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 it's ultimately inhuman to only see things for their functionality.
We want things to be more than that.
The desire for beauty is something that's in us, and is not trivial."
I'm quoting the guest of today, is one of
the most renowned graphic designers in the world.
He's recognized for his unorthodox provocative designs
that tweak the status quo and question the designers' role in society.
He works across disciplines including design, typography,
environmental arts, conceptual exhibitions, video and more.
Often using his own body as a canvas
and is well known for his work in the music industry,
including album covers for stars like the Rolling Stone,
Lou Reed, Jay-Z, Aerosmith, just to name a few.
His work in the music industry earn him two Grammy awards,
his TED talks are inspirational, to say the least,
and today we'll try to capture some of his thoughts and his dreams,
trying to put ourself in his shoes.
Stefan Sagmeister, welcome to "In Your Shoes".
[LAUGH] Hello Mauro. Happy to be here.
Hi Stefan, such a pleasure to have you with us today.
I was, you know, I've been knowing you for a while
but I was preparing for this conversation today
and it's just mind-blowing the amount of talks and theories
and quotes that you can find online about you and about your vision.
Not just of design but of the world in general.
So, how did it all start?
How did you decide to become a graphic designer and
what was that first step in this professional journey?
Well, I'm Austrian, hence the accent,
was born just about five miles from the border of Switzerland and Austria,
middleclass family, very normal childhood, quite fine in a small town,
pretty town on the lake in the Alps,
and was not particularly good at drawing in school.
But when I was 15, I change schools and there in the new town
joined a small youth magazine first to write
and then very quickly, because nobody else wanted to do layout there,
I took over the layout of that magazine.
And because that magazine was also quite involved in organizing concerts

for bands and maybe a demonstration here or there.
So, it was culturally active, all these activities
needed somehow graphic design iterations,
posters for this and transparencies for that and so on.
And so, because I already did the layout, that was also me who did those things.
And I found them enjoyable to do,
I liked it much more than I had the writing,
and at the same I was also in a band, terrible band,
but through the band of course was very close to album covers
and I thought, "Well, right now I'm doing these sort of like cultural things
for a magazine but the dream job of course would be do design album covers,"
because by that point of like 15 or so I understood
that this was actually a possibility that
there are people, not so many, but there few people
in the world who actually make their living doing that
and I just thought that would be fabulous.
And how did you start in the music industry then, the world of,
you've been working with some of the most famous music artists in the world.
Well it took a while, so then I studied, I worked for this company and that company and
then it was only in '93, so I would have been 30 years old then,
31 years old, when I opened my own studio
and sort of rethought of that initial thought
why I became a designer in the first place.
So, basically 15 years later, I'd done,
I'd tried maybe an album cover here and there,
but very, very isolated pieces.
But, when I opened the studio I really thought,
that would be fun, to keep the studio small
and to combine my true biggest direction of loves, music and design.
And, I think, even though we didn't have a single music client, it said,
on the first opening card, it said "Design for the Music Industry".
[LAUGH]
But it was a more sort of like, a hope, than a fact.
And, ultimately, I think I saw
all the record companies and many of them said
"Oh we'll give you a job," but they never really did
and I think the change came when an album cover
that we designed for a friend's band was nominated for a Grammy
and the record company sort of understood,
"So, he cannot just do this for the portfolio,
they can also do it in real life and can make it happen."
And I think that was the big change then a good number of jobs came in.
I think the first of the covers that we did for a person
that I was a proper fan of would have been Lou Reed.
Who also, of course, lived very close by so he literally came...
Here in New York?

