

THINK
CLEARLY



Annual Report 2016



Turner Rode The F-train
Billboard, New York, 2009

What initially looks like
a mistake can be the
beginning of something
beautiful.

This was a theme I first explored in my first gallery show as a photographer: finding and framing beautiful colors, textures and compositions in cracked concrete, rusty doors and peeled off subway billboards. Above is a piece from my 2010 show.

**The power of
repetition 4
February 17th 8
Job hunt 18
Kickstart 21
World Tour 27
Parsons 29
Kindness 33
Books 40
Daddy duty 43
Look ahead 44**

The power of repetition

Every year in December I gather my notebooks from the past year and I dedicate some time to sit down and process. I review my notes and write out a timeline of events. I also try to find the major themes. Then I reflect on the most important events and themes, which for me means that I write my way through what happened, my emotional experiences around it, what I have learned and what I might do with these learnings. Eventually I look ahead into the coming year and try to imagine what I might want to accomplish in the year ahead. This is always hard for me and a bit daunting because whenever I set a clear and specific goal there is the risk that I will fail at reaching it. But I like to at least try. When I am done with my personal reflections I write this report and share it with the world on my website and in my newsletter. In the past I have spent entire weeks on this ordeal, writing, photographing notes, editing photos, designing etc., but this year I feel that I have found a more intentional and focused process: I spent three half days on the debrief and then a short day on typing up and making the report.

Why do I do this?

The answer varies depending on which aspect of 'this' the question is referring to. Taking the time to personally debrief my year is for me the most important part of the process because this is where I get the benefit of the perspective of time. What was perhaps a dramatic and highly stressful event back

in February now seems less terrifying and I can see it in the context of everything that happened after. This is therapeutic and enjoyable for me, but it also gives me a chance to identify learnings that I might have missed when I was in the midst of the chaos. With my current lifestyle and work I felt that taking three half-days to do this gave me a lot of value. But one half-day might be enough for others and seven full days might be optimal in some other situation. My friends find this rather self indulgent, and I would tend to agree. I don't have any problem with that. For me it's a real luxury and I appreciate it very much. Much more than any fancy hotel or spa treatment. Making the report and especially sharing something so personal is typically more puzzling for people. This is seen not just as self indulgent but straight up narcissistic. Writing a 30+ page report about a year in your own life. I don't mind if you think this. Perhaps it is. But it's not how I see it.

Being fictional

For me, the Mathias that figures in this report is in some ways more like a fictional character. He has many similarities with me, the person sitting here and typing this. But he is not me. I just happen to have a privileged view into his experiences and I decide to share a glimpse into these experiences for three reasons: First of all, I think some of these experiences and learnings can potentially be useful and relevant for you as you are living your life. Secondly I believe that doing this publicly can help legitimize this self indulgent luxury and perhaps inspire you to reflect

on your own experiences, in private or in public as you please. If I didn't share this, I would feel that it was a missed opportunity for learning. Third and last, I feel that we live in a world where most things are constant streams: Facebook, news, daily work life — it all just flows without interruptions. This is lovely in many ways but it also makes everything feel completely ephemeral: the top news story about Syrian refugees is just one pull-to-refresh from being replaced with the next funny gif and a dear friend sharing her progress in recovering from breast cancer. Making a report is a way of enacting a milestone with a little more permanence and gravity.

Three major plot points

In order to understand this year, it's important to know what came before: 2015 was the first year in my life where I worked full-time for someone else the entire year. This provided an unprecedented amount of financial and emotional stability for me and in turn for our family. Even as my work took me flying quite literally all over the world, we experienced what it was like to have a great platform for our family. 2016 turned out to be nothing like this: everything was turned upside down, I quickly Kickstarted my transition before I realized that I had somehow become unable to be kind to myself. These are the main stories of this year's report. I hope you will enjoy it.

If you have any questions or comments or just want to say hi, I am always happy to hear from you on Twitter, WhatsApp, iMessage or e-mail.

— much love, Mathias



Yep, still baking...

97 loaves baked this year: 381 on January 2nd through 477 on December 25th. Photographed for Tapas Magazine because they wanted to do a story about the Sourdough Inn.

**I built this tiny igloo
one night after the
kids were asleep.**



February 17th

11am

It's February 17th 2016. I'm working at Hyper Island, a Swedish school and business transformation consultancy with a strong reputation in digital. January and February are usually the quieter months here. But tomorrow there is some action as we will host our annual Industry Forum: a gathering of industry thought leaders with the intent of collectively mapping the future needs for learning. I am in preparation and production mode, printing and cutting trend cards for the workshop, however, the communal cutter in our shared WeWork office has seemingly been used to cut sheets of super-sticky glue and is essentially useless. So I am trying my best to get the glue off, using some cotton cloth and a bottle of whiteboard cleaner. In the middle of this scrubbing I get an email from my manager Per: "Hey Mathias, can we meet today at 4pm?" No topic. No reason.

I'm not really sure what it is about this e-mail, but I know immediately that something is up. We are five people in the office and the atmosphere is typically quite casual. Also, my calendar is public so if he really just wanted to know my availability he can just check it. I write him back that this is fine, and ask if there is anything I should prepare for the meeting. Obviously I don't get any response to this. I have a knot in my stomach and I am suddenly happy that the cutter is smeared in glue because it gives me an immediate problem to focus on for a while. Eventually I get it clean and proceed to cut the cards and get everything setup for tomorrow.

4pm comes around. We sit down to meet. He closes the door. I realize what is happening right before he says it: he is restructuring the company and because my work is really tied to our projects, which fluctuate dramatically throughout the year, he no longer wants to have a Learning Designer on monthly payroll and would rather hire freelancers only when the need is there. His face is very serious. I know he respects me and my work. A lot. This is truly painful for him. I think he says that, but even if he hadn't I can tell.

There are many more words that I don't really remember. But what I do remember is seeing myself from the outside in a flash, sitting in that office. I have insight into the company financials so I know how we are doing and I'm not actually surprised that this is happening. What surprises me is that I feel zero resistance to this new reality. I would have expected some sort of denial — oh my God I can't believe this is happening — what am I going to do? — what about my family? — but there is none of that. I remember just feeling the swoosh in my gut like a rollercoaster ride and the speed picking up. It's ok. I can figure this out. Let's get specific on our terms etc. My manager is still talking. I want to ease his pain. I tell him "it's ok, it will be fine!"

