

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 or 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've really only asked one question throughout my career and that is, what's next for design? I'm quoting our guest for today, who is an industrial designer by training and the chair of IDEO, a global design and innovation company devoted to creating a positive impact in the world through design. A passionate ambassador of the value of design thinking, creative leadership and purposeful innovation, he takes a special interest in the convergence of technology and the arts, as well as in the ways in which design can be used to promote the wellbeing of people living in emerging economies. He's an advisor to senior executives and boards of global Fortune 100 companies. He serves on the Board of Directors of Steelcase, he's a member of the Board of Advisors for the World Economic Forum Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Boom Supersonic. He writes for the Harvard Business Review, The Economist and other prominent publications and his book on agile design thinking transforms organization change by design was released by Harper Business in September, 2009.

He holds honorary doctorates from the Royal College of Art, Keio University, Claremont McKenna Graduate University, and Art Center College of Art and Design. There's one thing you wonder from his bio. One of the first products he ever designed was a table saw for an old British company called Wadkin. More than 30 years later one of those sores is still in use in the workshop of the Central St. Martin Design School in London, helping new generations of designer build their making skills and creative confidence. Tim Brown, welcome to In Your Shoes. It's such a pleasure to have you with us today Tim. Thank you for accepting the invite.

Oh, thanks Mauro. It's always, it's always great to great to hang out with you. So I really appreciate the invitation. So the first question I want to ask you today, I go straight to the point is how do you become Tim Brown? I mean, you are an icon in the design world and there are many young designers probably right now, listening to us and thinking, how can I become somebody like Tim, that is not just a great designer, but he's also a top leader in our industry. You wrote an amazing book that I read right away, as soon as it was out. You are really, you help the design world in so many ways. To have a

seat at the table in the business community, in the business world. How do you get where you are today?

Hm. You know, um, I wish I had a very sort of deep and, uh, sophisticated answer to that question, but, uh, you know, a lot of it, like so many, I think of, uh, things in life was, was, was there a healthy dose of, of, of good fortune and, you know, a little bit of, a little bit of determination and perhaps a little bit of talent, but I think not so much talent, a lot of the other things. Um, but I was, you know, I, I, I was just very, I, was very fortunate. I've always been very fortunate to, to work with people who have inspired me and cause me to think about, um, uh, about design and about, uh, about my role in design and, and, and help point point the direction.

And, uh, you know, I, uh, whether it's people like Bill Moggridge and David Kelley who founded IDEO, um, and the, and the many people that I've worked with at IDEO and the many great clients I've worked with, it's just been a continual sort of, um, you know, kind of wonderful experience of working with smart people and, and, you know, really just, I, you know, I, I, I've spent my whole career really asking one question, uh, which is this, this, this, this question of what's next for design.

And, uh, and that has kept me kind of focused on trying to understand the role of in the world and try and trying to help and promote the role of design in the world. And, you know, uh, I think I was fortunate to be doing that at a time when design, it perhaps has more value and more meaning than it's ever had before.

And a certain point in your life asking yourself, what's next for design, you decided together with your team at IDEO that design thinking was the right approach to drive innovation in companies big and small. I don't know exactly when that happened, but I'm sure that many people around the world know about design thinking because of you and your work with IDEO and what you've been doing through that platform. What is design thinking? If you had to explain this to a business person that is not really familiar with the word and what was in 2009, when you've wrote *Changed by Design*, your book, and what it is today, did it change or it's still the same thing?

Uh, well, I'll start at the end and work back. I mean, it has changed and it evolves and it continuously evolves and that's, what's so fascinating about it. Um, as, as we embrace an ever bigger landscape of challenges, opportunities, places where design can play and can play a role. Um, you know, my, my, my, uh, I think my definition of design is, is, is pretty much infinite. I think design can apply to almost anything. Uh,

