

MATHIAS
VESTERGAARD™
CORP.



Annual Report 2011



View from the bathroom at The Boom Boom Room

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Where We Left

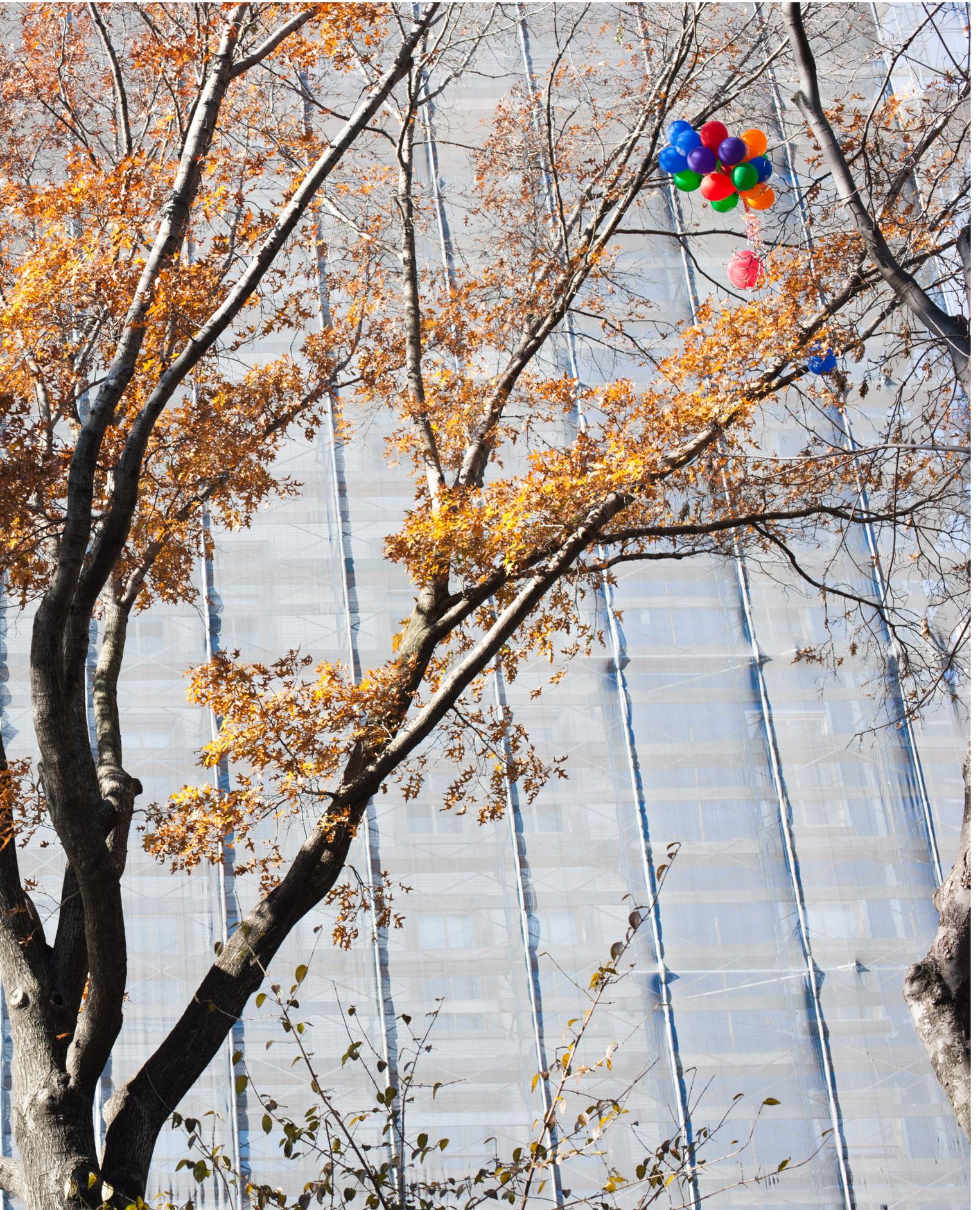
2010 was called 'The Year of Fantastic Disappointments.' The anti-climax of returning to Denmark after an exciting three month visit to New York. The exciting promise of launching a big startup company and then losing the funding the day before. And the thrill of having an amazing job, being asked to stay and postpone moving to New York, saying yes but then not being able to agree on a contract. It was truly a year of big ups and big downs,

however, the fluctuations aside, showing a general overall improvement. So that was 2010. With that as a measure it seemed impossible that 2011 could ever surpass it. But it doesn't make sense to compare. That is why the format of this annual report has been changed dramatically to capture the radically different nature of 2011. A copy of the 2010 report can be obtained by e-mailing m@mathiasvestergaard.com

MATHIAS VESTERGAARD CORP. COMPANY STRUCTURE

Formed in 1985 as the first major collaboration between M. H. Jakobsen Holding and M. V. Jensen Holding, each with an equal 50 % genetic investment. In 2002 M. V. Jensen Holding joined forces with B. Thrana Corp. and changed name to M. V. Thrana Holding. Simultaneously Birgitte Vestergaard Thrana stepped in as new managing director in Mette Hesseldahl Jakobsen Holding thereby assuming responsibility for all daughter (and son) companies incl. Mathias Vestergaard Corp. Since then she has skilfully managed the original investment in a perfect balance between remaining extremely faithful to the legacy and heritage of M. H. Jakobsen Holding while also adding her own distinct favour and style to the mix. Mathias Vestergaard Corp. will forever be thankful for Birgitte's hard work.