Then we talk terms. I'm in the process of bringing Bloomberg, one of my own previous clients, in to do a Hyper Island project. I ask if I can take this project with me, and of course I can. He also offers me a generous four months transition period where I will continue doing project work on a sort of premium freelance terms, essentially getting paid more like an employee and keeping all my benefits, while being relieved of all other non-project duties.

5pm

I am free. And my mind is spinning. I'm making lists of people that I want to call. Ideas I want to pitch. Calculating cash flow. As I am walking through downtown Manhattan towards to subway I call Dev. He is the person I know will be the absolutely most helpful in getting me on a path towards my next job or whatever else I can be doing. We talk briefly and agree to meet Friday to work on this together. No big moves before this. Focus on delivering the workshop tomorrow.

5:55pm

I'm almost home now. It's time to face the worst part of this whole thing: telling my wife that I no longer have a job. This part of the story is hard for me to tell. The excitement I felt about new opportunities just five minutes ago is overshadowed by the weight of this. The sense of failure is acute and real: we split responsibility and she is doing her part which is to take care of the kids. I just failed at my part: keeping a job. I have no idea how she will react. And I can at least in part understand those people who decide to just say nothing and pretend it didn't happen. But I can't do that. The question is more how I do it. I want to bring my optimism so that she doesn't need to feel so scared. I want her to know that I have a plan.

I'm not really sure how it happened in the end. I think I told her pretty much right away, or perhaps I waited until the kids were asleep? I'm not sure. And she doesn't quite remember either. Looking back now, I should perhaps have known that my optimism usually provokes the opposite reaction for her: if I am not worried then surely she will have to be. That's all she remembers: I was being too calm. She was freaking out on the inside.

I think the only thing that helped a little bit, was that we were in agreement that this was not the time for me to launch a new personal venture — the priority was to find another job with health insurance and predictable income.



**Dev in his home,
February 19th**

Friday

It's time to meet with Dev and talk through the different scenarios. I feel so incredibly lucky to have a close friend who offers the world's best career counsel. With patience and focus he guides me from what I want to do next, why I want to do that, and into what story I need to tell that answers the right questions and sets me up to get what I want. But not everyone has a friend named Dev, so let me try to share a bit of this process.

What I want is another job. Why? it's because it's what is best for my family right now. But this why is not a great story that sets me up for getting it, because it mainly elicits sympathy, and I don't think anyone wants to hire based on sympathy. What other reasons are there for having a job? One of the things I learned while working at Hyper Island, was that I really enjoyed being a part of a team and having roles where we each do what we are best at, and together we are able to do so much more. Can you feel the difference in how these two, equally true and equally valid reasons, elicit an emotional response?

What do I want to do in this job? I want to do what I am really good at (duh!) so what is that? I am really good at helping groups of people go through transformation. To face the challenges in front of them. To dream about a better future. And to create plans for how to get there. The obvious but implicit questions that this story must answer are: where is the proof that you are actually good at this, and why didn't you just continue doing it where you did it before? The answer to the first question is that this is the work I have been doing for a long time, both in my own Think Clearly consulting practice and at Hyper Island.

The second question is tougher because there is a potential contradiction here: if I am really good at this, and this is really what I want to be doing, and I was doing this at Hyper Island, then why would I want to leave Hyper Island?



Noah & I

If I answer that I was laid off (true) there are two main risks: 1) it elicits a sympathy reaction which is potentially distracting and not a good response to provoke if you want to get hired. I witnessed this a few days later when we shared the news with the rest of the team. One of my coworkers had a very strong emotional reaction with lots of anger at our boss and despair on my behalf. The reaction was of course fully legitimate and reasonable and coming from a loving and caring heart: it was raw and spontaneous and real. And for that I can and will always appreciate it. You know who you are.

2) The other risk is that it can cast an unconscious doubt on my qualifications to do this work. The mind is not good at understanding negations, so saying that I it wasn't due to performance issues simply ensures that the seed of doubt is planted.

We found a better answer when we reframed the question and imagined that I had not been laid off but rather decided to quit: in this situation, what reasons would I give for moving on? I always felt that Hyper Island was doing work at a very very high level in terms of helping people initiate transformation. However, I was missing ways to engage with groups over longer periods of time and really see the transformation through. This was why my own consulting previously had been so rewarding. I used to work with clients for months and even years, witnessing the evolution with my own eyes. Now the story could make sense: This is what I am great at. This is what I want to do. Proof: I have been doing it in these circumstances. Why am I moving on and what am I looking for? I want longer and deeper engagements. The sums add up. No distracting sympathy. I could make a list of potential companies that fit this profile. I knew who to call.

Finally we just talked through priorities: job search and networking would be priority number one. But there is also only so much one can do here, and in order to secure cash flow in the short term I would spend the remaining time and energy doing business development to get some short term consulting projects. Dev's work was done. I hugged him and thanked him. I could now enjoy the weekend.

Monday

It's finally time to begin acting. To begin reaching out to my network. To ask for help. I began emailing. Sending texts. WhatsApp. At first it felt great. Finally making moves. But three hours later I was mortified: I hadn't heard back from anyone. Was my story wrong? Had I wasted my opportunity by telling the wrong story to all my most important contacts? I wrote a note to Dev and got the most amazing response:

"Be gentle on yourself.

You are good at what you do.

You are doing all the right things.

You have the right networks and know the right people.

You have the right experience and as long as you are putting things out there each day.

With time the best thing and the right thing will come in.

Let yourself off the hook. I would tell you if you are going in the wrong direction.

You are doing all the right things,

:)

-Dev"

Why am I telling this story?

I am telling this story for two reasons. First of all I think we don't hear these stories enough. We would all like to tell the story of how we were headhunted from our previous amazing and prestigious job to our new and even more amazing and prestigious job. Yet, it's not how it usually plays out. Events like this happen all the time, and judging from how our labor market is evolving on a macro level it is something that will happen even more in the future. We all need to get used to living in

a world where we switch jobs. Sometimes because we are ready for the next adventure. Other times a little bit sooner than we might have preferred. By keeping these stories private it can become shameful which just makes it harder whenever it happen. My aim in telling this story the way I do it here, is to balance this narrative and help make a space where these stories can be told. I'm also trying to show that timing matters and that we have a choice. Back in February I thought about telling the story this way, with all the details, but I decided against it. I was too raw and I felt that the story would be more a forceful demonstration of rawness which I have learned from professor Brown is not really vulnerability but simply oversharing. Now I am no longer feeling raw, yet it's still quite daunting to share this. It feels vulnerable now. Next year it will feel like ancient past. My hope is that next time you experience something similar to this, that you will also consider sharing your story, once the timing is right.