you know, I, I always use, uh, my definition of design is based on some, on something that, uh, Herbert Simon, the, the Nobel Laureate economist and father of AI, uh, said, uh, back in the 1950s, I think when he said that essentially whenever we're shaping the world to meet our needs, then we're designing. Um, and you know, when you, when you think about that definition design, it applies to pretty much everything we do, that's intentional in the world that isn't science and nature, or that isn't accident, everything else is essentially designed. So that, that means my def, my definition of design is pretty it's, it's very, very broad. Um, and, uh, I, you know, I've always believed that design when you think about it in that way, uh, is an activity that applies to many, many people beyond those of us who are fortunate enough to be trained, uh, in, in, in, you know, in design school or in a, kind of a creative, um, uh, creative educational establishment. And so, uh, whether you're a business person or an entrepreneur, or you run a, uh, you know, a sort of a social organization or a community-based organization, um, or just an individual in your, in your, in your ordinary life, um, all, all of us can be and need to be essentially, uh, to be designers. And it was that realization. I think that design applied to this much broader spectrum of activities beyond the more obvious form giving around products, or maybe a digital experience, or maybe a piece of communication and a brand, there was that realization that, that caused us to want to find a way to describe design that wasn't confined to those, just those traditional things. And what seemed important and, and really this, I, I would say that, uh, this, this kind of emerged from a conversation that David Kelly and I had actually in his office at Stanford many, many years ago when he started, when he said, you know, whenever I try to describe

what design is to my students or, or to, to people I'm talking to, I always end up putting the word thinking after the word design. Uh, and so, Oh, that sounds good. Like, you know, and, you know, it turns out that the term design thinking has existed a long time before as well. But, uh, you know, I w w we felt like, then this was a moment when really trying to emphasize not so much the artifacts of design, but the methods and the mindsets of design, how do creative people go about that process of designing?

What is their approach? What is, what are they thinking about, what are they paying attention to? What are the very important and unique skills that they bring? Um, uh, and could we help others, uh, on the one hand, understand them, if you're a

business leader and you want to make better and better use of them and even practice them. So, you know, these skills obviously include the ability and the, and the mindset of curiosity and interest in the world and understanding why people do things, uh, understanding how people lead their lives, what, uh, what their needs might be, um, because that's the starting point for great design, you know, um, uh, so that might be that's one set of skills and mindsets and an important one. Another one is this going from the sort of abstract question to the, to the real, tangible outcome. That ability to ideate that ability to prototype, um, and make things real in the world, and having that confidence to take an idea and try and make it real for people, whether it's through a drawing or a video or a model, um, or a, or a movie, whatever, whatever it might be.

So that ability to ideate and iterate ideas and learn from ideas. Um, and then, you know, uh, and then this sort of determination that designers have to see their ideas come to life, um, to integrate all of the various concerns and factors that make up a finished idea. If it's a product that might be to do with how you manufacture the product, or how you market the product, if it's an experience, it might be all of those various touch points and aspects of the experience that make it successful. If it's an organization, it might be more to do with incentives and how people relate to each other and what their purpose is. So it depends on what the problem is, but the design, the designer has his ability to integrate all of those, all of those concerns and all of those, um, those facets of the problem in order to create a solution. So really design thinking is, is, is all of these things, um, and, and, and a whole set of methods and tools and mindsets. And that's what we were really trying to communicate.

You know, I see many companies that over the years eventually made the mistake of thinking that design thinking could be the solution to everything. Because actually, if you, if you think about what you just described, it's an amazing approach to drive innovation in any kind of organization. The reality is that there is another element that is the quality of the observation of the ideation of the execution of your ideas. So what does it make, design thinking a good, good design thinking versus bad design thinking?

I mean, at it's simplest I would argue that it's, this is like any other skill, right? I mean, you know, um, uh, we all, we all learn to write when we're, when we're at elementary school and we, um, some of us get a little bit better at it when we're in high school and maybe even some of us study it at college and

others go on to be professional writers. Um, but we all use writing in our lives. Right. Um, but we understand that, uh, that a great offer, um, or a great professional writer has has skills, um, that are, uh, that give them the ability to bring truly unique, um, pieces of literature into, into the world. And a lot of that comes from a little bit of talent and a lot of practice, the same with music, uh, the same with painting the same with any creative skill and the same is true for design.

It is largely the result of a lot of practice. And, uh, you know, um, I think the mistake that many make is to think of design as a concept that once you under understand the concept, that then you can deploy it, um, at the same level as somebody who's been, who's been deploying design thinking for a long time. And, um, and that will be like expecting to read a book about how to play the piano and then sitting down in front of the piano and being able to play Beethoven. Uh, and we know that's not, that's not possible. So, so I, you know, I think that's the, that's the mistake that we can sometimes make is to realize that it takes, it takes time. It takes skill, it takes practice, um, and a desire to get better and better and better,

And building on this, if anybody can be a design thinker, and this could be a suicidal question for me, but do you need designers in corporations? I mean, companies small or big. You know, I think that, uh, what, what designers have those of us who have been educated as designers is that we've had lots and lots of practice. You know, we, we, we started a lot earlier. We also had, I think, you know, what attracts, I don't know about you, but what attracted me to, um, design school was, was because I was very attracted to exploring new ideas. It was a natural tendency I had to explore new ideas. Not everybody wants to do that. Not everybody feels comfortable doing, uh, doing that. And so, um, you know, you tend to get, uh, uh, more people who have been trained as designers who are interested in exploring the future and exploring questions of things that don't exist yet. And so they, they maybe learn a little bit faster. Um, uh, so I think, uh, I think, I think designers have had more practice. We have skills that are useful. Um, I just think that in that today and in the future, uh, instead of designers practicing innovation on their own, we are practicing it alongside many other people, um, from across our organizations, whether they be technical people or business people or entrepreneurs, um, or, or, or whatever.

