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MBS ([00:00](#)):

I get asked often how I sold more than a million copies of *The Coaching Habit*, and I wish I had a better answer because then I'd use it to sell a million copies each of my other books. And of course, there is no singular answer. It's a combination of a number of things going well plus a healthy dose of magic fairy dust, aka, the right things at the right time, getting lift off and somehow escaping gravity.

([00:30](#)):

Now, for *The Coaching Habit*, one of the things that we got right, something that other people often get wrong is the design of the book itself. Because of my relationship with Page Two, my publisher, I was able to push for creating a reading experience through the design that felt lighter and accessible or not intimidating. So many books feel heavy, a wall of text, and I wanted a book that when you flick through it, you went, "Yeah, yeah, I could read this."



[\(01:02\)](#):

Now, this wasn't just something that occurred to me in the moment. On my shelves, I've actually got lots of books that I think have done a great job with design, pretty much anything from the publisher Phaidon, that's P-H-A-I-D-O-N, Austin Kleon of course, who's *Steel Like an Artist* trilogy is gorgeous, some of Tom Peter's later works who really played with the design of what a business book could be, and Stefan Bucher as well, and more on him in a moment. Whatever you're working on, let's forget the content for a moment, what's the experience that you're creating?

[\(01:40\)](#):

Welcome to Two Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Stefan Butcher likes designing books, and he likes questions. I mean, I found him through his wonderful book *344 Questions: The Creative Person's Do-it-yourself Guide to Insight, Survival, and Artistic Fulfillment*. So I know we're going to get along. He's a graphic designer and illustrator with an illustrious career so far, illustrious that's probably a pun. If you happen to pick up the soundtrack to the first *Matrix* movie, well, you've seen his artwork on the cover and he created typography for films like *The Fall*, *Mortals* and *Mirror Mirror*. And Stefan's current work is really no less interesting. He live streams his design shops.

Stefan [\(02:36\)](#):

I have an illustration series called *The Daily Monster*, so I'm a creative, not a layabout, a getabout, a creative scallywag.

MBS [\(02:45\)](#):

I think I probably need to hire him to design the *Advice Monster* series. Now, if you're interested in his latest monstrous livestream, well, you'll find that at



dailymonster.inc, I-N-C. Now, the seed for Stefan's interest in design were planted early and easy enough to see in retrospect.

Stefan ([03:03](#)):

My dad got me some comic books and they were Disney comics and they were printed on uncoated stock on that really ratty sort of easily yellowed paper.

MBS ([03:13](#)):

Love it when somebody's journey starts with the books they were given. Books, they're awesome. I've actually just rescued some of my favorites from the family home. I mean, the Captain Pugwash series, classics of their time. But for my books, my childhood books, well, I was caught up in the story and the heroics of those books, but Stefan's attention was snagged by something else.

Stefan ([03:36](#)):

What I noticed is that there were black areas that were colored in, but the color was spilling over onto the black, and it took me 20 years to figure out that that's called trapping, but that was the first time where I thought, "Well, wait a second, this is an artifact." So it was the first time that it sort of pulled back and noticed that it's an artifact.

MBS ([03:56](#)):

I love how the word artifact is made up of both art and fact. I mean, its technical meaning is an object made by a human being, it's typically an item of cultural or historical interest. So what we're saying here, in other words, Stefan realized that a human made the comic book, a designer. I mean, that's obvious enough when you say it out loud, but mostly we miss our life is shaped by design, both good and bad.



Stefan ([04:23](#)):

The brain wants to save energy, so it doesn't really think about things much. It's like, "Yeah, pretty sure this is a road, pretty sure this is a tree, we know what to do." And what the designer's eye is in that context is that it went, "Oh, right, it's a comic book. I'm supposed to read these panels and I'm supposed to see what the characters are doing." But part of my brain, let's call it the designer brain, pulled back and was like, "Oh, wait a second. There's the story level, there's the visual level, but then there's also the level of the artifact of, oh, this was created. How was it created? What is it doing? Why is this this way?"