Here in New York, yes.
So, the studio was and is on 14th street and he lived on 11th street.
So, he literally came, meaning one day to do them
and rang up and said "I have Lou Reed here for you,"
and without any, there was no appointment or anything.
And I, of course, did not believe it until he actually stood there in real life.
The magic of New York. [LAUGH]
Yes. Yeah, yeah.
I was not there in those years, but I was talking
with one designer that work here in PepsiCo with me.
Mm-hmm.
And he was here, you know, back then and he told me that
when you opened the office in New York,
you took a picture of yourself without clothing [LAUGH]
and you sent it to everybody,
to potential customers saying, "I have the attributes,"
let's put it this way, "To open a studio in New York".
How much did it change between the Stefan of those years,
that was starting, and the Stefan of today?
Well, I mean, and this would have been '93, so this is 25,
whatever that means, 27 years ago now.
So, I would hope that I would have changed in the meantime.
I mean, for one thing, I, when I got many offers to do this again,
I wouldn't do a naked photo shoot now.
Not because I suddenly, you know, wouldn't be able to, but the joke kind of got old.
Like, you know, [LAUGH] we did the opening card,
which from a pure functionality point of view,
obviously worked extremely well because it's almost
three decades ago and we're still talking about it. [LAUGH]
Yeah.
But also, like, you know, it was printed as a postcard
and maybe sent to 200 people but
ultimately it got reprinted in design magazines all over the world.
And that print run was in the tens, possibly in the hundreds of thousands.
So, from a pure advertising effect point of view, this actually, this clearly worked.
And it was definitely at the time it needed some, I had to overcome some fears.
Like, I remember my girlfriend at the time really advised heavily against it.
She thought that, I had basically, when we opened the studio, there was one client.
And she thought that if I'm literally sending this card out,
I'm going to lose that one client. [LAUGH]
And, that just did not happen.
What did happen was that a month later when I visited that client,
he had that card pinned up in his office with a little post-it note on it.
And the post-it note said, I'm paraphrasing, "The only risk is not to take any risks".
Which, of course, was perfect
and it definitely encouraged me to here and there, not all of us,

because I lose, there's also many times when
I don't do anything to overcome my fear,
but it definitely encouraged me here and there
to go beyond what I would normally do.
And that's, it turns out that in design, or specifically communication design,
this works really, really, really well from a functioning point of view
because if you're in a business
where you have the attention of your audience
by definition only for a second or possibly
even a fraction of a second, like in this case,
people looking through their mails, getting a ton of postcards.
And the people, let's say record companies,
who are clients that have sent this to, probably
get at that point, probably got dozens of cards like this every day.
Then to have some sort of surprise in that card
or possibly even some sort of shock in that card
is a very helpful and efficient strategy.
Yeah.
You are a risk taker by definition, at least this is what we see from outside.
I'm sure that there are many risk from what you just told me
that you wanted to take eventually you didn't take.
Yep.
But if you look back, probably there are many that you decided to take.
You often talk about taking the risk and taking action, you know, acting.
And today, this is so important when any company
or any individual try to drive innovation,
to do something different.
Now, one of the problem of taking risk is that sometimes, you fail.
Sure.
- You make mistakes. - Yeah.
Is there any failure, I mean, any mistake that you made
that you remember today and
was very important because it taught you a lesson and
then you started to think differently after that?
I have to say, there were no disasters from times
where I had to talk myself into overcoming fear.
And we even did a, we even made a piece of work about that that basically said,
"Having guts always works out for me,", because it literally, it became sort of a,
a real pattern that, every time that I was at that point,
"Should I really do this, can I do this, is this maybe too much?"
And I did do it, it always went out well.
So, you would think that, from that experience the fear would just go away
and you wouldn't, that wouldn't be there, but that's not the case, sadly.
Like, that's still there or maybe positively, maybe it does
keep me from doing completely stupid things, here and there.
[LAUGH] Is it [making is?] more preservation [in the speeches?]. [Some?], yes.

But meaning I think that in general my theory is that
fear of course, comes...
like the reason that fear is put so importantly into our brain.
It's, you know, even that it has its own little shortcut,
the amygdala, where fear gets through
much faster than joy ever would, is of course to keep us safe.
And I think that that came from, you know,
the time for our, you know, our prehistoric ancestors,
you know, that the brain wanted to make them
see that saber tooth tiger in time.
Yeah.
I feel however that me and many of us, you know, leave such safe lives.
That those and others that have such safe existence in our work,
no saber tooth tigers attacking ever at all.
That...
to overcome that fear more often would
bring me very much likely a more full life
in life and a more full working life as well.
Does it make you more happy?
And I'm asking this for obvious reason.
Mm-hmm.
You have been starting the idea of happiness, investigating that for many, many years.
Mm-hmm.
You actually [CLEARS THROAT] directed and acted
[LAUGH] in your own movie, The Happy Film.
I remember, I saw it in the premiere in New York City with you
and it's really a beautiful,
beautiful movie that make you really think about
the meaning of life and how to reach happiness.
Is a movie I always recommend to everybody.
So, is this ability and desire to take risk
somehow connected to your search for happiness?
Do they work together in a way or the other?
I think they do.
Yes.
And there's actually a scene in the film, like in the second part
where I go through the three strategies to make myself happier.
Meditation, cognitive therapy, and drugs.
And in the second part, in the cognitive therapy part,
the therapist basically tells me that
that she sees that I'm a person that avoids confrontation.
And that maybe I here and there should put myself
into a situation where confrontation is necessary.
And then at least in situations where I feel uncomfortable.
And I do think that of course, immediately is not happy.
Meaning I don't want to be more uncomfortable than anybody else,