I love this, this answer, there is a higher probability,

essentially of finding people with the right mindset in this community, in our community, because they were by definition from the beginning, attracted by that way of thinking and working.

Exactly.

but then you need anyway, design thinkers, also outside of the design community. In the past 20 years, I've been trying to build this culture of design out, just not just in the design organization, but outside of our design community, within these big corporations. I have in my hands your book *Changed by Design*, that I bought right away in 2009. For the people that are watching the video, uh, you can see the yellow pages. And I love this, you know, oxidized by, by time. And and many, many, um, indexes post it indexes, I was working at 3m back then with many pages, very inspirational. There is one part, and I put the new marks for our conversation today, where you say, "I cannot count the number of clients who have marched in and said, give me the next iPod." But it's probably pretty close to the number of designers I've heard respond under their breath, "Give me the next Steve Jobs." So you need design thinkers outside of the design community. For any design leader, working within a company or outside in an agency, like, like IDEO, what's your advice on how to create this kind of culture in the business community? How can we help the business world better understanding design, design thinking and their role, their role in driving innovation with this approach?

Well, I, I, I, all I can say is I've learned from, from working with, uh, with, with clients, uh, with, with business leaders who, who have got great, uh, leadership when it comes to, when it comes to creativity and, and the thing that they all have in common or the, the two things I think that they all have in common one is they have a fascination and a sort of passion for, for thinking about the future. Um, they are, um, they are, uh, either in terms of being concerned about the future competitiveness of their business, or because they're just simply fascinated about the world. Uh, I think of people like Jim Hackett, who I work I've worked with for 20 odd years while he was at Steelcase and then at Ford is somebody that is passionate about thinking about the implications of technology on the world.

Um, uh, uh, and, uh, or I think about, uh, uh, Carlos Rodriguez Pastore, who's this wonderful Peruvian business leader that, uh, that I've worked with for, uh, for well six or seven years now, but perhaps a little bit longer who is passionate about thinking about what the future business opportunities are in his country, um, and, um, and how to grow, uh, the emerging

middle class. And so this, this fascination with the future, plus the ability to ask questions that are kind of an incitement for creative exploration, right? So, um, instead of thinking, they've got the answer, what they've got is the questions that challenge others to go find the answer. And, uh, you know, I think, I think that is what's really key for great business leadership when it comes to innovation. I mean, none of us, no leader has, has the answer on their own. Um, but if, but I think leaders do have the perspective to ask questions and ask brave questions. Um, I think of great leaders as being like explorers, um, who can look, uh, look over the horizon and say, "I wonder what is over the horizon? What, what other distant shore might be over the horizon? Why don't we go and find out?" Uh, and, uh, and so what I've tried to do, um, and I think what we tried to do at IDEO is equip those leaders with an understanding of how to use creativity, how to use design thinking to help them explore and discover those distant shores.

That's a fantastic, uh, mission, uh, in many way, combined with a overarching goal that, uh, that these, your goal in life, I guess, and then what you've been trying to do with design and design thinking that is, creating a positive impact in society. A few years ago, you, you called me together with Joe Gebbia to join, uh, Design Vanguard. Uh, and, and we got together in, um, in California with all the design leaders from different kind of background and fields, actually in that occasion, I never told you, but in that occasion, I became very good friends with James Sommerville. That back then was the head of design of Coca Cola. So you put, you had the designer PepsiCo the head design at Coca-Cola together. with a purpose. Can you tell us more about this Vanguard and what was your, your dream with Design Vanguard?