Post truth

Second, I am telling it for myself as a way to process my own conscience. Entering the White House we now have a performance artist who has an ugly act which is perhaps best appreciated as a powerful defiance of anything resembling the truth. So in the era of the orange man, I can perhaps look in the mirror and wonder what my own relationship with truth is.

During my job search I told many people that I had decided to leave Hyper Island. Was this a lie? Obviously I decided to leave because my position was no longer available. But it wasn't entirely my own choice since staying wasn't an option that was on the table. I can't really defend it. I just did it anyway, because I wanted something and this twisting of reality and intentional omission of a detail would be a significant advantage. However, I must admit that it also doesn't feel like anything that I said was untrue. It didn't really feel like a lie. What

I felt was ownership of my own story. I could make a choice between being a victim of a minor detail in the sequence of events (that my role was terminated before I decided to leave) or being the protagonist in a narrative where I was on a quest for greater impact in the world while supporting and growing a family. I made my choice and it wasn't difficult.

By sharing this I am not so much hoping to argue why I'm right, or defend my reasons, but simply to expose my logic and invite an open exchange. What do you think when you read this?

Gratitude

I'm really grateful that I had a manager who took his job seriously. I am grateful that he took the time to think through scenarios and offered me the absolutely best he could, while also being responsible for the health of the company. I am grateful that he had the experience to counter some of my more spontaneous impulses, for example around how and when we shared the news with the rest of the team. And even though I was perhaps too vulnerable in the moment to fully appreciate it, I can now see that he was being fair and honest the whole time.

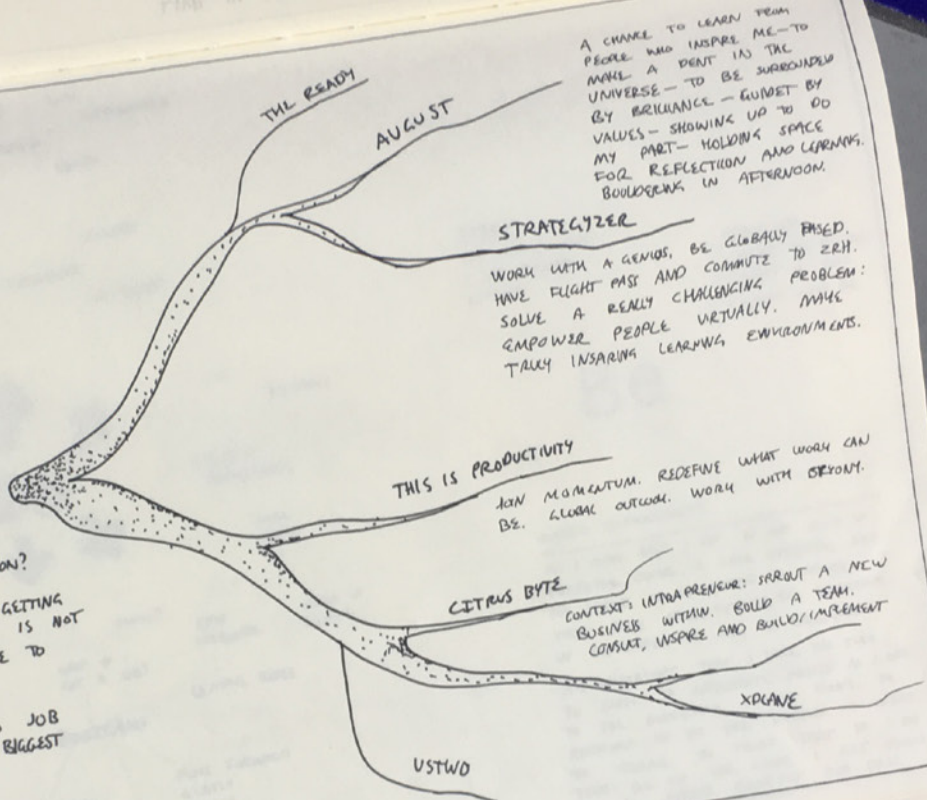
I'm also grateful that this happened because it set into motion what has become a truly amazing year, full of experiences that I could never have imagined last year when I was writing my 2015 report. While this story is the most prominent narrative in this year's report, in reality it is dwarfed by everything that happened after, reduced to a plot point that triggered and unleashed the forces.