[\(05:04\)](#):

And that's kind of my core mission in everything I do, is to get people out of their default setting and to cultivate... I mean, I guess ultimately it's just awareness. I didn't know that when I started going down that road, but 10 years of therapy will do things to you. And the first time I noticed graphic design as a thing that I would call graphic design was actually sort of a very similar thing, which was looking at a CD for a British band called Fuzzbox in the '90s. And I was going through the booklet because I'm a liner note reader, which is no surprise to anyone who knows me. And there was a design credit and it said, "The way it looks is gorgeous by The Designer's Republic Limited," and I'm an ESL person, right? English was my second language so at that point I'd learned English for maybe five, six years, and I knew enough to know that that's not a proper sentence. And it was before the internet, I didn't know what The Designers Republic, it was as a design firm out of Leeds, I think.

[\(06:16\)](#):

And so I thought, "This is confusing, but intriguing." And then I started reading the rest of the legal copy and there were all kinds of little things hidden, and I think that was the first time that I really recognized that there's a person behind this. I think when I saw that comic book with the trapping, I was like, "Oh, this is an object. This is not just a thing that I interact with mindlessly," but that CD was the first time where I thought, "Oh, that's not a design studio or an agency or a



publisher, that's somebody like me sitting there making decisions and having fun."

MBS ([07:03](#)):

Stefan, you talked about your mission being disrupting the status quo. What are the seeds of that?

Stefan ([07:11](#)):

I find life bewildering and somewhat anxiety-inducing and my coping mechanism has always been... Well, there's a thing in The Simpsons, "Alcohol, the cause of insolution to all of life's problems." And mine is anxiety where I have this misapprehension that the problem in my life is that there are rules to life and I just can't understand them. And so if I can try to define the rules and then play by them, then everything will be okay. I'm told by my therapist constantly that's not true, that's not how it works. But I think -

MBS ([07:56](#)):

Which part is not true, that there are rules to life or that you should play by them?

Stefan ([08:00](#)):

That there are rules to life.

MBS ([08:01](#)):

Okay, got it.

Stefan ([08:02](#)):

That there's some sort of deep underlying rule book that everybody knows, I just don't. But I think my mission sort of developed as sort of a maladaptation to that erroneous idea. And so it's this thing of, can I somehow by hook or crook figure out some rules or can I just establish a set of rules of my own and then



use that as a framework to exist more peacefully? And I think that's where I've geared my work is to get people into the mindset of, can I pull back to see what's happening beyond the surface level? Or better yet, can I just make up fun rules and fun games for stuff that's every day? Do all your house plants have names? And if they don't, they should, because your life will be much more fun if they do.

MBS ([09:14](#)):

That's true. I am already taking away a key action from this podcast, and we're only six minutes into it. You talked about disrupting the status quo as a maladaptation because actually it's less exhausting just to follow the rules, figure it out, and just kind of head down, blend in. It is, I imagine, quite tiring to have as a deep engine for your purpose a sense that I need to be disruptive. What do you draw upon that allows you to keep being a force of disruption?

Stefan ([09:59](#)):

It's interesting to hear it reflected back to me that way because I think fundamentally for myself, I don't set out to be disruptive. I try to create harmony. I try to put myself in harmony with the world, and I try to create harmony in the world. And I think a lot of times I just fail at it. And so where does the energy come from? I think is because it doesn't feel optional to me because I very much long for peace and for connection, and my body and my brain as part of my body is swimming at various degrees of desperation towards that sense of harmony. And this is the technique that it tends to go for.

([11:03](#)):

So it's not a thing of where I get up in the morning and I'm like, "Well, I'm going to disrupt the status quo," it is really more like, "Man, it worked a little bit yesterday, maybe it'll work a little bit more today." And it has been over the years, the way of disruption has changed for me where I think there was a period of, "Screw it, people don't seem to like what I'm doing so I'm just going to



do whatever the hell I want to do anyway." And that was that sort of the angry young man kind of thing, though never with a real defiance but always like, "Well, I'm just going to do whatever I want to do, but do you like it?" And now it's more, "Hey, I'm just doing what I'm doing over here. I'm no threat to you."