Well you know, I mean, interestingly Design Vanguard came out of a conversation that I was having with John Kerry, uh, uh, who's uh, uh, who helped actually, who helps run the Eames Tanch. Um, but also has done a lot of work in social impact design, uh, and Jocelyn Wyatt who heads up ideo.org and, um, uh, who, you know, founded, uh, IDEO.org, uh, uh, so many, 10 years ago now. And we were, we were talking about how there seems to be this sort of generation of design leaders that are seeking to have impact at a societal level, as well as, um, as well as at the business level. And we thought, wouldn't it be interesting to get some of those folks together, uh, and, and almost create a new generation? I mean, I think looking back, I mean, in some ways back to the Eames, um, generation of a time when I think design was a very

optimistic moment.

And, um, and, uh, there was a lot of, uh, concern about, um, about design's role in society, as well as design's role in business. And it felt like it was time maybe 50 years later to think about, uh, think about re re kind of reenergizing that. And so, uh, and so, um, talking with Joe, we had this idea that wouldn't it be interesting to bring a set of corporate design leaders, uh, design leaders from across prac, you know, different areas of design practice, people who are working in social entrepreneurship and social impact together, just to talk about what, what are the, you know, what are the emerging concerns? Where is, um, where is design able to perhaps has the potential to have an impact, but it's not having today. Um, and let's get everybody together and see what happens. Uh, and so that's what we did, and we were extremely lucky to have, uh, have a great group of people join. And, um, as you recall, you know, we focused on things like, what are the kind of, um, what's the equivalent of the sort of Hippocratic oath for designers in the 21st century? What should we be pledging ourselves to in terms of the kind of ethics and morals of design? uh, um, and, uh, uh, uh, and I think created a set of, um, of commitments that, uh, that I think help, help guide all of us, um, as we tried to be as effective with our limited resources as we can be,

And talking about design and social impact of design, we, the past two years have been, and especially the past year is being a particularly complex, from a society standpoint. Uh, from Me Too, to Black Lives Matter, uh, to the Asian situation and many others, uh, situation and many other things happening in... All amplified by also pandemic that, that, uh, has a been, that has been creating a very complex scenario scenario that is driving many changes in our society right now. Uh, what could be the role of design and design thinking to help these changes? To drive this change in the right direction?

Well, I mean, interestingly enough, we, don't, one of the things that we did through Design Vanguard right in the beginning of the pandemic, was to reach out and, uh, to all of our colleagues, uh, and say, w you know, where are the examples that you can see of design responding to the initial crisis of the pandemic, things like around, how do we organize our physical environment now that we have a need for social distance? How are we dealing with, with, with protective equipment? What other, what else, what other solutions are emerging? And within just a few weeks, we, you know, we received over 150 really interesting projects that we put onto an index on the



Design Vanguard site, um, of, of response, creative design responses to the pandemic, literally within, within a few weeks. And I think for me, that was an indication of, of, of what, um, design does.

It provides a capacity for us to be resilient because, um, because our ability to tackle new problems very quickly, our ability to take designers who might normally be designing motorcars and have them switch and design ventilators within, within a matter of days. Um, those kinds of things are part of our society's resilience to, uh, to dramatic change. And, you know, as we look forward, we can see more and more and more likelihood of this kind of dramatic change. Either that's coming because of climate or because, or because of future pandemics, or maybe because of political disruption or business disruption. And so, uh, you know, for me, you know, I, I just think it made the case that we need design capacity. We need creative capacity to respond to these unexpected, uh, unexpected changes. Whether that design capacity is within business, where I think a lot of it needs to be, but also within the social sector or even the government sector. And we're seeing more and more examples for instance of healthcare providers building their own design teams, places like the Mayo Clinic or the Cleveland Clinic, um, or we're seeing governments like the UK government and its cabinet office has a design team who works with all the various departments of the UK government to help them use design, to think about their, uh, to think about their strategy. And so I, I believe that building design capacity is building societal resilience for the future.

I love, love this definition. I'm write it down. Look, with IDEO. you've been, um, funning hundreds, probably thousands of innovation projects. Personally, through PepsiCo through my past in 3m, I've been working with you in, in, in many different ways. Uh, today I'll tell you a story. Today, when I tried to explain what design innovation is, design-driven innovation is, design thinking, you know, what we're trying to do with our teams, and I see people that got lost and they don't exactly understand what I'm talking about. Usually they say, well, you know what IDEO does, right? We're trying to do something similar. So, and oh, everybody's like, oh, we get it. We understand now. So IDEO became an icon of design driven innovation. What are the projects that you love the most, that you're most proud of? Some, you know, some projects that you can share with us that you really, you know, you're really proud of? That really embody, this idea of design driven innovation.