DREAM JOBS

WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

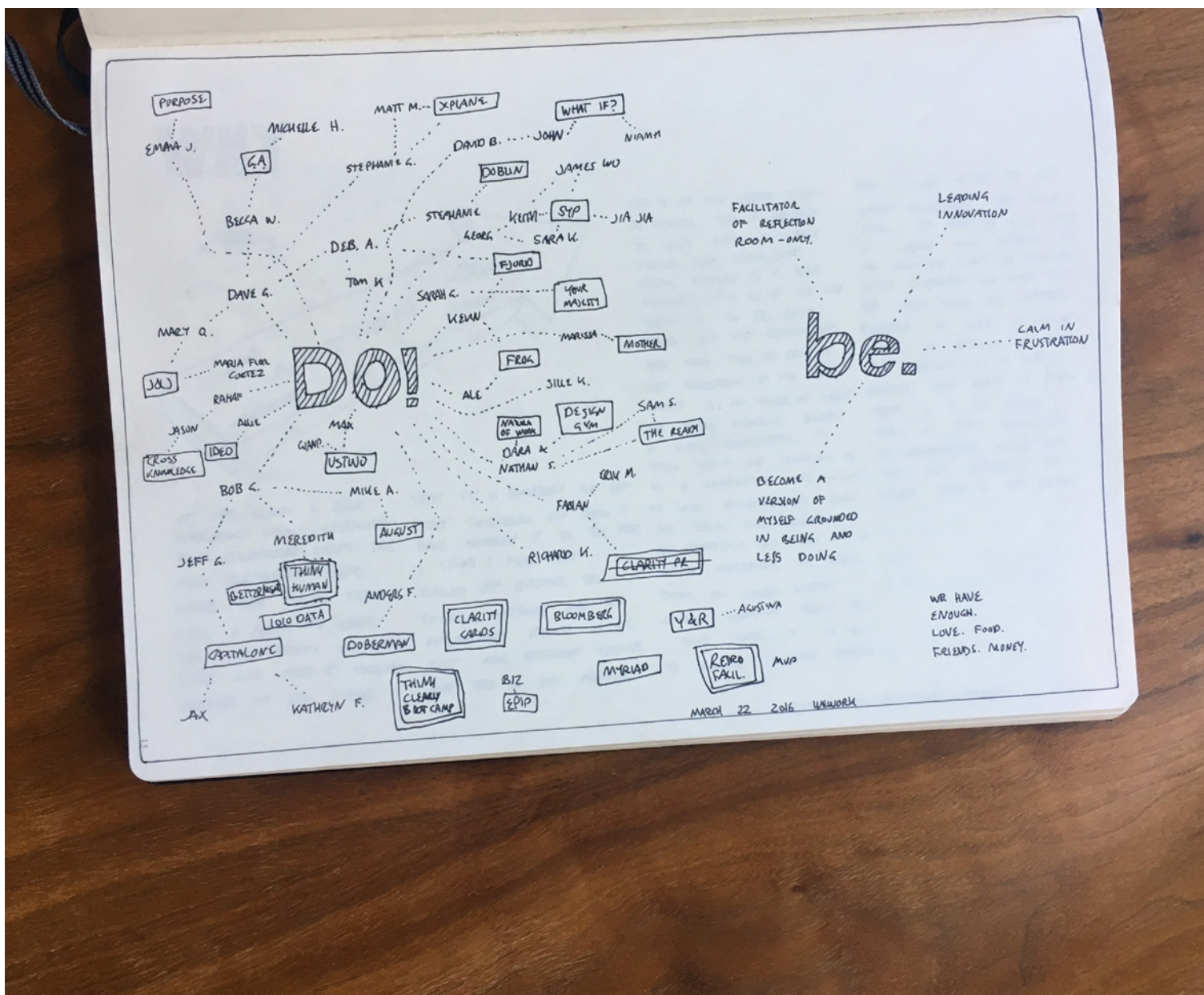
I'M AFRAID OF NOT GETTING ANY JOB, BUT THAT IS NOT A PRODUCTIVE SPACE TO DREAM FROM.

HOW DOES THIS JOB TIE WITH MY BIGGEST DREAMS?



MAY 2 2016 WILSON

Job search



After the initial storytelling exercise with Dev the rest of my job hunt was essentially a mix of meeting people, getting more introductions, finding opportunities, and just following several threads in parallel. These are images from my notebooks that show some of the pages that helped me keep track of how these threads were linked between the people who had made the introduction and the companies and positions I was interviewing for.

Facilitation course

Despite spending two years running intensive courses for executives, It's not often that I have taken the time to attend a course for myself, however, with the increased flexibility of my schedule this spring I decided to join my friends and mentor Sarah Gregersen for her facilitation course The Other Potential. She is one of the most inspiring humans I have met and getting to spend two whole days with her and a group of passionate learners was hugely rewarding. It was really great for me to take a course in facilitation because it helped me articulate in words a lot of the practice I already have. I could replay challenging situations from the past and have new insights both confirming that I did the right thing and now knowing why, but also the opposite. This was the toughest part: revisiting all these memories and seeing in crystal clear HD the many times I failed as a facilitator and now understanding exactly why. This brought up all kinds of shame and guilt – why couldn't I be better? Why did I let those people down? But I think there can be no real learning without some mistakes and failures and as much as we should appreciate this is as a part of the journey, I try to also accept that it still hurts. If it doesn't it's not really failure anyway, and perhaps its because we feel it, that it actually works. My biggest learning however, was that I have been working too much alone for too long. Without really trusted collaboration partners around me I have not managed to process many of these challenging experiences properly.

SHIFT

BEGUN TO SAY NO—IN ORDER TO SAY YES
TO OTHER THINGS. CHALLENGE MYSELF TO
REALLY CONSIDER "WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?"
WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE? BEGIN TRUSTING
THAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE ABUNDANT AND THAT
I CAN HAVE EXACTLY WHAT I WANT,
SO LONG AS I KNOW WHAT IT IS.



OPPORTUNITY GROWTH AND EXPLORATION IN
ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE. SAY YES TO
ALMOST EVERYTHING AND NOTHING MORE
FORWARD. MOVE FAST.



Kickstarter

The backstory is this: In December of 2015 I was spending some time with my friend Dave in his home near St. Louis, MO. He liked the way I use notebooks to reflect on my experiences and he suggested that we make a deck of cards with questions to help others do the same. In less than a half hour we had written out the 49 questions on PostIt notes. The next day I flew back to New York.

In early January I quickly designed a prototype of the card deck and found a manufacturer that could make a small batch of three decks. When they arrived I posted a photo on Instagram. Normally I only get comments and likes when I share adorable photos of our kids (who seemingly have inherited all my wife's beauty and none of my bad humor). When I share anything work related it usually goes by unnoticed. This time however, I got an overwhelming amount of comments from people asking where they could buy these cards.

Then we wrote a Medium piece about the cards and setup a simple way that people could signup to be notified when we launched. The interest kept growing.

By early March I was ready to launch. I made a very simple Kickstarter campaign. I calculated that I could produce and ship the cards for \$10-15 per deck even in relatively small scale production. I thought \$35 would be a good price point and that early supporters should get them for \$25. I knew I wanted to tell a story of being successfully funded within 24 hours and I would rather do a small batch and get them out than try to stretch it and risk not getting it funded at all. I had explicit interest from around 70 people and I was confident I could find some more, so I set the funding goal at \$2500. Not a lot considering that other card decks have raised more than \$100,000 on Kickstarter. But this was not the game I wanted to play. I launched on March 7th and I began emailing directly to each of the 70 people who had expressed interest.



My first prototype of the Clarity Cards which I posted on Instagram.

Within three minutes from sending the first e-mail I had the first order: WOW! Not only did this feel like success, I also knew that this was a drug: It's one thing to get push notifications on your phone whenever someone sends you an e-mail, text message or yet another invitation to play Candy Crush Saga on Facebook. You feel the dopamine. Or at least you did back in 2008 when this was all new. This, however, was not the sound of another work e-mail or meaningless tweet (I have turned most push notifications off anyway) this was the sound of paying customers spending real dollars buying a deck of cards that Dave and I had made. This was next level dopamine! This was awesome!