I mean, like it's... uncomfortable is uncomfortable.
But I think that the results of this, the possibility to see and learn something new,
or if it's applied to work, the possibility to create
something new, of course, is much, much higher.
And I've once heard a talk to a very young,
fantastic Brazilian designer who basically
make that his daily modus operandi.
He said that if he doesn't have that uncomfortable feeling in his belly,
he knows he's just repeating himself.
So, he used that uncomfortableness
as a sign that he's working on something new.
And I have to admit, I never really quite got there.
Because I just hate the uncomfortableness too much. [LAUGH]
It's like, you know, there's just many days where
I also much rather want to be comfortable.
And work on something that it's...
I think my sort of like rule of thumb is that
I feel best when I know about half of a job,
and I don't know the other half.
If I know everything, it's really boring and
then I really feel it's just repeating myself.
If I know nothing it just becomes too frightening and I get too anxious.
So, somewhere in-between I think is my sweet spot.
And it's pretty clear I think to a designer, but
there is many people listening to us today that are not designers.
And you know, the question is, why a designer
decides to make a movie about happiness?
Well, I, since a long time, implemented this scheme.
Where I go on a sabbatical every seven years.
So, I've done three so far of seven years of work, one year of sabbatical.
And in the sabbatical years...
Where did you go?
The first one I stayed in New York because it was so new
that I couldn't even think of going anywhere else.
Second one, I was in Indonesia, in Bali.
The third one I did three locations, Mexico City,
Tokyo, and some tiny village in the Austrian Alps.
And in the second one, in Indonesia,
I was working on furniture that was going into the studio
that was in New York, that was being renovated while I was in Indonesia.
And a friend of mine came to visit and thought that this was sort of
a little bit of a waste of my time to do furniture for my own studio.
And that I should be working on something that some other people have a benefit from.
And I felt that he had a point.
And then thought for a while of what that could be and I had all this...

I had already given a talk on design and happiness,
like you know, is it possible to design something
that would increase the happiness of the user?
Or is it possible to design something and become happier as a designer?
And I felt maybe I should make a bigger project out of it.
And of course, I could've done a book, like
a big picture book and it would've been much easier,
because I know how to do books.
We've done many books in the course of the studio.
And I felt maybe to make a documentary film would be a bigger challenge.
and...
And that it definitely turned out to be.
Because I had underestimated how different
the world of documentary film really is from communication design.
And it was a very, very steep learning curve
with... full of ironically, I don't think
I've ever worked on any other project where
I felt miserable for so long than working
doing The Happy Film.
And it was ironic also from the point of view that it was a self-generated project
that in some ways, you know, you expect to be kind of fun to work at, you know,
much funner [PH] for sure than, you know, promotional client projects.
Where you ultimately can do whatever you want.
And of course, also, many of these freedoms
that me and I suspect many other designers
are always asking for, also come with their own problems.
Because if you can do whatever you want or whatever you can.
That really creates its own area of difficulties.
Did it make you more happy?
That journey?
It was eight years, am I wrong?
It was eight years now, yeah, yeah. [LAUGH]
It was eight years that we...
I think the original plan was sort of like, probably a two-year period.
And it turned out into an eight-year period, which looking back,
I think was on the one hand a mistake,
I think we could've done that also in a much shorter time.
At the same time, it would've been a different film because it somehow,
probably because of the built-in learning curve,
like I just needed to learn so much
until a film came out that was watchable.
[Two and that?]
it's very difficult to even just make a film that an audience
can sit through that's interesting enough to, that doesn't bore you.
And doesn't make people turn off after five minutes.
It was just a very hard and very, very long journey.