Finding meaning and purpose <<

While 2010 was a year of major ups and downs and radical changes in direction, 2011 has been more like a continuous journey. The goal was not defined. Instead the journey began merely with a direction: west bound, to New York City. After arriving in New York it quickly became clear to me that the actual journey was not to move across the Atlantic. The real journey has been inward. A spiritual journey that has led me towards inner peace and meaning in life and to a major discovery of the true purpose of my earthly life. Admittedly this is a very lofty story about feelings, meditation and passion. This, however is contrasted by the very tangible and

non-fancy daily life in a new city, in a new country on a different continent. A struggle to find work, make money, pay the bills and buy groceries. In many ways my day to day life has never been more difficult and challenging. It has been a long time since I had so little money to spend and thus I have not lived on such a limited budget since before I moved out of my parent's house in late 2004. Yet, it has been extremely rewarding and I have found it much more meaningful than ever before. The struggle is not over, but I feel confident that I am on the right path. In this annual report I invite you to come along and read about 2011 in my life.



Mathias Vestergaard
Creative Misfit™ and CEO of my own life



BY



A slide going through the floors. From the Carsten Höller: Experience exhibition at The New Museum

Key Metrics 2011 (global)



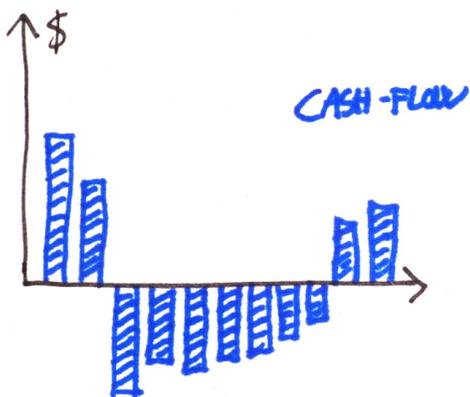
Sculptures at 14th Street subway station



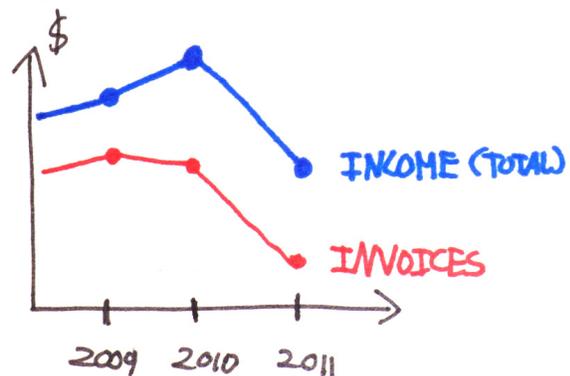
Global operations

Financially 2011 has been the worst year in recent history. However, the financial losses are easily made up for by the new potentials in gained understanding, improved network and learning.

CASH FLOW (BASED ON WORK PRODUCED)