Within 18 hours the funding goal was reached and the momentum was still strong. I don't remember when I have ever been this high on my iPhone. Every hour I would get another ping. When I woke up in the morning there would be several notifications greeting me. It's easy to get out of bed when you have made \$100 in your sleep. By April 7th when the campaign ended I had sold more than \$10,000 worth of card decks to 350 different backers in more than 40 countries all over the world.

Looking back on it now it is still mind boggling for me that this actually happened. Naturally, after the initial high I adapted to the dopamine and the effect wore off until it was sort of disappointing to wake up and see that only two people had bought card decks over night. I had also massively miscalculated the cost of shipping the cards internationally which cut significantly into the profit margins I had expected. And packing and shipping 350 packages actually takes a while.

However, the whole experience of creating my own product and launching it in this way fundamentally changed something in the way that I see the world. I loved feeling supported by everyone around me. Whenever someone I knew bought the cards or shared the campaign with their friends, I felt they were cheering me on. I have become much more likely to support others who do similar projects, simply because I know how much it means emotionally. And I really believe that if there is any way you can do some sort of crowdfunding campaign I really think you should do it. No matter how small. In the end it's not about the money: the value is in how the world looks different afterwards.

My favorite example of this was when my friend Bryony left her job this summer and called me. She wanted to make podcast about the future of sex — a topic that has become a huge interest for her over the past years. I convinced her to do a campaign for it: asking friends for money (she asked for \$1) to pursue her passion and offering nothing in return except the feeling of supporting a passionate individual. She received \$786 from 44 people. Not enough to make an entire podcast, however, what Bryony told me later was that the combination of feeling incredibly emotionally supported and the accountability of saying “I’m going to do this” was much more significant than the dollars in helping her get from idea to launch.

Check it out: www.futureofsex.org

The experience of crowdfunding a project was also a vital ingredient in how I managed the financial risk of my World Tour.



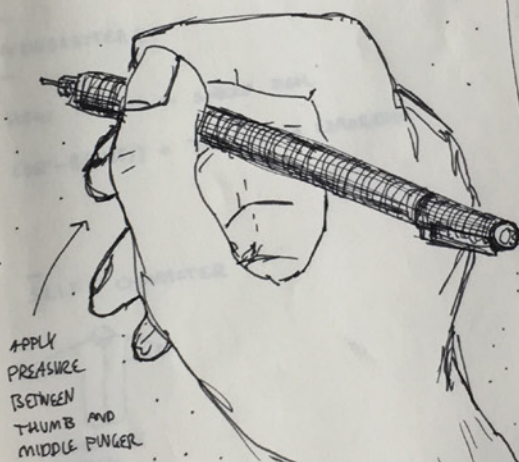
2016
Sourdough Bread
[Brooklyn, NY]

Soft cheese, light toast,
medium sour, yeasty

HOW TO HOLD A PEN
FOR MAXIMUM PRECISION
ACCORDING TO RICHARD, 80
RETIRED SURGEON

— EXPECT IT TO TAKE
12 MONTHS OF
PRACTICE.

RELAX INDEX
FINGER —
REST GENTLY



APPLY
PRESSURE
BETWEEN
THUMB AND
MIDDLE FINGER

JULY 4 2016 ACB3 YVR-SYD

On my flight to Australia I met Richard who told me how to really hold a pen.

World Tour

In April a few things started colliding in my brain: my past teaching experience and desire to teach and share what I know, my crowdfunding experience with the Clarity Cards, my community of newsletter subscribers and some of the waste and unnecessary risk I had seen in my previous work experience. Together this became the idea of a one day Think Clearly bootcamp for 20-30 people, and the bootcamp became a series of bootcamps all over the world. A World Tour.

I have already written extensively about this experience on Medium.com and I feel that I have very little extra to say about it here. It was thrilling and exhausting and amazing and everything in between, and it was successful beyond what I could ever have hoped for. So successful that by mid-summer, long before I had anything solid in terms of a new job, we felt confident to begin planning for our third child, and by April 2017 we are expecting that Noah and Uma will be joined by a new little sister.

Read more: www.medium.com/think-clearly-world-tour

Workshop in Brazil





Parsons students

This fall I taught a course in Managing Creative Project and Teams at Parsons School of Design. It has been a long time since I taught in a university setting with weekly classes, homework and giving grades. It's quite different from a three day intensive with working professionals where each day is fully focused and jam packed. My Parsons students had two other classes with lots of reading and many of them were working full-time jobs too, so it was hard for me to know, let alone control, what was going on in their lives outside of the three hours we had together each Thursday night. But it was also an amazing chance to slowly get to know someone over a longer stretch of time and to see how each person was growing and unfolding. Speaking up more in class. Participating. Learning. Asking questions. I am extremely excited to teach again this spring.



This woman gets better every day.



**Our weekly
dinner ritual.**



Probably the
meal I enjoyed
the most this
year.

Not being kind with myself

I'm sitting in a lounge chair outside, looking over Klöntersee, a lake in Switzerland, and the sun is shining. It's quiet and my friend Rasmus has fallen asleep in the chair next to me. We got up early and swam in a cold lake, then headed into the mountains for brunch and a peaceful walk and now we are here and I find it utterly offensive. Which is surprising because how can something this nice be offensive to anyone? But it really does offend me and I can feel it in my bones: they are telling me that this is like being in zero gravity – that without the constant resistance of gravity my bones will go soft and I will quickly lose all my strength.

That's when I begin to get scared. I would consider myself to be a rather playful person, privileged in that I have rarely had to "work hard", but it seems that I have somehow gotten myself to a place where my mind perceives resting and relaxing as an existential threat.

Without noticing, my beliefs have somehow shifted during this intense job hunting spring and summer: I had to be strong and enduring and I have pushed myself hard. I have tested my limits. But as I am strolling out over that lake somewhere in the alps, I can't figure out how this happened or how I might shift it back. It's a bit claustrophobic. I can notice how I have attempted to be kind to myself but what ends up happening is that with each act of self-kindness I also raise my expectations of myself and my performance so it's not really kindness at all. I even stress about if I can enjoy it enough.

As I write this four months later it seems perfectly silly. I can look at my notes from those days and I know I felt it. Now it all seems so obvious: without restitution there can never be any strength. But I write this as a reminder to myself that even deep beliefs can shift under me, especially if I don't make time and space for self care and for appreciating myself without conditions.