Now meaning, I have to admit, I haven't seen the film in quite a while.
You know, I think it's been three years since it's done.
But I remember at the end, before we showed it
to audiences, both my neighbors and myself,
we directed it together, literally had no clue
if we made something that was worthwhile or not.
If it was crap or watchable.
We did not break after being involved with this,
so for eight years we literally were clueless.
And then once it came out, there were many, many people, you know
specifically people that we admire, one being you.
Who thought it was a worthwhile endeavor.
And that of course originally was the reason to make it.
But of course, when you are in it, you know, you forget about that reason again
and it's like about the nitty gritty of that day of
getting that particular shot or that particular edit done.
At the end is a piece of design, right.
Yes.
It's something that came from your heart, from your mind.
And you're offering to the world, it's between poetry and design,
I think in general, they're so connected anyway.
How do you feel when you have, you create something, whatever it is.
Mm-hmm.
And you see the reaction of people using it and enjoying it
and they're really appreciating what you were able to create.
Oh, it's fantastic. I mean,
I think it's ultimately the reason to be a designer.
You know, I think that as a designer, we make things for people.
And so, meaning I've always believed that
the ultimate judge of your work is the audience.
And in the same vein, I think that that stayed with us in the studio.
So, when we design, let's say an exhibition on beauty,
it's extremely important to both Jessica and myself, that
this exhibition is visited and visited in numbers that sort of
make the hard work that we put into it worthwhile.
Let's say if we would have a couple of hundred people going to that exhibition,
that would be the last exhibition we've ever designed.
Because then it just makes no sense.
And if those visitors think that the exhibition doesn't tell anything to them.
Or that they leave the exhibition having nothing learned
or gained or haven't been excited
or haven't been touched or haven't been moved,
then we would have to do something else or
we would definitely think of that exhibition as a failure.
I think that that's the, in many ways also
some clarity of design, that the functioning part,

you know, and I think that every piece of design needs to have a functioning part
where it does something and then it needs
to have a joyous part where it touches an audience,
or that it delights an audience.
But the functioning part is, I like it because
it allows for sort of like an easy measurement of its quality.
The touchy part is much more difficult to quantify, but you know, I don't know,
let's say if I redesign this can and I push it so hard,
the design, that I can't drink out of it anymore,
that it doesn't allow me to take a sip of liquid, then it stops being a can
and it becomes a small sculpture.
And then I can look at it from a artistic point of view.
Is it a good sculpture or a bad sculpture?
But it won't be a piece of design anymore.
So,
even though the quote that you opened this talk with,
where I say that, you know, functionality alone
or functionalism really is not enough.
And I really believe it.
I do also believe that design, in order to be called design,
needs some sort of function.
Even that that can be... some design can be
a fantastic piece of design if its function is extremely low.
Like it depends on how it is used and what it is really supposed to do.
You know, meaning there are chairs out there that where the function of sitting,
which is the main function of a chair, can be quite uncomfortable.
But it can still be an extremely successful chair
if it does other things, like you know, I don't know,
enhance my status or
tell me something about the world or it can be quite close
to an art piece where it almost pretends to be a chair.
So, all of these things are possible and still be called excellent design.
I don't know if it's true or not, but I remember
a story that a teacher at university when
I was in 19, 20, told me when I started to study design, about chairs.
Mm-hmm.
And being uncomfortable.
It was very similar to the point you are making,
but with a different kind of example.
Essentially, you expect a chair to be comfortable, to be good design.
Yeah.
And they were talking about McDonald's
and how they were designing their chairs to be not too comfortable.
Sure.
So, that people wouldn't stay [LAUGH] sitting too long.
Sure, sure, sure, sure, sure.