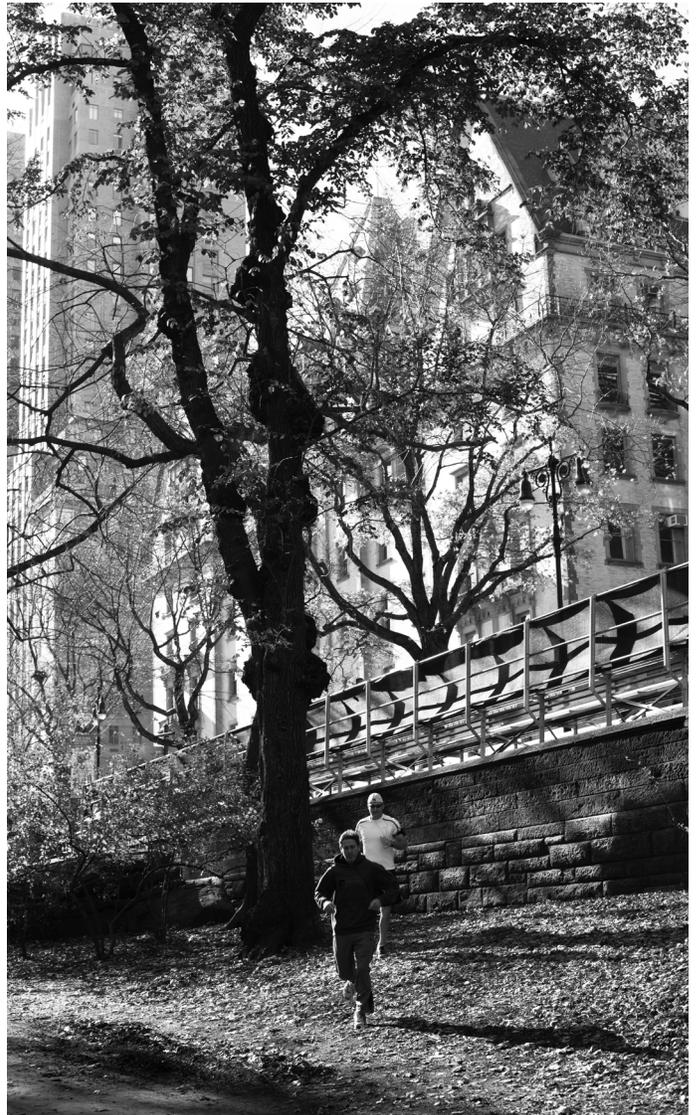
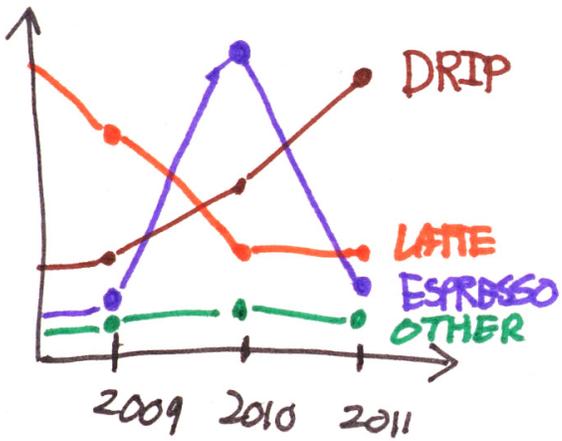


EARNINGS (INFLATION ADJUSTED)

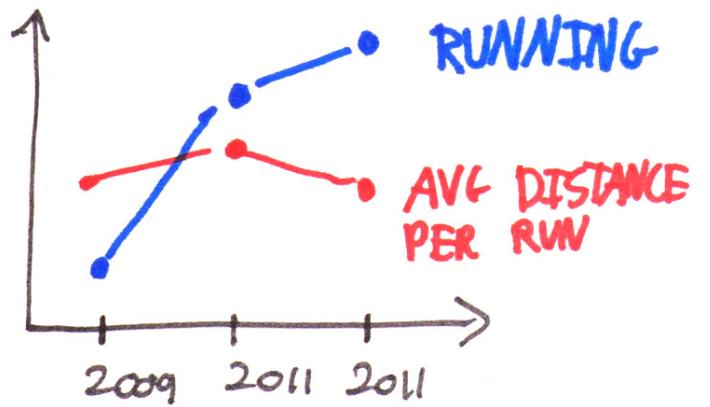




COFFEE CONSUMPTION (ESTIMATED)



EXERCISE (TRACKED BY NOKIA SPORTSTRACKER)



Activities 2011



J.S. Bach concert in St. Paul's Chapel in Downtown Manhattan.



Moving from Denmark to Brooklyn, New York<<<

2011 began with the culmination of a four year long process. Let me quickly go through the main events: In fall 2007 I began researching what it would take to obtain a proper work visa to live and work in the US. Since then I began collecting evidence of my work, e.g. letters of recommendation, tears from newspapers and magazine etc. In 2009 I took the next step and hired an advisor to help me compile a green card application. It was submitted in January 2010 and in early 2011 I picked up the immigration packages from the US Embassy in Copenhagen. Just as every exit in an entrance to somewhere else, so is the end of a process often the beginning of a new one. After four years of intense work and stressful waiting to get a green card, suddenly it was a reality, and I realized that now comes the real challenge: moving to New York and building our lives here.

Most of January and all of February was spent packing up our belongings. Most of it went into storage, organized in numbered boxes with a corresponding Google Document containing detailed lists of the contents of each box.* I found a tenant who was interested in renting the apartment and within a few days we had a lease signed and a security deposit. We bought tickets to leave on Sunday March 6th, and on Saturday March 5th we cleaned the rest of the apartment and moved our seven suitcases + carry on items to my parents' house outside of Aarhus. From there we packed the last things, always with an eye on the baggage weight: 23 kg per suitcase. No more and no less. We decided to bring a good bunch of cooking ware, and even some porcelain cups and glasses. The little things that make it feel like home.

On the night of the 5th Pernille caught some kind of virus that knocked her out within a few hours. A little past midnight it was already clear that Pernille was so weak that she would not be able to travel the next day and we decided to stay and wait for her to get better.

Some people might ask: why didn't you just go on your own and then Pernille could recover and catch up later? Some people seem to think that moving to New York was initially my idea and that Pernille just decided to come along. This could not be further from the truth. Let's go back a few years. In August 2005 Pernille and I went to New York for the first time. It was our first visit to the city that has now become our home, and it was the first vacation we went on together as a couple. When we booked the vacation in late May 2005 we had only been together for a little more than five months and it was still another two months before departure. In many ways it was probably the first commitment into the future we made in our young relationship, and we have later talked about how big it felt back then. The city really inspired us and we both fell in love with it, although none of the places we saw back then (midtown) are places we ever

“Some people seem to think that moving to New York was initially my idea and that Pernille just decided to come along.”