Theory of change

on bread and airplanes

When I bake bread I directly involved in the change. I touch the dough with my hands. I feel the moisture levels. I smell it for signs of how the fermentation is going. I bake it and I give it a little love. I see them smile as they bite into a baked high quality slice of bread. I won't get much more direct.

I am about as far removed from creating the bread (or Starbucks coffee) as I can get without being completely useless. I am coaching them that they can teach themselves to fly. I am consulting with them differently. I am showing them the many steps it takes. This requires more than simply saying "fly" - it's about how to fly, and how to fly right.

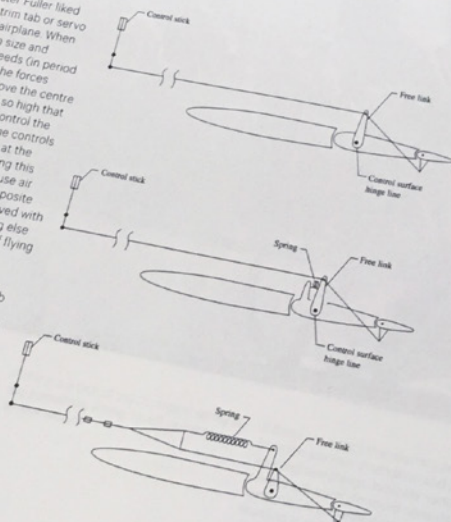
INITIAL

show me
and make
my do.

and work

I like the way Buckminster Fuller liked to refer to himself as a trim tab or servo tab as it is called on an airplane. When airplanes got to a certain size and began flying at higher speeds (in period between WWI and WWII) the forces needed from the pilot to move the center stick and rudder pedals got so high that it was no longer feasible to have the center stick and rudder pedals connected to the edge of the aileron. So instead the controls were connected to a small tab at the edge of the aileron. When moving this little tab up or down it would cause air flow to push the aileron in the opposite direction. So one little thing is moved with minimal effort. It pushes something else and suddenly the whole 447 tons of flying aluminum is turning in the air.

In order to work as much as a servo tab as possible, getting the plane to move with less effort, my approach is inspired by appreciative inquiry (as opposed to problem solving). Instead of trying to diagnose perfectly what is not working and then trying to fix it, approaching it from a place of appreciation means seeing what already is, seeing the best of it, amplifying it, dreaming about what could be, and creating things towards that.



Fighting for Greatness

I can easily relate to the SYP vision, however, I feel a need to specify what I think it means to fight for greatness (and what it is not). At the core it is a paradox: to appreciate what is already here, as a step in the way, while knowing that no matter how good it already is, it can always be better.

It is not about being constantly critical and unsatisfied. It's not about always saying 'late' and obsessing over every detail. It's not about maximum effort all the time.

Therefore, fighting for greatness is not a journey to a destination, not a state that is ever achieved or achievable, but rather a dance that never ends. It's a marathon and then another marathon after that, and then another one. Nobody ever wins, but some people give up and stop dancing.

Therefore it is also always a long term endeavor. Which means that self-care is critical so that you can fight again tomorrow and next week and next month and next year, and next decade and in your next lifetime.

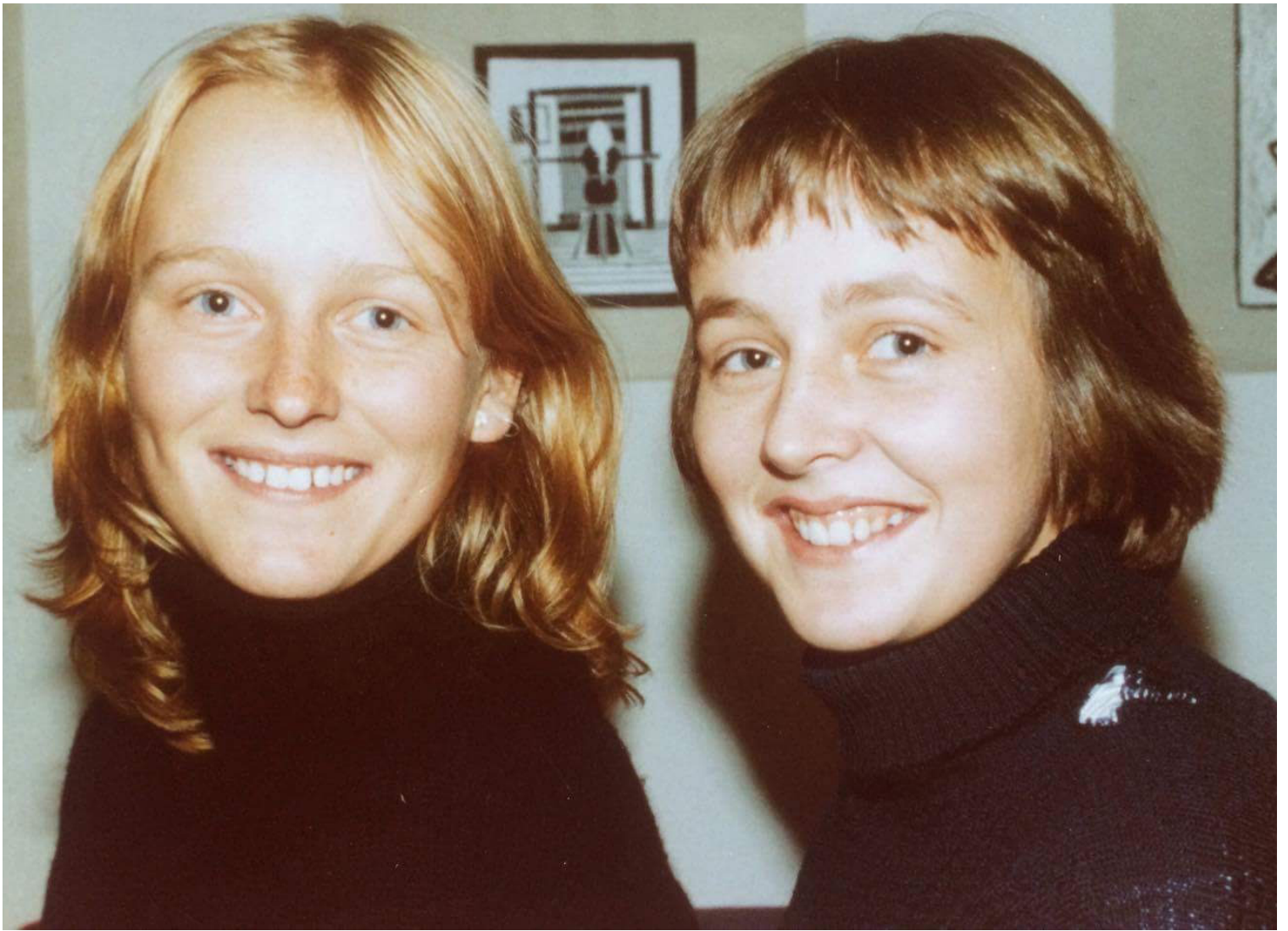
SYPartners

Is there such a thing as a dream job? I refuse to think that there is only one.