[\(11:57\)](#):

I always talk about... I talk about myself all the time, but I think of myself as a platypus. I'm weird, I'm a little bit duck, I'm a little bit beaver, and I'm just swimming around. I'm not a threat to anybody, I'm just trying to make my thing happen. And I'm trying to help other people do the same and just go, "Hey, what's going on with you?" And so now my disruption is just to go against hustle and to go against performative excellence and performative power. I'm in a bad way, the pandemic has messed me up. I'm isolated, I'm not doing well at all. I'm in a tough period in my life, and I talk about it openly because I think that that's a helpful disruption that I can contribute right now is to not go out and go like, "Me? Doing swell," because that's sort of the Western way of just going out and you're only allowed success. And I think that's hurtful and I think that's harmful.

MBS [\(13:11\)](#):

As an aside, you do know that platypus have poisonous spurs on their back legs, so they're not totally harmless and they do glow in the dark, which they've just discovered as well, which is a whole nother thing about platypi. But to the real essence of the question, how do you move beyond performative? Because it is asked of us by our society, and it is also often part of what it means to be a designer, be a creator, needing to give people a degree of confidence that you can do a thing for them. So I'm wondering how you sit with the power of putting aside the performative act, but also stay in the vulnerability of not being in that performative act?



Stefan ([14:12](#)):

It's a fluid thing. I mean, there are times where I have to go into... Well, I guess I would draw a distinction between a performative competence and an embodied competence. And I try to stay in the embodied as much as possible where I can say, "Hey, I don't know what's going to happen with this project right now. I can tell you based on what I've done, here are the things that we've bumped into in the past. Here are some things that I see coming down the road for us. Let's talk about it." And I think that to me is the distinction versus going, "Don't you worry about it. We've got this."

([15:03](#)):

And I mean, I'm not going to go into a new client meeting and go, "Boy, I'm feeling real unsure about this one. This is all making me very nervous." I'm not going to do that, but I'm going to stay open and I'm going to stay aware of the situation. And for example if they were to say, "Well, I'm looking at your portfolio and you've never done this kind of job before," then I would say, "You're absolutely right, I haven't. And I think we need to talk about that. If it's important for you to have somebody who's done this 10 times before, I'm not that person." I may bring it up first, I might say, "Hey, I noticed that what you want I don't have in my past," and then we can address it. And I think that's true in any relationship. I read *Win Without Pitching*, the Blair Enns thing.

MBS ([15:03](#)):

Oh, I don't know that.

Stefan ([16:05](#)):

Oh, super, super good. And a thing that he said at one point that I always remembered is, "Don't be afraid of information." And a lot of how I interact with people comes from movies and TV shows because my parents were also loners. And so I was like, "Oh, how to be with people? Let me look at TV and movies." Not a good approach, I don't recommend it. But I remember picking up a thing



from a law show that said, "Never ask a question that you don't know the answer to," which is a really good approach if you're a trial lawyer on TV, it's a lousy way of living. But I did that for decades.

MBS ([16:48](#)):

It's terrible, yeah.

Stefan ([16:50](#)):

And then I heard, "Don't be afraid of information." I'm like, "Oh, I am afraid of information because I want to maintain relationships, I want to avoid conflict." And now when I say I don't want to be performative, that goes into that to say, "Hey, I don't know the answer to this. I sense that there's something going on. Can we talk about it?" And to do that calmly and to do it with a real sense of curiosity, I think that's what I'm talking about.

MBS ([17:22](#)):

I love that. Stefan, there's a ton more here, but I'm going to ask you about the book you've chosen to read for us, what have you picked?

Stefan ([17:30](#)):

I have picked *The Salmon of Doubt* by Douglas Adams, which is-

MBS ([17:35](#)):

Really great choice. Douglas Adams, what a legend. And the first time Douglas Adams has been picked, so I'm so glad you're bringing him to us.