* This has proven to be an excellent method that we highly recommend for anyone in a similar situation. It has allowed us a very good overview of our stored items while far away, and thus we have been able to request people to bring stuff to us from the warehouse with specific instructions on what box to look in, and with an ability to update the inventory list as the items arrived.

come back to now. I think it was just in the air. I remember wondering to myself: “how would it be to live here?” In fall 2005 Pernille took the next step: she wanted to go back to New York. Alone. And for a full month. Without consulting me she had suddenly booked a flight and a hostel for March 2006. I didn’t want to be left behind completely so I managed to find a way to come and visit her one week. This was the trip where Pernille managed to get under the skin of the city in a different way. She explored East Village and Greenwich Village and Lower East Side, and she can take credit for introducing me to many of the parts of New York that today are part of my daily life. Only then was it my turn to take the lead: for fall 2007 I went to New York alone for three months, in order to get a better sense of how it would feel to really live here. This was when I began exploring how the immigration system works and learned how I could begin collection evidence. In 2009 we spent three months together in the city and this was when we decided that we wanted to

at least give it a try and see if we could move here. Our visa application would have to be based on the evidence of my abilities. But it was our shared dream and something we wanted to do together. That is why I never really thought about going on my own. New York is our shared project and of course we both wanted to arrive in New York together. As a couple. A married couple of immigrants. On Wednesday she was finally getting better and we decided to buy new tickets for Friday 11th.

I think the beauty of this story is that even in the most stressful times of pulling ourselves up at the root and confronted with unexpected events we still managed to stay together and support each other. On March 25th 2011 we moved into our first apartment in Brooklyn, ready to start building a new life together. I don’t think we could have done this without each other. In fact I think this whole process has only made us even stronger together.



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Discovering Purpose



Community garden in East Village

For the past five years I have often told people that I was trying to change the world in order to make it a better place for everyone. I have often said it with a smile, sometimes half-serious and always half-jokingly. It was more of a fun provocative statement coming from me as an entrepreneur involved in the so-called “creative” (and dare I say superficial) world of fashion and design. I think many people would wonder if it was more of a bad excuse to myself, or if I somehow saw a connection between fashion and saving the world. I must admit that I have always seen the connection, but I also always doubted myself as actually working towards a better world. It was something I said to get a reaction. As you might have guessed, this is no longer the case and what you are about to read is my account of what happened.

It was during the summer. We had just had a visit from my wife’s family (where they had been staying with us in our Brooklyn apartment) and my wife and I were having a fairly superficial argument about common courtesy towards guests. She argued that I should have been more courteous towards her family. For me the situation was not about courtesy but instead about being honest. Instead of letting her family become an intrusion in my daily life, I had remained focused on my own activities and spent time with her family when it did not interfere with my normal plans. I felt that if I allowed her family to become a hassle and an obstacle for my daily life, I

would easily become irritated. By focusing on living my life as normal and enjoying their presence when it fit in, I managed to never feel any negative emotions on their occupation of our living room, and so when they asked “we hope we haven’t been too much trouble?” I could honestly and sincerely reply that they hadn’t. To my wife, this was just a stupid excuse for not being more careful to show hospitality in my actions.

I began arguing that it was important for me to be truthful to myself. I told her of a situation where a dear friend of mine had become furious at me because I had told him that I was learning to be more polite. He strongly argued that there are already too many people who are so well-adjusted that they are boring. For him, greatness was closely connected with not letting oneself be dominated by what is expected and remaining true to one’s inner calling. I do believe that politeness can be effective, but I must admit that his words stuck with me and I gradually learned to appreciate that some of the parts of me that I am less proud of e.g. lacking some social abilities in certain situations, are in fact connected to some of my abilities to make things happen. As we went on the argument got more heated.

At this point my account of the situation gets a bit blurry and I am not entirely sure of the exact events, however, it was somewhere in this argument over common courtesy that I somehow recognized that at the root of this simple discussion was the core existential frustration of my life:

“Then I broke down in tears. I covered my face in a pillow, disgusted with myself and my stupidity. Embarrassed to even think like this. I think I even started laughing at myself, while still crying into the pillow and trying to explain to my wife that I had these visions of changing the world.”