I mean, the honest answer to that is I'm sure you would have the same one, which is the most recent projects I'm working on, but of course, I can't tell you about those. Or at least for the most part. Um, you know, I think, I think the things that I'm personally proud of that have come from IDEO, not necessarily just for me, um, you know, are open all the way going right, the way back to, you know, the, the, the, some of the early pieces of technology that we got to work on, like the first laptop and the, and the, and the original Apple mouse and things like that. Because, you know, there is a, still a role for design when it comes to anticipating how new technology will fit into our lives. And back then it was the first computing hardware, mobile computing hardware, and early cell phones.

These days. It might be thinking, thinking about things like how, uh, you know, crypto technologies are going to provide, uh, are going to fit into our lives beyond, you know, beyond financial services. And we're doing a lot of work in that area is very exciting and very interesting. Um, you know, other things that I'm, I'm, I'm proud of, when we started to apply, uh, design thinking to these broader kind of systemic, um, issues. So whether, you know, for instance, whether it was in, um, health care and helping the Mayo Clinic set up their own, their own innovation lab and work on how to provide, um, uh, different and better patient experiences or with, or with, uh. Another one which I wrote wrote about in the book a long time ago is with Kaiser, um, well health system here in California, helping nurses redesign how their own workflows happened in, in, on the ward and, um, making massive differences in both in terms of quality and quality of experience, both for patients and for themselves.

Um, and I mentioned a little bit earlier, um, Carlos Rodriguez-Pastor, or the first project he asked us to do work with him on was to design a new education system for Peru, a new private school system. Which was needed to be very high quality and very low cost. And together with them, we, we, we literally designed a ground up school system where we designed the curriculum, the technology, the classrooms, the school campus, the teacher training system, everything. Um, that the, now there are more than 50 schools in Peru. Um, uh, that's called the Innova School system. And, um, the, uh, the impact has been absolutely enormous. And in the, the, uh, the, the, the academic scores of their students are up to three times higher than they are for the national average in maths and languages. Just last year, we had the first graduate from one of our schools get into Stanford, uh, and, and, and she came from a family that couldn't

even afford to pay her school fees at Innova, even though they're very low.

So she went through Innova on a scholarship. And so incredibly proud of, of applying design to something that's making a massive difference to children and to emerging middle-class families, uh, in a, in a country like Peru. And now that school system is getting rolled out in other Latin American, uh, Latin American countries. So, um, I mean, another one that, that I, that I, that I mentioned already, but the creation of IDEO.org, as we realized the opportunity to, um, uh, uh, to apply design, uh, in the development and social impact, um, arena and, uh, working with Jocelyn, uh, and, and, uh, uh, to, um, create a structure that allowed us to work on projects in Sub-Saharan Africa and India, also in the United States around those who are most vulnerable and most, uh, most in need. I'm very proud of that. Very proud of a lot of the work that they've done in, uh, things like, um, uh, teenage reproductive health, uh, and in financial inclusion and women's, uh, opportunities, business opportunities for women. I'm very proud of all of that work,

Uh, as the designers, in the, in the very moment we design something, most of the times, that something goes in the environment, has an impact in the environment. An impact that by the very existence of the product itself is negative. The moment, you know, you produce with you, you ship it, you use it, the you dismiss it, what's your point of view on our role and our responsibility, mostly for, you know, as designers, uh, in sustainability? And, and, and what can we do to, to, to drive a more sustainable approach to anything that we design? Well, you know, I think, I actually think, and I know you feel the same way, um, that as designers, we are in a unique position to make a difference, um, and you know, and the truth is that, you know, for all of the great, great benefits that the industrial revolution brought to the world in terms of raising literally billions of people out of poverty, it relied, uh, and has relied up until recently, on a system of production that's linear. That takes the Earth's resources, literally digs them out of the ground, converts them into products that often get used for a very short period of time. Sometimes only once, and then they get thrown away and they end up in landfill where they're no use. Um, and, uh, not only can we not afford to waste the level of resource that we're wasting, um, uh, that way, and also putting enormous amounts of waste into the oceans and other, uh, into, into our environment, but also 45% of, of carbon that we output comes from the way that we make products and the way that we grow our food.

Um, and so we have to find a different way of, um, uh, of making things. And, uh, I was very lucky, uh, several years ago to meet Ellen MacArthur, um, uh, who under the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has really been building the argument and promoting the value of the circular economy. Uh, and for me, what struck me as a designer, I use metaphors and analogy to understand the world and to create new ideas. And, and the, the, the, the, the simplicity of the idea of a circular economy of things staying in use for as long as possible. Um, and, um, that was a, that was a concept that was really clear to me, and very much easier to understand the abstract idea of sustainability, which, you know, I can't picture sustainability, but I can picture the circular economy.