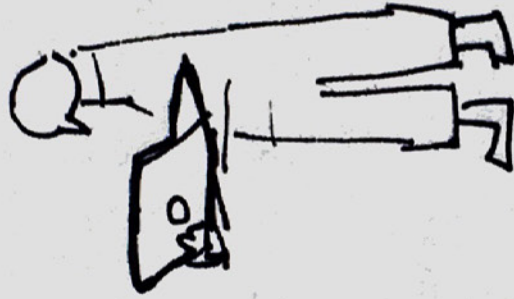
I think many jobs can be dream jobs if we decide to see them that way.

Certainly for me, working at Hyper Island was a dream job, and yet now that I find myself at SYPartners I can't imagine a better place to be than this.

I feel that I get to practice a form of leadership without any authority at all, which is such a great place to be in. I am channeling a lot of my mother's energy and ways of operating. I look much forward to see what 2017 will bring for me here.



**My mother
and my aunt
in their late
teens.**



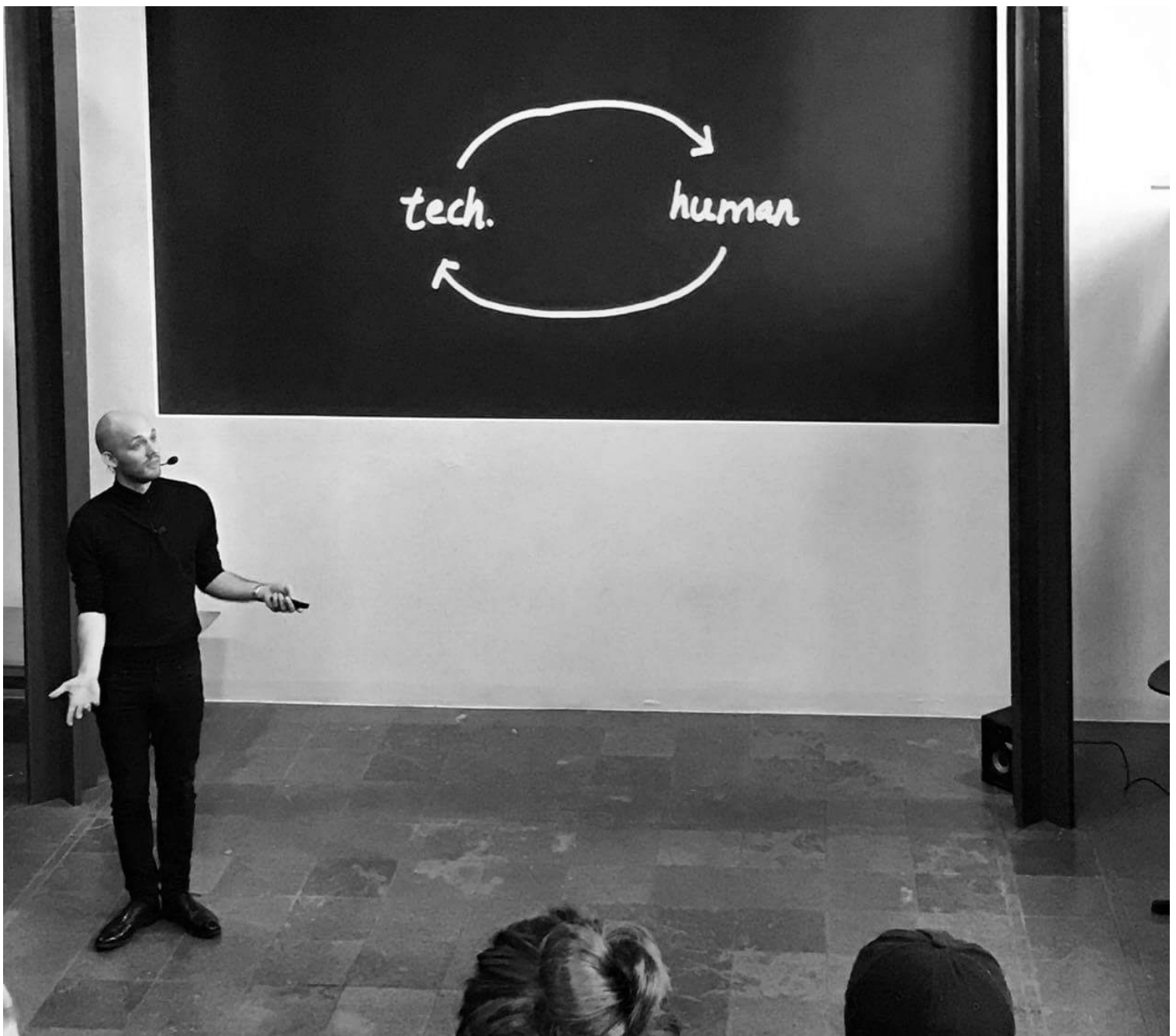
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT
THE LOOK OF PEOPLE WALKING
AROUND WITH THEIR LAPTOPS THAT
JUST FEELS SOMEHOW... W ME.
NOT SURE WHAT IT IS. THE "LOOK"
OF "I'M ALWAYS WORKING" "I'M
PRODUCTIVE" — THE LOOK OF A
MODERN DAY PROFESSIONAL OFFICE
WORKER. IT BETWEENS ME.

Citizen

We have lived in NYC for more than five years now and this year we applied to become naturalized citizens. I have thought a lot about how dreams come true, and it seems to me that it happens gradually. First we wanted to live in NYC. Then we got green cards. Then we moved. Then we were trying to establish ourselves but it felt quite uncertain at times and we had to discuss if we wanted to stay or move back to Denmark. Perhaps the challenge is not to say how dreams come true, but rather to determine when it has happened. For me the dream was never really to be a citizen. But I think that it has become the symbolic marker of a very long process. The tangible and irreversible proof that we did it.