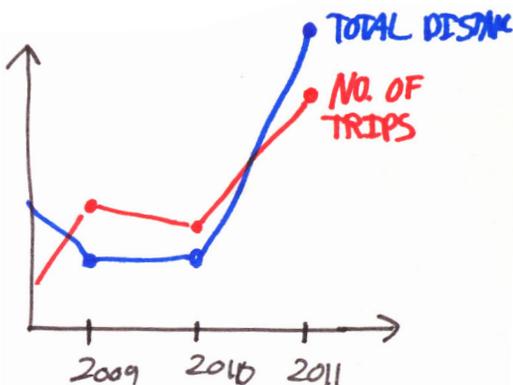
this boy, clearly disillusioned with his own feeling of grandeur. I realized that I see myself as someone who actually has a chance at creating radical change and making the world a much better place on a grand scale. Then I broke down in tears. I covered my face in a pillow, disgusted with myself and my stupidity. Embarrassed to even think like this. I think I even started laughing at myself, while still crying into the pillow and trying to explain to my wife that I had these visions of changing the world. It is hard for me to adequately convey the emotional ride this was. I was so embarrassed and I felt so stupid that I kept weeping for a while, but at the same time I knew that I had discovered something genuine in myself, and no matter how stupid I felt to have these visions, it couldn't make it less true. I had discovered my true purpose in life and I better get used to it.

After this mental break-down and awakening of meaning it still took me several weeks for this new insight to settle into my body. As it did, I gradually realized that most of the things I have done in the past actually correlate with this purpose. I'm not arguing that a project about fashion week is creating a better world in itself, but it serves a valuable practice in creating change, while I try to understand what is really a "better world."

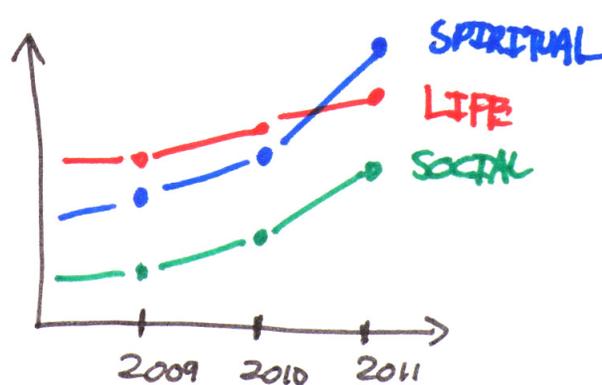
Silly as it sounded to me that day, my feeling of being capable of doing something great has also matured with primarily one obvious consequence: I am beginning to believe it myself. Thus I have in many ways overcome one of the most annoying aspects of myself: I used to have a fairly constant need to prove that I was better, smarter, faster, more knowledgeable etc. This need is rapidly diminishing and I now rest more comfortably in my own skin, knowing that I am good at a lot of stuff. If others recognize it, that is wonderful. If they don't, it's not my problem anymore. I think this has made me a bit easier to be around.

On the one side was the love to my wife, and the reason to be more courteous and polite, since it obviously meant a lot to her. If I really loved her I should naturally do what would make her happy. On the other hand, however, I discovered that my desire to change the world and make it a better place, was in fact rooted all the way deep down inside me, right next to the love to my wife. It was not just a funny thing I said. There were no more layers to peel of. It was at my essence, and if I were to do it, I knew I would need my extraordinary abilities. Naturally, this issue of saving the world was too important to let my greatness be lost to courtesy and politeness. Once I began to explain this to my wife it suddenly struck me how completely stupid I sound. It was like stepping out of my body and seeing myself in third person: I saw

FLIGHTS



UNDERSTANDING



Business redefinition

Discovering my purpose in life did not put an end to my frustrations of being unable to really find my spot in the work-life. I have been self-employed since I was 16, while studying my way through high school, college and grad school. During the first many months in New York I sent out several very specific application to jobs that fit my skill-set and profile. I spent days creating applications for each specific job but in the end I only got a single reply: I was not considered a candidate for the position. I didn't get a single interview. Meanwhile I had thrown myself into several projects on the side to keep me busy. I shot some hundred photos for a new guide book about New York*, I conceived ideas, scripted, filmed and edited several small concept ad videos for a competition hosted by Scandinavian Airlines** and I was spending time preparing Fashion Week Live for August 2011. Frustrated with my lack of success in finding a job, of not winning the competition, and not getting a sponsor for Fashion Week Live, and generally feeling that I never finished anything, I created a map in my notebook. "Why I'm fucked!" it said in capital letters in the middle and I listed all my current activities around that. Suddenly the page was completely filled with words referring to different projects. No wonder I felt I didn't finish anything. I kept initiating new projects at the pace of a manic. I sent the image to my friend Thomas in Denmark and he gave me a very wise suggestion: "make the same drawing with a heart

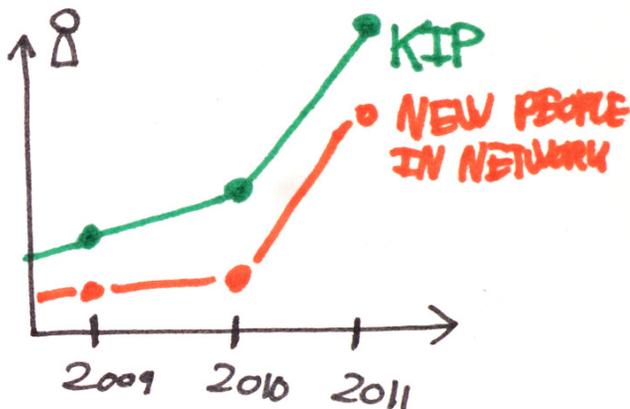
in the middle and then write the projects that are most important closest to the heart." This really made me stop and look at myself again. I realized that in my fucked-drawing there was no mention of my wife! I quickly flipped a page, drew a heart and wrote a big P inside it to signify the importance of her. Then I wrote three projects around the heart and began listing the other stuff around the edge of the paper until I realized that none of all the other things really mattered very much to me. So I didn't even bother to transfer them to the new page. Thomas's suggestion had made it clear to me that I had to focus and avoid scattering my energy so broadly that nothing ever gets done properly.