Stefan ([17:42](#)):

Oh, good. Well, I love Douglas and I never got to meet him, but I discovered him as a teenager, as I think a lot of boys do, certainly through *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. *The Salmon of Doubt* is a collection of writings that were pulled from his various computers after he passed. And it is been one of the



books that I've returned to a lot. And a lot of it is technology writing, and some of it is now woefully outdated. But what always drew me to him was that he just sees the world in such a different and kind of unusual and quirky way, and that gave me a lot of hope when I was marooned in the German hinterland as akin.... As akin? As a kid.

MBS ([18:46](#)):

Yeah, as a kid, yeah.

Stefan ([18:49](#)):

And it invariably makes me feel less alone in my skull.

MBS ([18:54](#)):

That's brilliant. What pages have you chosen to read for us?

Stefan ([18:58](#)):

I have chosen part of a lecture that he gives about the evolution of humanity and the evolution of communication, and he talks about the ages of sand.

MBS ([19:15](#)):

Well, let me introduce you. Stefan Bucher, also one of my favorite books, *344 Questions? Reading Douglas Adams, The Salmon of Doubt*. Stefan, over to you.

Stefan ([19:36](#)):

What is the fourth age of sand? Let me back up for a minute and talk about the way we communicate. Traditionally, we have a bunch of different ways in which we communicate with each other. One way is one-to-one, we talk to each other, have a conversation. Another one is one-to-many with undoing of the moment, or someone could stand up and sing a song or announce we've got to go to war. Then we have many-to-one communication. We have a pretty patchy, clunky, not really working version we call democracy. But in a more



primitive state, I would stand up and say, "Okay, we're going to go to war," and some may shout back, "No, we're not," then we have many-to-many communication in the argument that breaks out afterwards.

[\(20:21\)](#):

In this century and the previous century, we modeled one-to-one communications on the telephone, which I assume we're all familiar with. We have one-to-many communication, boy do we have an awful lot of that, broadcasting, publishing, journalism, et cetera. We get information poured at us from all over the place, and it's completely indiscriminate as to where it might land. It's curious, but we don't have to go very far back in our history until we find that all the information that reached us was relevant to us and therefore anything that happened, any news, whether it was about something that's actually happened to us in the next house or in the next village, within the boundary or within our horizon, it happened in our world. And if we reacted to it, the world reacted back. It was all relevant to us.

[\(21:11\)](#):

So for example, if somebody had a terrible accident, we could crowd round and really help. Nowadays because of the plethora of one-to-many communication we have, if a plane crashes in India, we may get terribly anxious about it, but our anxiety doesn't have any impact. We're not very well able to distinguish between a terrible emergency that's happened to somebody a world away and something that's happened to someone around the corner. We can't really distinguish between them anymore, which is why we get terribly upset by something that has happened to somebody in a soap opera that comes out of Hollywood and maybe less concerned when it happened to our sister. We've all become twisted and disconnected, and it's not surprising that we feel very stressed and alienated in the world because the world impacts on us, but we don't impact the world.



([22:01](#)):

Then there's many-to-one, we have that, but not very well yet, and there's not much of it about. Essentially our democratic systems are a model of that, and though they're not very good they will improve dramatically. But the fourth, the many-to-many we didn't have at all before the coming of the internet, which of course runs on fiber optics. It's communication between us that forms the fourth age of sand.

MBS ([22:29](#)):

What is it about this that you find comforting and helpful?

Stefan ([22:41](#)):

It feels like talking to a wise friend. It feels like being in the presence of somebody with a humane perspective on life, somebody who tries to see the world kindly and to help me navigate it. And I had some difficulty picking two pages because I was going through it, and I respond with Adams to his general soul rather than a particular page where I'm like, "Oh, well that's good stuff." So I picked something that seemed relevant, especially to this moment in history. The man sadly passed long before our current age of isolation and fragmentation, but this seemed to address that some. There's a wonderful piece in the book about him swimming with manta rays, but it's long, it's wonderful. There's one where he walks up the side of Kilimanjaro with somebody dressed as a rhinoceros.

