, we're humans.
And that was her very simple definition of, like, if we're all people,
regardless of our sex, we should have equal rights, and it's the same thing.
Regardless of our race, regardless of our country, we're people.
You'd think that something so simple would be ingrained in us, and it's not.
It's really mind-boggling to me.

Yeah, I totally agree.

Well, this is a beautiful design project,
and necessary more than beautiful.

I wish we didn't need to have that kind of design project,
but a necessary design project
that I think we all need to invest on more, and more,
and more in the coming months and years...

Yeah, for sure.

...hoping to find a solution.

There is another big project or meta project
that for sure we are, driving here in PepsiCo,
especially under our new CEO, Ramon Laguarta.

But any designer around the world somehow should be sensitive to this.

And I'm talking about sustainability and the fact
that the moment we designers design something
and the companies produce that something,
we'll have an impact on the environment.

No matter what we design, even eco-friendly products,
have an impact on the environment,
just extraction of the materials, the production,
the shipping, the logistics, the consumption, this mission.

So, the moment we create something,
we have a negative impact on the environment.

And obviously then, if you think about big corporations like ours,
with the volumes of products that we have
and the fact that we consume them daily,
the impact, you can have a very huge scale.

What is the role of design in the world of sustainability?

We are just, a component of the equation.

we work with companies, and then there is the society.

There is the users. They need to behave in a certain way.

There are governments. There is education.

There are so many different [enactors?], but for sure, we designers have a role.

We have a very important role.

So, what's your point of view on sustainability
and the role of design on sustainability in anything we do?

A big multi-million dollar question.

First of all, I was like, "Where is Mauro going with this question?"
and I thought you were gonna land in aging,
which is my other favorite subject.

So, let's talk about sustainability first, and then we'll...

But, there are many answers to that.

But I'll tell you, I guess maybe because you got me started with,
where I come from and,

my childhood in Turkey, my head immediately went to there.

I mean, sustainability as a designer,

especially working with Herman Miller for so many years now, I mean, Herman Miller was one of the first companies to create this cradle to cradle system for manufacturing, and so it's ingrained in me to think sustainable, sustainable materials. How can you deconstruct a product and break it into its parts so that it can go back to where it came from? But I just wanna tell you where my heart is going, and that is my childhood. Because when I was growing up in Turkey in the '70s, many things were scarce. we weren't a rich nation, and the world wasn't into so much consumerism. So, if you drank a Pepsi, you would then take the bottle back to the bodega, or the grocery store, or in Turkish it's called "bakar," the corner store, right? Yeah. And there would be a deposit money. They would give you five cents back. You would recycle the bottle, the glass bottle. You wouldn't throw anything away. When we use when you use aluminum foil, okay, we... first, we didn't have that. Once we had that, we would wash the aluminum foil, and that aluminum foil would get reused, like, five or six times before it broke down. But better yet, what you would do is you would use shower caps. You would close your bowl with a shower cap, and then you would wash that, and to this day, when I go to my mom's house in Istanbul, there's a whole pack of shower caps or things like that that's been there forever and ever, So, it's things like that that I think... and the examples could go on and on. And I'm sure you, saw some of this growing up in Italy, is that... ...it's not just about manufacturing. It's a whole different way of life. And we've become so lazy in our ways. Some of it for a good reason. we want practicality, and we want to not spend so much time doing this thing so we can do that thing. But I really think that the eventual answer to sustainability, yes, we need solar power, yes, we need to recycle, but we also have to live differently. And one thing with COVID, we saw how quickly we can change how we live and adapt to situations, and I wanna keep my optimism. My only concern is it takes a horrible disaster or a crisis for us to change our ways. And I can't imagine, well, I can unfortunately imagine. But, I think what feels like is going to happen with nature

is going to be much more difficult to handle,
and it's going to teach us some really hard lessons.

Yeah.

And so, I wanna bring it to an optimistic place in that we are capable,
and I think we are capable of change.

It will require designing very different daily lives,
and habits, and experiences for us
to really make a dent in sustainability, is my long answer to you.

No, I completely agree with you.

On one side, we need to change behaviors and we need to make sure that
this is communicated from schools,
the media, governments, corporations and brands.

We need to make sure, that we raise awareness
that there are some behaviors to change.

On the other side, I think the challenge we have as designers is
how to create something that has the minimal impact
on the environment combined with convenience.

'Cause when you lose convenience,
that's when people don't buy your products anymore,
don't use a product, or don't change behavior.

So, in some form or way, they will need to compromise on convenience
if we wanna speed up the change.

Because there is no solution there yet in many areas, in many industries,
that is, can maintain the same level of convenience and really change the game.

So, I think we need to strive, we need to keep pushing as innovators
for that balance between convenience and the right solution for the environment.

But then as users, citizens, people, human beings,
we need to really understand what is our role
and how we can change our habits every day.

Yeah.

What inspires you?

Where do you search for your inspiration every day?

So many things. So,
everything inspires me in the sense that
when I have a design project...

right now, for example, we're working on a beautiful project about women's health.

And so, everything that I see, whether it's a Netflix show, or a book I read,
or something that my kid says, I relay it back to women's health.

And when I say everything, you know I don't mean everything.

But it's kind of like as a designer,
you're like a sponge taking in information,

and what I take in changes depending on the project that I'm working on.

And so, when I say everything inspires me, I say that with pride.

Because I think that's one of the beauties of being a designer is
how much you need to learn with every project.

And every project is different.

And with that, a whole kind of learning experience
opens up like a window opens up.
And you're curious, and, it's the best excuse to be
a constant or continuous learner, so I love that.
And then I'll just add one more thing.
But in general, what inspires me in the act of design,
what inspires me is other creative people.
Like, I love to listen to a live orchestra.
Because I have so much admiration for how they're designing
and they're creating in the moment,
and they're not afraid of performing in front of other people,
and that always gives me creative courage.
When I'm alone with my notebook or iPad and I have to think of something,
I try to bring in that courage of the other creatives
who do it so well and try to emulate them.
I love the notion of creative courage, and on this we could go on,
and on, and on for hours, but we're gonna wrap up.
But we touched so many beautiful topics
from diversity, sustainability, to the way of work,
and keywords like collaboration and optimism.
But what I really like the most of your approach in general,
not just of what we discussed today,
is this idea of the meta project of designing your life.
At the end of the day, design was all about this always.
It was about creating something, objects, experiences, even brands,
that could add value to the life of people,
and you're taking it to the next level.
"Well, let's design completely our life,"
and I really, really love what you're doing.
So, thank you so much, not just for being with us today,
but for what you're doing to evangelize...
...now we're gonna use that word
this idea of designing your life.
Thank you.
Mauro, thank you, and actually, you ended this beautifully,
but I can't help but add designing your life is probably
the most sustainable design you can imagine because it's you,
your life, and the design process, and you don't need anything else.
I love that closing. I love it.
Thank you so much. Thank you.
Thank you. This was lovely.
It was my pleasure.
Thank you.
Thank you.