A few weeks later I decided to pick up meditation and mindfulness again. I began reading *The Four Noble Truths* by Dalai Lama and after that I jumped into *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. Both books have had profound impact on my mental attitude. I have re-read both of them several times with new insights each time. I have learned the importance of patience. Something I never had before. I have also learned to let my thoughts fall in the background and be more present in the moment. This has greatly influenced my work. Things that seemed difficult earlier are now easy, almost light, and much more fun, so long as I can remain mindful in the situation.

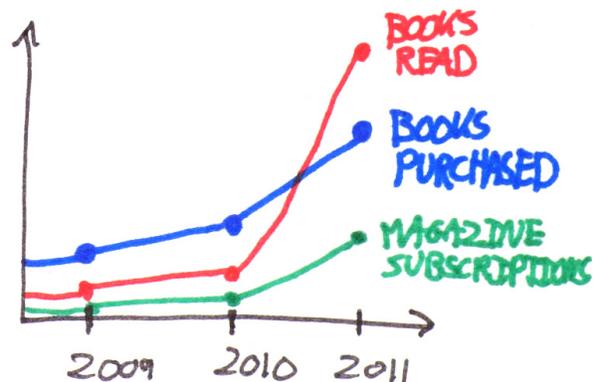
* The book is available at www.voresnewyork.dk