MBS ([23:56](#)):

Wow.

Stefan ([23:57](#)):

There are all these wonderful things in there, it's one of my favorite books. But this seemed a well contained thought. And again, it seemed like a good thing to



think about in terms of the root of our current discontent and disorder, dyspepsia and various other 'dis's.

MBS ([24:23](#)):

I'm wondering how you keep your heart open.

Stefan ([24:29](#)):

I seem to have no choice in it, which sometimes feels like a curse but it really isn't, because I know from episodes of depression that it's not the pain that kills you, it's the numbness. And I have those patches too. And sometimes it sort of comes and goes during the day. A lot of my design work and a lot of my illustration work is to just, not to numb myself out, but to go into a zone where I disappear and I just become what I do, that's very relaxing. But yeah, it seems to be pretty wide open. There's a Paul Simon Lyric... Oh, it's from Graceland, right? What does it say? God, there's something about the heart and everybody sees you're blown apart. I can't quite get it together, but it's very good, look it up.

MBS ([25:40](#)):

I can't either, but I know exactly the line you're talking about. I ask, Stefan, because in this conversation you can feel these two rhythms moving through it. One is you said a few times feeling isolated and alone, and the other time being kind of cracked open and vulnerable at the same time. And I suspect you're speaking truth to lots of people who listen to this who have similar experiences of both of those things coexisting. So with a certain tendency to be alone and to be isolated, what have you learned about what it takes to reach out and connect?

Stefan ([26:32](#)):

It takes effort, humility, and good humor. And I'm in Los Angeles, and from talking to people I've found that it's a particularly difficult city to connect with people because of geographical distance. Also, everybody seems to be forever



working on the project that's going to break them where it's like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, no, no, no, I totally want to get together, but I got to just finish this project because I feel it, this is the one." So there's a lot of that going on.

[\(27:10\)](#):

And when I would reach out to people to connect, I often would feel, it would trigger some self-esteem and self-worth issues for me when I wouldn't hear back or it would take forever to schedule just getting together for a coffee. And I would always see it as a reflection on, "Oh, I'm not worth their time." And I'm shedding that, with some difficulty, but I'm prioritizing it. I've made it a project to say, "I want to create a rich circle of friends." And I've recognized that when people are busy, they're just busy, they just have their own path and they have their own struggles. And so I talk to people and I say, "Hey, let's get together." And then sometimes it takes a year to get together for a coffee, all right. And I try to do it with enough people where I can just get together because it's important to me to see people.

[\(28:19\)](#):

And the other thing is when they have stuff, I show up for it or I try very hard to show up for it. It's like, "Are you releasing a book? Let me come to your launch. Are you having a gallery show? Let me put on my mask and go to it." So it's a decision, it's just making it a priority.

MBS [\(28:40\)](#):

Shifting focus slightly, how do you choose what to work on?

Stefan [\(28:47\)](#):

Do I like the people? Sometimes it can be that there's a lot of money involved, which helps-

MBS [\(28:59\)](#):

Often persuasive, yeah.



Stefan ([28:59](#)):

Which is often persuasive, but I also have said no to fairly ridiculous sums of money because I was like, it's not even that I didn't like the people, it's like, "Eh, this doesn't interest me," or, "This feels compromising to me." I think it's just, do I like the people and do I feel like I can help? And sometimes I like the people and I'm like, "Yeah, but I can't help you. This isn't for me." And then I try to give it to people that I think can help. Yeah, it's just that.

([29:36](#)):

And the nice thing is that because of my platypus nature, poison spikes and all, the people who find me usually are a good match. It's very rare that I get approached by somebody where I go, "Why in the world are you talking to me?" It's usually very clear how we connect.