It was the idea of fast food.
Yeah.
I don't know if it's true or not, but it was a very interesting idea
of how good design is all about your intent and what you're trying
to create for your experience and for
your consumer or your target audience in the moment.
And it can go extreme.
Meaning, I have a friend in Holland, very good designer, Hella Jongerius,
and she famously said that, "There are still people out there
who can ruin a perfectly fine vase by putting flowers into it."
[LAUGH]
So, she basically, she designs a thing that looks like a vase.
But weirdly you're not supposed to put flowers in it.
And even that has a long precedent in history, like
I've been to the residence of the Bavarian emperor
and when he ordered his table-sets from France, hand-painted of course and so,
they literally, I mean they came plates and
vessels and cups, they were never thought
for actually being eaten from.
They immediately went into display, so they were somewhat, they were art pieces that
took on the shape of design, but weirdly
were not meant to be used as pieces of design.
So, meaning, I would say that in this case,
the function while it's reduced to being a display piece,
it's extremely small or the main function is zero,
meaning the traditional plate function.
But of course, it does other things.
It's very interesting to hear Stefan Sagmeister talking
about functionality and celebrating functionality.
I think probably somehow tired of all this conversation
about functionality that we have in our world.
At a certain point, you are like, "Wait a second, yes, we need that.
But we need to celebrate also beauty."
And you did a lot of work around the idea of beauty.
So, can you tell us more about what's the role of beauty in society,
the social role of beauty, the meaning of beauty?
I mean, your point of view on beauty.
I mean, I can talk about this forever.
Yes. [LAUGH]
[LAUGH] I'll try to keep it small, or to keep it shorter.
But I'd say that specifically in the second part of the 20th century,
through various directions from history.
This idea took place that all we need is function,
and that really led to functionalism.
Where people said, partially because they understood ideas from the Bauhaus [rung?],
partially because the clients pressed for,

"Let's do this very fast and very cheap."
Where this idea took hold that if it actually, if it functions well, it's good.
You know, and I think that form follows function.
[COUGH]
It was also misinterpreted from the original architect
who said it, Louis Sullivan, a Chicago architect,
who's own work followed no function whatsoever.
Whose on forms very often were ornamental and not extremely functional.
But going back to about that second part,
I'd say 1960 to 2000,
when housing blocks were developed,
where literally the idea was, "Let's put as many people as cheaply as possible
with a roof over their head."
And that led to these gigantic social housing projects,
pretty much on every continent,
North, South, East, West.
Where people really didn't want to live in.
Crime rates went up.
Many of them needed to be dynamited in the 80s
when they were built in the Sixties because
they really weren't functioning.
They were not fit for human housing.
That's an easy example, but you see that all the way until now.
If you look at our social media platforms, the one that's purely functional,
that's literally function only would be Twitter, the one that's much more,
the aesthetics play a big role, would be Instagram.
You have been talking about social media.
You are, you know, in social media today, you can be your personal branding.
You know, anybody can somehow finally use the platform communication.
Sometimes in a good way, sometimes less good.
You, I don't know if it was an intention,
if it was planned, but in a way or the other,
you are an icon, you are admired and celebrated
by many designers who are around the world.
I have many of my designers here in PepsiCo that just love Stefan Sagmeister.
You are somehow, you have a brand, Stefan Sagmeister is a brand.
Did you do it on purpose?
You design your own brand?
Or it was just the results of the extraordinary work you did over the years?
I can like really honestly say, which is sort of odd
considering that we created many brands for our clients,
that I spent extremely little time
and thought on working on our own brand.
Meaning, we created this little icon, very simple, an S in a circle as a logo.
Changed it into an ampersand in a circle when Jessica joined.
Considering I'm doing now mostly self-generated work again,

it's back to the S in the circle.
But from a design brand point of view,
I spent a number of hours on that thing,
yes, we designed the business card and things like that.
But that was pretty much it.
Now, of course, we both know that
a brand in a commercial sense of course, is much bigger than
some logo design and a couple of stationary items.
And ultimately, the brand is basically
all the things that other people see in a product.
And all the attributes.
And that was never consciously designed by myself or the studio.
And mostly, I mean, there were always a couple of goalposts around, you know.
One was, "Let's try to do as good work as we can.
Let's try to stay small.
Let's try to be kind to other people and ourselves within the studio."
I love this. [LAUGH]
You know, not that we were successful all the time, in all of this.
You know, but that was the goalpost.
And I think from those posts,
a reputation started to form.
Meaning, you know, obviously I think we've mentioned it,
I've been doing this now for a long time.
If I count those first posters for that magazine
when I was 15, I'm 57, so that's over 40 years
that I've somehow been involved with
communicating things through the way of design.
And talking again about social media, recently
you have been using your social media to offer project critiques, right.
How did you come up with that idea?
And I really like this idea of interacting with
your fans, with the people that follow you.
Can you tell us more about that?
Well, ultimately, the original impetus I stole.
Many, many years ago, I heard a rumor that
Louise Bourgeois, the fantastic artist
is giving a salon every Sunday.
And I looked into it and called up her studio and it turned out to be true.
Yes, you could basically get on a list and go there with your, you had to bring work
and she would talk, she would dissect it.
And I did and it was fabulous.
Like one of the best Sunday nights I've ever spent.
I mean, she was brutal.
10 people were there and she told exactly what she thought, completely honest
without,
and she was not taking any prisoners. [LAUGH]