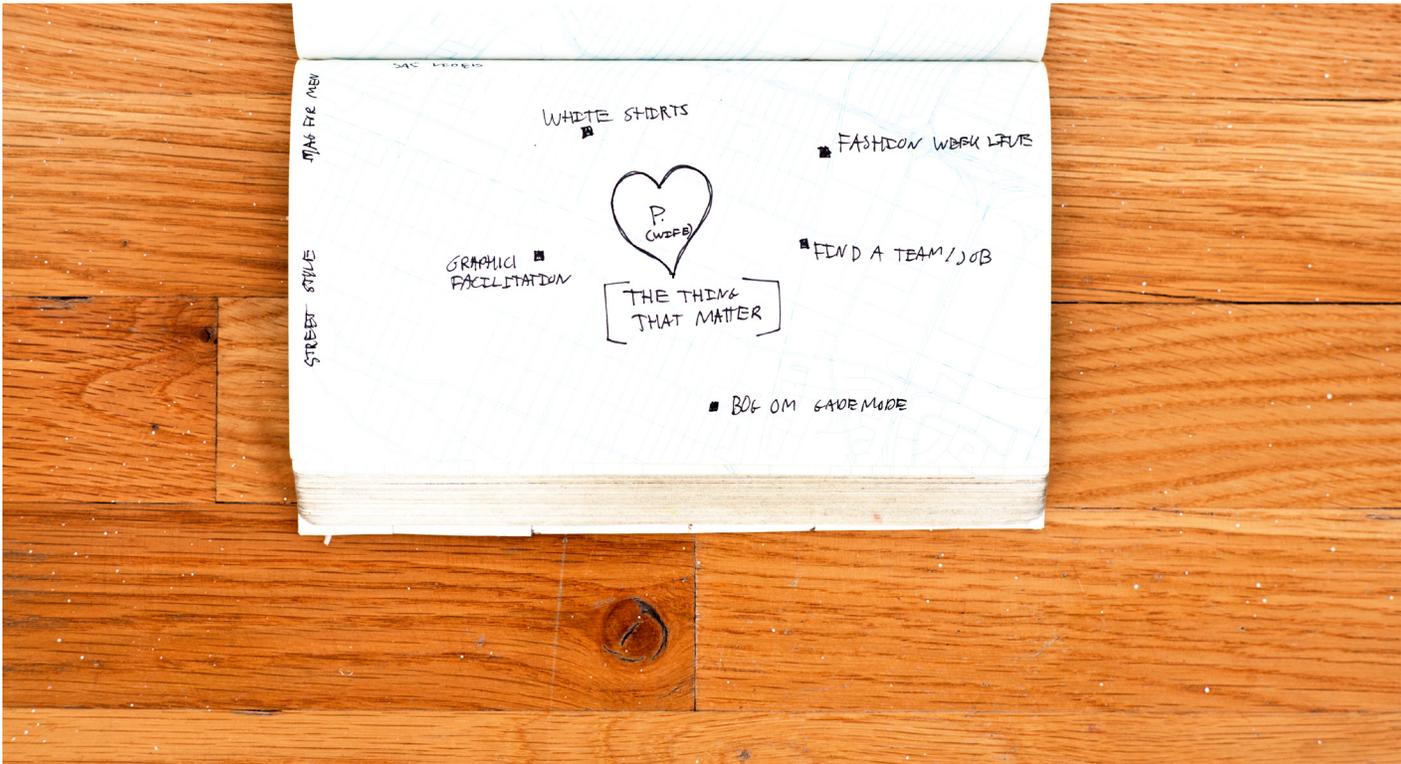
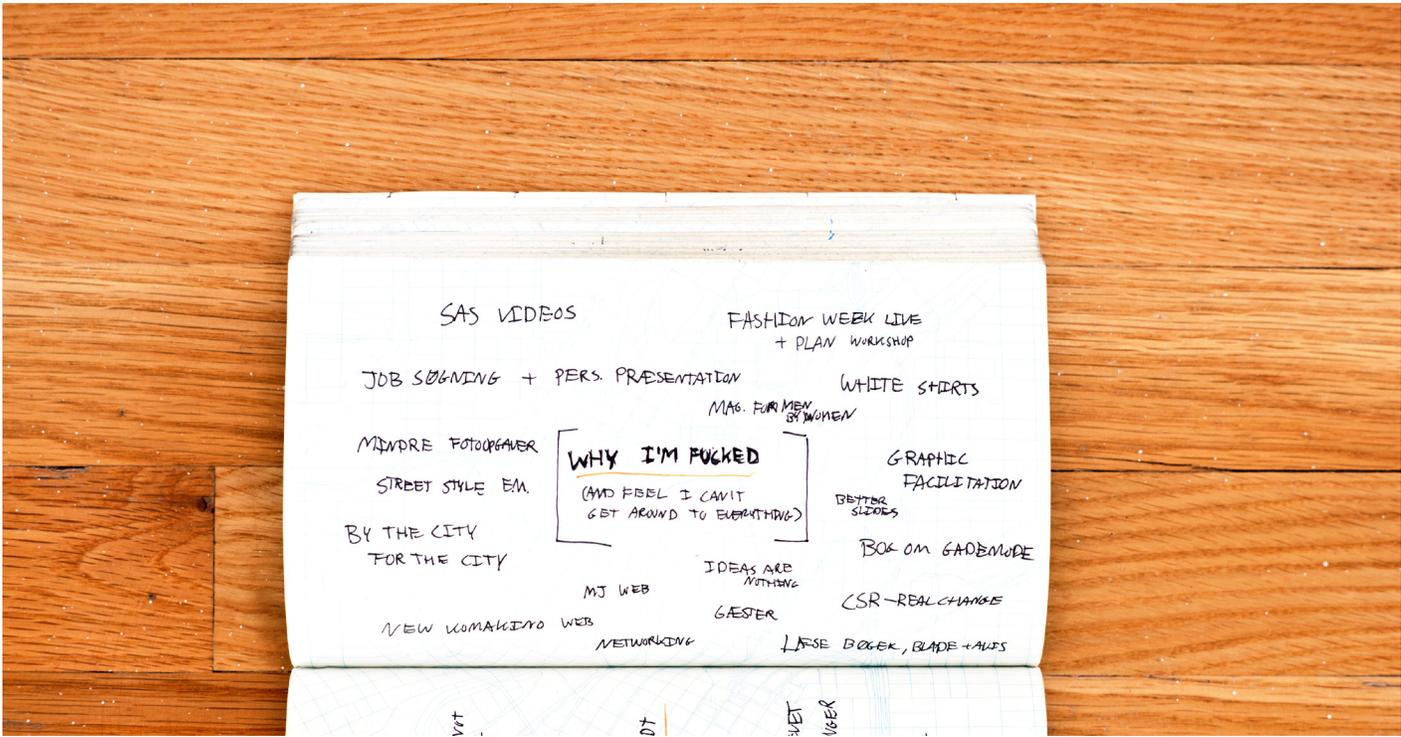
** The competition is over but the videos are still available here: www.mathiasvestergaard.com/sas

KEY INTERESTING PEOPLE (KIP)



READING





Redefining my business. Two pages from my notebook.

Projects 2011



From the lobby at NU Hotel in Brooklyn.



YES!

© 2011 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. All rights reserved. This work is a collaboration between the artist and the museum. The work is a tribute to the artist's work and the museum's collection. The work is a tribute to the artist's work and the museum's collection. The work is a tribute to the artist's work and the museum's collection.