My style in 2008,
2009 and 2012
**Compare with
next page**



One of my goals for 2016 was to develop and deliver my own keynote talk, and in November I was both asked by KPMG to speak about design at their annual technology conference Ktech, and I went to Denmark to speak at a weekend hackathon about The Future of Advertising. I was asked to help elevate the perspective of the groups, so the talk was less about advertising and more about the bigger themes of the world we live in: how all technologies are converging through the internet and what this really means for how we live our lives, how we are parents, how we love.

You can watch a preview of the talk here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f88aiF2sdVA>

My favorite **books** of 2016 were **Sitting In The Fire** by Arnold Mindell, which gave me new perspectives on rank and privilege. Dave Gray's new book **Liminal Thinking**, which describes so much of the work I have been doing the past half decade, but not been able to explain. Frederic Laloux's **Reinventing Organizations** as an tour through eight interesting companies each doing alternative forms of management.



**A polar bear built in
snow. Something
magical I experienced
as a child, which I hope
to pass on.**



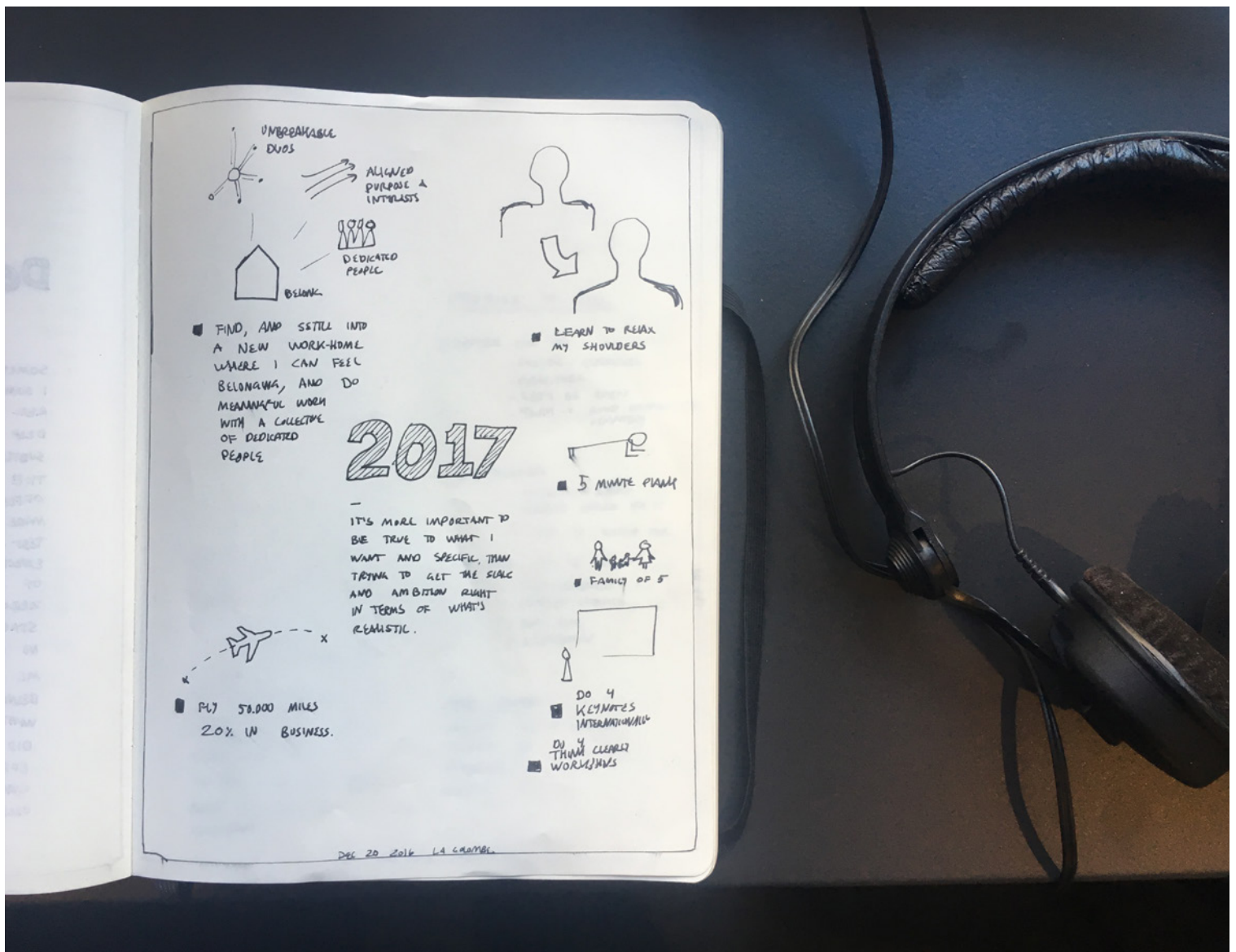
**Alone with both kids
for nine days. Survival
training.**

Daddy duty

My wife is the primary caretaker for our kids while I have the luxury of going to the office every day and doing the work I love to do (so long as I also bring home the bread and pay rent). For the most part, this constellation seems to work well for both of us, but it's also nice to change things up occasionally so in December I sent Pernille off to Denmark for nine whole days alone, while I took time off from work and was daddy alone with the kids. This was probably the toughest week of my life in a long time: it really requires a form of total endurance and self-leadership. It was also a magical week with so many special moments. We played outside for hours despite cold and rain, and when the kids were put to bed at night I had friends over for dinners and lots of wine.

I have always appreciated what my wife does for our family, especially all the times I have travelled and she has been home alone with both kids. However, this experience has allowed me to really feel it on a deeper level. And I think she might even feel my appreciation more, because now she knows that I know how it feels.

I want to do this again in 2017.



Looking ahead

I could never have **predicted** that 2016 would turn out the way it did. Everything was turned upside down. I'm looking forward to 2017 with a growing **family** and lots of new adventures.



**Thank you for being part
of my life.**



Annual Report 2016 by Mathias Jakobsen is
licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International License.

Published by
Ideas Are Nothing LLC
Mathias Jakobsen
114 Troutman St
Brooklyn NY 11206

www.thnklrly.com

m@thnklrly.com
+1 347 987 5090