And so, I basically copied that thing pretty much exactly.
And did this on Monday evenings in the studio.
Up to 10 people could come in and I would critique,
we would close the door and I would critique their work.
I had to try to be brutal, because it's not really so much in my nature.
But I also tried to be as honest as I could.
And then I just start... my travel schedule became so crazy
that it became difficult to hold these Monday evening sessions.
And so, I started doing it again on Instagram.
And of course, on Instagram, it's less personal,
because... and it's shorter and it's, you know,
obviously a critique in person is probably more valuable
and at the same time of course,
the Instagram version can be seen by so more, many, many people.
And it has this fantastic extra bonus that other people can chime in.
So, like you know, I obviously do the first couple of sentences.
And then other people chime in, often some say, "No, I don't...
I completely disagree with Stefan, I think blah," or, "I think this or that."
But what I really love about it is that
I myself try to have constructive criticism
or the kind of criticism that I would like to get that is helpful to me,
like I try to be not snide or ironic or tear somebody down.
And that tone is obviously, well it's very clearly recognized by other people.
And that tone is continuous in the comments.
I try not to involve myself in the comments,
then it's really sort of like out there.
Like I don't come back and say, "No, you're wrong.
I really think that blah is correct."
Yeah.
I do the first iteration and then people chime in,
but those other people's comments are also...
there's very, very few exceptions, very positive
and very sort of like with having
the best of the person critiqued in mind.
- That's kind of lovely. - Yeah.
I also think it would be difficult to do this on Twitter,
I'm not sure if that would even be possible.
So, yeah. No, I think it was... well,
I wanted to say it's one of my better ideas,
but it actually wasn't. [LAUGH]
It's one of Louise Bourgeois' better ideas.
And zooming out, not just on Stefan account,
but thinking about social media in general,
crowdsourcing, the global world.
Yeah.
Do you think, you have two potential point of views on what is happening.

On one side, this [world?] may average down everything to a common denominator
and who screams the loudest is gonna be the one who's gonna be heard.
Mm-hmm.
On the other side, the other perspective is that actually
this competition on one side
and then building on each other ideas, may generate
actually accidents and a better world and better ideas.
What's your point of view on this world we are entering,
this global social media driven high-tech world we are in?
I mean, I feel that so much of the negative points
of social media have been pointed out
and I agree with many of them.
You know, the envy generates, the aggression on all of that stuff.
That I probably would more want to point out
the positive parts that it brought about.
You know, when I was on sabbatical in Tokyo,
I met many of my friends, among them also
Italians, who were young designers who were able to make
a living in Tokyo purely from their Instagram accounts.
They would create some sort of system where they would, you know, post something
every second day or maybe every day of things that they would love to do.
A project that they would love to do,
and from those projects, they got, you know,
jobs from Dubai and South Africa and Finland.
Even though they lived in Tokyo and had a good life in Tokyo.
Now, for a no-name young designer, that sort of
possibility was just not there before social media.
It's like, when I was 24, after I studied, I would've
loved to live in Tokyo, but it just wasn't possible.
Like unless you had rich parents.
But if you needed to make your own money, that just was not possible.
And so, things opened up, I also think that by and large,
the world of design has a wider audience through social media.
Meaning, when I think of people that contact me
that are not designers, but clearly follow my account
and comment on it, they would've never or even find that sort of interesting.
That they would be interested in an account
that talks about, "This should be kerned differently."
"And maybe try this typeface instead and possibly
make a darker shade of red for this element."
Or meaning, you know, without any doubt
the general public is much more design-centric
and design-savvy now than it was 40 years ago.
Meaning, if I look at my parents' generation,
my parents couldn't have told you a single typeface
if you would've asked them, like they probably...