MBS ([29:59](#)):

Yeah. And how about for your own projects? Do you have your own projects? Because I suspect you do. I mean, I think of this book is 344 Questions, and there's just a new expanded edition coming out from it as well. I'm projecting entirely here, but I know that I have a surfeit of ideas of things that I could do and at certain times I'm forced to pick one of them to be the next thing I'm working on. I'm curious to know how you make that decision.

Stefan ([30:32](#)):

It's the ideas that won't let go.

MBS ([30:34](#)):

Yeah, that's true.

Stefan ([30:36](#)):

An interesting shift has happened because it used to be that it was very clear where I thought, "Oh yeah, yeah, this idea isn't letting go of me and this is going



to connect me to so many things. I'm going to be able to give talks based on this, or I'm going to get work based on this, or I'm going to meet all these people based on this." And a few years ago I had an epiphany around some things in my personal life where I thought, "Oh, I thought that my work was going to be the engine of connection." And it has been in many ways, but the kind of connection that I really want isn't going to come directly out of that.

[\(31:14\)](#):

And so now what I work on, I really just have to love it. I have to feel that it has some spiritual importance to me. And I'm an atheist, but I mean, this is in the sense of I want to bring something good into the world, I want to make my life and what is in my sphere more peaceful, more kind and more gentle. And if I can do that, then that's a good project. And at this point, I'm doing a lot of music learning because I like puzzles and I like getting that emotional avenue. So there's now a real competition for my time where before it was like, "Well, I got to do something. I know how to design and illustrate, let me do that." And now it has to compete against, "Oh, I'm learning extended chords. So it's got to be better than that, it's got to be more fun than that." And so that's a really good filter.

MBS [\(32:34\)](#):

That's a really good filter, yeah.

Stefan [\(32:36\)](#):

And when I'm in the happy position that I have maybe a human in my life that I want to spend a lot of time with, that takes precedence over everything else. And that's not always been true, which is one of my regrets in this life is that a lot of times I've fled into my work and I've neglected people around me... Or not even neglected, but I didn't allow myself to enjoy them to the degree that I could have.



MBS ([33:07](#)):

That's profound.

Stefan ([33:09](#)):

And that is my absolute priority now. And right now I'm just sort of sitting here, music is at the top spot, but humans, music, everything else, also chocolate.

MBS ([33:27](#)):

Also chocolate, yeah. One of the things I loved about the book, the 344 Questions book is it is a collaboration. It's not that obvious from the front of the cover, but in fact you've clearly reached out to people to ask them about questions that matter to them and probably prompted them to go further and deeper with those questions and then designed them in a very intriguing way. I'm wondering what you've learned about the ebb and the flow of collaboration?

Stefan ([34:05](#)):

Oh, can you elaborate on what you mean by ebb and flow?

MBS ([34:13](#)):

My suspicion and my own experience of collaboration is it is a dance together as you try and figure out how to work with people. Maybe for this book it was like, "Let's have a conversation, give me your questions and then I'm going to make it look fantastic," so it was a little more transactional, but I can't but help feeling that across the wide range of things you've designed for from record covers to book design to space design, you've had to collaborate with other people to get stuff done. And I'm wondering what you could teach me around what the essence of collaboration might be.

Stefan ([34:55](#)):



I love that question, thank you for elaborating. It's changed for me because I think in the beginning it was a sparring match and now it's not even a dance. I don't know what it would be like, maybe a joined hike or something. And what I mean by that is I recently learned about... What is it called? Covert agreements or covert contracts where you're in a relationship and you state what you're doing together, but one side makes a covert contract where I'm like, "I also really want you to give me personal validation from this," or, "I also want to get rich off this," or something like that, but you don't state it. And so there is an imbalance in the collaboration because there's dark matter that's pulling at the gravity of the objects in the relationship, speaking of space work.

[\(35:55\)](#):

And so for example, when I was starting out, it was like, "Well, I want to help you with the thing that you've asked me to help you with, but I also want to have a portfolio piece because I need this as a way to show the world what I'm all about so that you can love me." And now collaboration to me is we are each other's keeper. It's my job to treat you with respect and help you get to where you want to go and it's your job to teach me with respect and help me where I want to go, or at least not impede me, let's lower the bar.