Um, and, uh, and so I got very excited about that.

And, uh, I've been working with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and initially we did some work to create a sort of circular design guide to help designers have an entry point into how they may change their design practices to become more circular. Um, now, and I know you're part of the same community of design leaders who are seeking to influence all of our organizations and as many organizations and many other designers as you can in the world, to think about how they are designing to, to make, to make the systems that they're designing in, more circular. And I think that applies to our food systems. It apply, applies to the way that our cities work, it applies to the way we manufacture every kind of product that we, that we manufacture. It's not going to be easy to get to a circular economy. We need innovations in materials.

We need innovations in manufacture. We absolutely need innovations in recycling and how we bring and keep materials in use. Uh, we need societal innovations in terms of what our expectations are for the way we consume products and use products. So there's immense amounts of innovation that are necessary. Um, but I think it's possible. Uh, and, uh, and it's very exciting to imagine that we may eventually get to a future where it sort of doesn't matter how much stuff we make, because we're keeping it all in use. What we're making is as regenerative to the planet as possible. Um, uh, and, uh, I think that would take us from a society today that can feel sometimes very fragile, to a society that can feel abundant and optimistic, and that can serve the needs of everybody, including the planet. Um, and so that's a, that's an idea I can get pretty excited about.

You're getting, I think everybody excited with this description of the opportunity. You use a word that I love,

optimistic. How important is optimism for an innovator in the world?

I think it's essential. I mean, and I don't mean a naive optimism. I don't think you, I mean, utopianism is a, is a, is sometimes a trap that we can fall into as designers thinking that everything in the future is going to be wonderful. Of course it's not, but if you don't have a certain level of optimism, but that you and those who you're working with can create a new idea and have that idea go into the world and have it make a positive impact. You'd never start the process in the first place. Um, and so I think it's the same level of optimism that an entrepreneur has, right. I think as, uh, as I think those of us who bring new things into the world, those of us who create new businesses, those of us that create new ideas and put them into the world, have to be optimistic. Um, otherwise, as I say, you would, you would, you would never start. Um, and I, you know, and I think that, um, that, uh, is part of the mindset of design thinking is this is, is this optimism. But it can't be naive. It has to be informed. It has to be based on an understanding of the world. Um, but, uh, but I think that's perfectly possible. Um, I find it, I find myself that the more I know about the world, even though the challenges get greater, my optimism gets greater also,

I, by the way, there is a wonderful exhibit of Stefan Sagmeister, the renowned graphic designer in New York is going on right now, probably when, when this episode will be out, would be done. Uh, but Stefan did an amazing work in, uh, essentially looking at the statistic of where we are today in our society compared to 200 years ago. And the progress from democracy, uh, women rights, uh, mortality of children, and many, and, and it's a very optimistic exhibit, you know, showing the amazing progress of where we are today. There is so much pessimism in social media, complaining about the situation we're in. And the reality is that we are in a journey. And we are in a journey that is proceeding in a positive way.

And I really believe in what you just said. We need to have a optimistic outlook for the future, enjoying the progress where we are today. And then trying to your, your question, what's next, always asking yourself what's next and trying to push that positive future.

Exactly. But without being naive and understanding that there are some areas where, you know, we don't know yet, what is this a curve that keeps going up and up and up, or are we going to crash at some point because the planet can't support what we do anymore. And I think that's why this, this energy climate circular economy, and by biodiversity, those overlapping

questions are all ones that should, should deeply concern us as designers, um, because they require us to change the way that we do so many things. Um, and, uh, you know, it's never easy to learn how to do something that you're very used to doing and to learn how to do it differently. And of course our modern economy is so very complex. And as we've seen from the last year, um, when, when, when it has to change very quickly, it's not quite as adaptable as we think. You know, as, as we saw all these supply chains get broken and problems occur. Um, and so there's a lot of work to do. Uh, uh, we're not going to be short of, uh, of interesting projects to work on as designers for the next, the next few decades.

It's actually a very exciting moment. One of those moments we read about in the books in twenty, thirty years. Our children will read about this moment in time. Um, what's next for Tim Brown? What are you working on? Is there anything that you can share that is not too confidential?