I'm not sure if my dad was aware of the fact
that typefaces had names and were designed by people.
If you now go,
if we leave the studio and go on the street, and make a little survey,
I'm sure everybody that we would meet could tell us the name of five typefaces
that they have on the computer and like or don't like.
It's just, and I think social, well obviously
the digitalization played a big role in that.
But so does social media, I would say specifically Instagram,
there are I think advantages through
that because I also think that it is possible
that a number of people and non-designers,
I'm always most interested in non-designers.
Like as a designer, I'd much rather speak
to the general public than to other designers.
I think that a number of non-designers
basically sharpen their view on how to see.
Or what to look for.
Or on elements, how they are composed and get together on Instagram.
Now, that might be not 100 percent true.
Maybe I'm looking at this issue a little bit with rosy glasses.
[LAUGH]
But, I suspect it.
And how do the media, social media in this case, media,
the new media, are impacting design, typography,
and the way we express ourself
through the different design disciplines?
I mean, I think that the entire culture of likes, of course, on some,
on the one hand, [democratized?] the whole scene.
At the same time made it, put a weight on some things
and took a weight off other things.
You know, meaning we all know artists who became [true?],
through no social media presence of their own,
much bigger because they looked good on Instagram.
Kusama being one.
I could think, Dan Flavin being another, like you know,
I would say that out of the minimalist artists,
at least from my own perspective,
Donald Judd or Walter De Maria also,
were much bigger than Dan Flavin, but now with,
because neon looks so good on Instagram,
then Flavin seems to be the leader of that pack.
And of course, the influence on fashion is significant, you know.
Meaning, I think on the good paths, more colorful, maybe
more flashy, maybe more easy to understand concepts
get more play and on the bad side,

probably somethings that are more subtle.
Like, you know, particular details probably are lost on the wayside
because they don't really look all that great on Instagram.
Yeah.
One last question, your
restless search for the new, your investigation of a variety
of different topics from beauty to happiness
in your own real life and through the world
and the lenses of design has been inspiring
many people around the world, including myself.
What inspires you?
I mean, probably, there's a couple of things that I do all the time.
I see a lot and I travel a lot, so I do a good number of talks,
we have exhibitions around the world.
I see and involved in projects around the world.
So, basically being in different parts.
And having that possibility to maybe even though
I might be busy, just spending some times,
this can be as little as 10 minutes or a half-an-hour
in a hotel room, while the days before,
the day or two before, I saw a lot of things, can be fruitful.
I don't really spend all that much time looking at things online,
but I do spend a lot of time looking at things in real life.
Let's say like I definitely spent, you know,
New York is fantastic for that, spend a whole
bunch of time in its museums and galleries you know.
You guide us through multiple galleries just recently, right.
It was a beautiful afternoon. [LAUGH]
Well it's, when I say that, I don't really do this for,
"Oh, I have to go out and get inspired."
I do it because I think it's a very fun thing to do, you know.
It just, meaning, what nicer thing can there be
than with a couple of friends, go to Chelsea
or even the Upper East Side or go to a couple of museum shows together.
Because that possibility that you see an original piece
and are able to look at that piece and
discuss it while you're looking at it is, I think, inherently enjoyable.
But also only museums or galleries can really offer such a thing.
You can't do that at the movies or you can't do that online.
It's this mixture of you're seeing something
but you're with your friends, so it's this mixture of a,
I guess a cultural experience and a personal experience
that I think makes it so beautiful.
I'm totally with you.
Well, it's been very enjoyable talking about fun and enjoying to talk to you today.
Thanks for giving us the possibility to enter in your shoes. [LAUGH]

As it is tradition, now in this podcast,
I want to give to you now, we were in your shoes
we would like you to be, in our shoes when you are at home, you know. [LAUGH]
Oh, fantastic. [LAUGH]
[Try some of these?] slippers by Pepsi! [LAUGH]
Excellent. Look, and it's... they are blue.
[LAUGH] Hopefully?...
They fit beautifully to my suit, so... [LAUGH]
And it is a prototype, so they're now...
- Oh, they are? - Yes.
Excellent.
We're talking about prototypes and experiments.
Wonderful.
Then we will have something better, we'll send it to you,
- and we have this beautiful bag. - Perfect.
Thank you again, Stefan. [It's a real pleasure?].
It was a pleasure, Mauro.
Thank you, thank you.