[\(36:37\)](#):

But I think as long as that can be made explicit and addressed as a core goal, it changes everything. And it's changed so much in my work with clients, with collaborators to say, "Honestly, here's what I want out of this. Here's what I would like to do. Is that what you want? And if it isn't, can we meet in the middle?" And I know in personal relationships, what I always want to keep in mind is to say, "I want us to have a great time, I want us to have joy together. What makes that happen?" Because I'm going to bring my energy into this relationship, and if what I'm bringing isn't fun and I'm not using my energy correctly, please tell me because then we'll do something else. I was recently in traffic with a good friend of mine and we were stuck in traffic and they were



getting quite annoyed with the traffic and I thought, "I don't care. I'm happy just to be together with you and chat."

MBS ([38:00](#)):

I've already won, yeah.

Stefan ([38:02](#)):

Yeah, I've already won, I don't care if we're sitting on the freeway or if we're sitting on a couch. I'm sorry you're getting frustrated, but to me this is already 95% of what I want.

MBS ([38:14](#)):

That's great. Hey Stefan, it's been a wonderful conversation, thank you. Thank you for being so open and just tenderhearted about this conversation. As a final question for you, is there anything that needs to be said that hasn't yet been said between you and me?

Stefan ([38:34](#)):

Just to say that I've enjoyed it so much and that it's such a wonderful conversation. We are living in interesting times and I think we are headed into very interesting times. And I think the only sane and viable thing to do right now is to connect ourselves as gently and kindly and deeply to our fellow travelers as we possibly can. Because I think, yeah, it's going to get weird and I don't know if it's going to get wonderfully weird or apocalyptically weird or just dissonantly weird, but I think we need to create our own sources of harmony and connection and you've allowed me to do that with you today and just it means a lot to me, thank you.

MBS ([39:57](#)):

One moment amongst many that caught my ear with Stefan, he said, "I'm an ESL person. English is a second language." And in fact, when I've watched him



livestream his monster designs, he often moves between English and German. And I'm guessing, but I think that's one way, this kind of double language or English as a second language, to stay outside of things, to stay slightly awkward. When you become fluent in the flow, you stop noticing. But when you're not in the mainstream, in the flow, you're on the outside looking in.

[\(40:33\)](#):

I mean, Stefan talked about this being on the outside, trying to define the rules, trying to figure out whether you wanted to play by the rules or not, assuming that you even had them figured out in the first place. I mean, it's a paradox, I think. One part of being a designer is getting to know the details intimately, a deep immersion into a subject. That's what I did with *The Coaching Habit*, I knew coaching really well. And one part of a designer is staying removed, being on the outside, noticing patterns and rhythms and deeper structures. That's also what I did in *The Coaching Habit*, which is I'm like, "How do I break what's normal and not seen? How do I make what's unseen obvious? How do I unweird coaching?" So my question for you, are you on the inside or on the outside at the moment?

[\(41:24\)](#):

There were so many episodes I wanted to connect you from this, but I'm limiting myself to two. It's the designer's choice, create limitations. So let me point to Mia Birdsong, *The Sacred and The Profane*, and also Jessica Abel, *How to Survive Being Creative*. And by the way, I know some of you have asked me to start numbering our episodes, we're going to do that, we're going to retrospectively go back and number episodes so I can give you a number to listen to, not just a name.

[\(41:51\)](#):

If you'd like more of Stefan, 344lovesyou.com is the kind of the website to go to, although the website I quoted earlier about his livestream designing dailymonster.inc, that might be something fun for you as well. Thank you for



listening. Thank you for your support and encouragement and loving the podcast and listening to the podcast and recommending the podcast. We are growing our listenership base slowly but surely, and in part that comes through word of mouth, our favorite way to grow. Thank you, you're awesome and you're doing great.