Well, you know, this last, this last year, I mean, I, you know, I stepped, I stepped aside as the CEO of IDEO a couple of years ago now. And, um, and, and handed the Baton over to this incredibly strong leader, Sandy Speicher, and she's doing a wonderful job, but neither of us expected it to be quite such a challenging time when she took over. And I feel very guilty about that sometimes, but I'm also very glad that she, um, she is leading IDEO at this moment because I think she is uniquely, uh, able to help take us through this sort of remarkable and remarkably challenging time. So for me, it's allowed me to sort of step back a little bit and, and, uh, you know, step into the work and, and get back to a little bit of writing and, and get closer to some of our clients again.

And, um, and look a bit more closely at some things I've been interested in for a long time, like designing for systems, um, or, uh, you know, how we might need to convene broader coalitions to take on some of these bigger challenges that the world faces. And so I've been focusing most of my energy around things around health and healthcare, particularly at the systems level. I've been doing some very interesting work with, uh, with one of my colleagues here, Joanne Cheung on, on framing, a new approach to upstream health that we're calling First Mile Health, um, and how we use interventions rarely much, much earlier in order to reduce the amount of money and energy we need to spend on health once people get sick. Um, so that's been an interesting area. I've been, we've been working a little bit on, uh, on some of the vaccine hesitancy issues, uh, uh, working with some coalitions, um, here in the United States. Um, I've been working on some

strategy programs for some clients, which is fascinating. I loved, I still love thinking about the future of technology. That's what I did in the early part of my career. And I still love doing that. Um, and so, uh, and the circular, the circular economy question that we were just talking about, all of these things that I'm spending, uh, spending my time on, and I'm finding interesting projects to work on or interesting conversations to have, uh, as we, as we think about that same question about what's next for design.

And if you look back at the past years, uh, you know, being an innovation leader by definition, when you do innovation, sooner or later, there will be failure. There will be mistakes. It's the nature of innovating, right? If you don't fail, probably there is something wrong. So is there any failure that you remember that taught you something? And after that, you're like, Oh, now, you know, I grew out of this failure. I, I learned something out of this experience, something that you want to share with us.

Oh, I mean, I mean, of course, I mean, we're constantly failing as designers because, you know, as we make things, as we prototype things, we learn and we learn what doesn't work as much as what does work. Um, you know, I, I, you know, there's such a long succession of failures, but, um, you know, I, I remember very early on in my, in my career working on a very important piece of strategy on the future of computing for one of the, um, uh, then relatively big, uh, American, uh, computer comp, uh, companies, um, a company called Unisys. And, um, and, uh, you know, this would have been in the, this would have been about 1989, 1990, something like that. And we completely missed the internet. I mean, we completely missed it. I mean, you know, I mean, we knew that the internet existed, but we had no idea that what was going to happen, happened. Only three or four years later.

But I mean, you know, um, uh, the web, the web browser came out in what, 93, 94, something like that. And, uh, no, we weren't the only ones to completely miss the internet.

MIT Media Lab missed it too. But, uh, but it's still like, Oh boy, it taught you, it taught you a lesson about how the, the, the future, while there are some things that you can imagine being, you can, you can predict there can be such important things that you completely miss. And so, again, it, it led me to the belief that design has to be both visionary and incredibly kind of reactive and adaptive. Uh, and so, uh, so that, that was a, that, that, that, you know, that was a good one, I mean, and another one much more recent. And I think more to do with my with sort of what I've learned as a leader

of, you know, of design and a leader of strategy is, you know, um, back in 2014, I worked with a team and we sort of evolved what I thought was the next strategy for IDEO, which was, this was long after we had all the growth through design thinking.

And it was really about this idea of, of, of could IDEO be a platform for, for multiple ways of using design in the world. So rather than just focusing on our consulting business, could we build products and services around design that would be, that would be useful. And, um, and I was, you know, I was busy saying, Oh, you know, I think over the next three or four years, we can probably build this huge thing, this huge platform. And the truth is we have built a platform. We've got this remarkable business now, um, uh, around a platform around, uh, called IDEO U, which is, um, online education around all math, all things to do with design thinking. It's very successful. Um, we've built IDEO.org we've, um, uh, we've built a kind of experimental, uh, CoLab with its own venture fund. We've built these things. It just took three times longer than I thought it was gonna take.

Uh, and, um, uh, and realized by trying right, the, the, the complexity of trying to shift or expand your business model is actually one of the hardest design challenges for any organization to take off. Um, because so many of your behaviors are, are, are wrapped up around, um, around the way your business model works. Um, and, uh, uh, you know, whether you're a, you know, a manufacturing company or a brand like Pepsi, or you're a, you're a professional services firm like IDEO, I mean, uh, trying to break outside that or expand that is, is extremely difficult. Um, and I think as designers, we're often thinking about new business models. We're often thinking about the move from products to services or systems, um, and, uh, you know, that experience taught me how difficult it was and, and, and maybe realize quite why us, our clients struggle with it as much as they do.

If you could meet your, uh, your young self, Tim in his twenties, just out of school, ready for his design journey, what would be the advice you would give him?

Um, uh, well, it's, you know, funny, I'll tell you a funny story about that. Um, so when I was 21, um, uh, I was at school, my undergraduate school up in Newcastle in England. And, uh, um, and, um, one of my professors, uh, asked me if I would write a short article on what I thought, what I thought design was all about. Um, I was a second year student. He was editing an, uh, an issue of, uh, what was then a national design magazine. Um, and so I wrote a little article on what I thought



design was all about, and I totally forgot about it. And then I found the article, uh, about seven or eight years ago. Um, I found a copy of the magazine and buried in a pile of papers that I had my, so I read re-read this article, and I hadn't seen it for, you know, so this wouldn't be twenty years. I hadn't seen it more than twenty years, twenty-five years. And, um, uh, I was shocked actually. Uh, one about how naive I was, I was as a writer, but actually I was asking some of the same questions then, as I'm asking now. Um, because I was, I was, was wondering why design didn't have greater impact, uh, and why design wasn't being applied to the more societal issues. Um, uh, I was, at that time, I was reading people like Victor Papanek, and I was very enamored with the idea that design could be, could be, it could make a bigger impact on every people or all people's lives. And so, you know, and then I'd forgotten about some of those things. And I came back to them, um, you know, many years, many years later. And so I think the advice I would, I would, I would probably give myself is your ideas are relevant right now and, and, and, and stay committed to them. Um, and, and, and don't stop asking questions that you think are important now. Uh, and, um, I was lucky, you know, I got the chance to keep answering, asking those questions and, and find a way I found it found a way to sort of explore them. And ultimately I hope, uh, have some impact with them. But, uh, but yeah, I, um, as I, as I said at the beginning, I, I literally have been asking that same question since I was 22 years old, Believe in yourself, believe in your ideas and never stop asking questions. The way of the Philosopher.

And then I think the other thing might be No, I, um, at the time, uh, uh, I went from, from Newcastle. I went through a college of art and I just assumed that I was going to go and set up my own studio. And I was getting, you know, the classic British or Italian, you know, route for, uh, for, uh, for a designer. I totally did not realize that the most important things that were going to happen in my career were not the ideas that I had, but it was the other designers that I was gonna meet and ultimately work with. Um, and, uh, and so I, the other piece of advice, uh, although I was absolutely, totally fortunate and it happened to me anyway, would be look out for, look out for the most interesting people to collaborate with. Um, because when I think about all of the important work that I've done, it's because I've been able to collaborate with other truly great people, starting with people like, starting with Bill Moggridge and David Kelley, but going on through a long, long list of people, both inside IDEO

and outside, out in the world. Um, and, and I realized that that has been probably the most important, uh, had the most important impact on my career.

This is so, so precious, you know, looking for mentors and role models and people, you can be inspired from them. And this imply also something that is very important, being open to receive, being like a sponge. You know, and seeing every encounter, every experience as an opportunity to grow. And many people eventually even have many opportunities, but they are blind, they are unable to receive. So I'm sure you are really a fertile ground to receive the seeds that these people were planting.

I think all great creative people are constantly curious.

Um, and you know, I, you know, I sometimes struggle. I have an idea. I'm excited about the idea. It's sometimes hard to remain open, open-minded, but, um, and we all struggle with that, but the truth is, you know, um, uh, I find, uh, the inspiration and sometimes the challenge that comes from other people is the thing that keeps me moving forward as a creative person. Um, and, uh, uh, I just feel incredibly fortunate to have spent my, my life, uh, being exposed to other people's ideas and, uh, and other people's personalities, other people's friendship. Um, and that that's been the way that I've been able to carry out my work

Well, talking about ideas Tim, thanks for being with us today.

Sharing many ideas, inspirational as usual. Thanks for everything you are doing for the design community and in the world, but mostly also what you're doing through design for the world. We are grateful for this. It's a pleasure.

Well, thank you, Mauro. It's been a, it's been great fun.

It's been a fun conversation. I always enjoy hanging out with you, of course. I have a huge amount of respect for what you've done also in the world of design. I mean, I think of you as a great colleague. And so, uh, thanks again for the invitation. I really enjoyed it.

Thank you Tim.