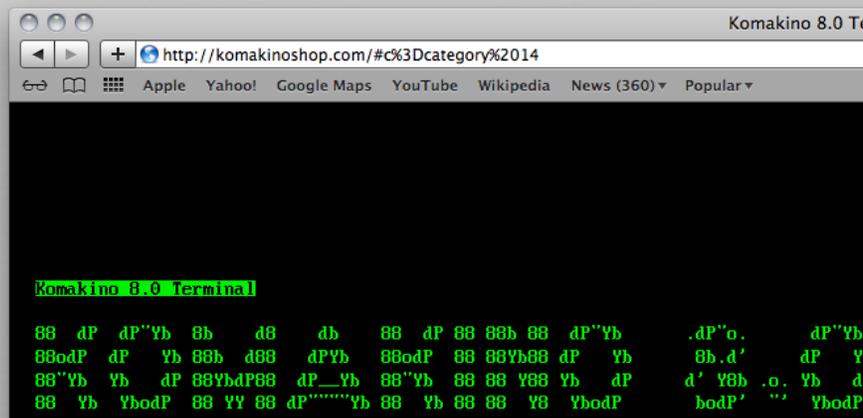
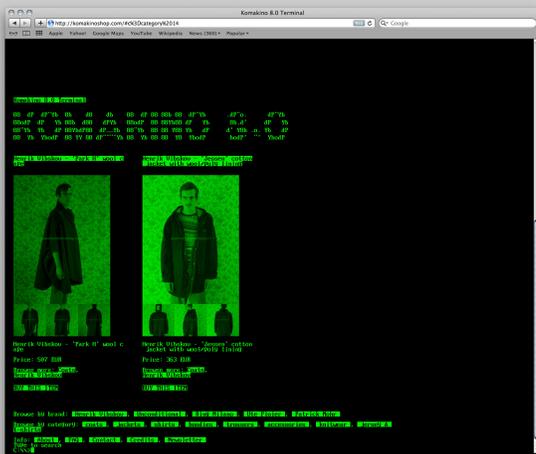


Komakino

I first met Campbell McDougall at a fashion show in Paris during the summer of 2006. I had recently grown an interest in men's fashion and influenced by fashion journalist Cathy Horyn of *The New York Times* I was extremely interested in Belgian designer Raf Simons. I therefore planned an attempt to sneak into his show, two days after I successfully did the same at Jean Paul Gaultier. Simon's show was to be held at Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, a somewhat obscure location for a Paris fashion show. I took the Metro from the hotel and when I got off the train I spotted a guy with a very fashionable look. Being completely clueless in french I nevertheless dared to ask him (in English) if he was going to the Raf Simons show. I was so relieved when I found out he was Canadian (BC) and was thus native in English: we could communicate. Completely careless of the appropriateness of my behaviour I went on to inquire about his relation to the business (he said he was a buyer) and if he had an invitation (which I didn't). He was very cool and casual and

did not seem to mind my interrogation. He said he would always ask not to get an invite and just have his name on the list, since he had too often lost his invite in the mail anyway. He promised to try and help me get in as his "assistant." It worked, and it was a huge experience for me. Cathy Horyn was there on front row and after the show I walked up to her, introduced myself and told her that I liked her writing. I of course thanked Campbell and we exchanged e-mail addresses. Soon after that first encounter we initiated a collaboration on the new website for his store Komakino. This year we passed five years of highly successful collaboration, marked by the complete rebranding and re-invention of the Komakino-store. It is now online only and features a retro-cool command-line interface with green text on black. Even if you are not into the products, I think this website is an experience in and by itself.

Check it out: www.komakinoshop.com



Screen shots of the Komakinoshop.com version 8.0

Photography

During 2011 I have also been fortunate to work with two amazing girls: Sarah and Anne, on their guide book Vores New York (published by Saxo in Denmark). As the exclusive photographer for the book I pulled my little trolley of equipment all over New York City to take pictures of the best restaurants, cafes, shops and other hot spots worth visiting.

In late October Anne was working on another guide book and asked me if I wanted to shoot the pictures for that as well. I just finished that project in December and look forward to see the printed book when it hits the store in spring.

www.voresnewyork.dk



Anne Blume Futtrup and her daughter Julie in DUMBO to do research and take the final photos for the book.

Graphic Facilitation

2011 was also the year where I discovered a new talent, which in many ways seems to unite a lot of my past experiences. It's called Graphic Facilitation. I realize that this, to the outsider, might seem less unusual. After all I have been going through several creative fields since I first established my own company. Computer programming. Then websites and Flash games and -animation. Then fashion journalism. Then street fashion photography. Then teaching leadership. Then commercial photography. Then teaching video editing. Never have I seemed to have the patience to stick to one field. Why should Graphic Facilitation be any different? Well maybe it isn't. However, there might be reason to think so.

First of all, what is it? To avoid too much unnecessary confusion I have included tangible examples of the two primary types of work I have been doing so far. Below on this page, and on the bottom of the next page is a series of images of pages from some of my notebooks. This type of work I call visual consulting. It's usually just me and the client, and we sit down and talk. I mostly listen and ask a few follow-up questions. Once I begin to understand the problem the client is experiencing or the goal of her mission, I begin sketching and drawing. I rely on my experience as a photographer/writer/strategist/entrepreneur/public-speaker/teacher/home-chef/husband/process-facilitator/coach/designer to understand the situation and propose solutions. I feel a bit like a doctor sometimes. The client might ask for X, but X might just be the symptom of Y. I always look for the Y because when you find the root of the problem it is so much easier to fix the symptoms too.

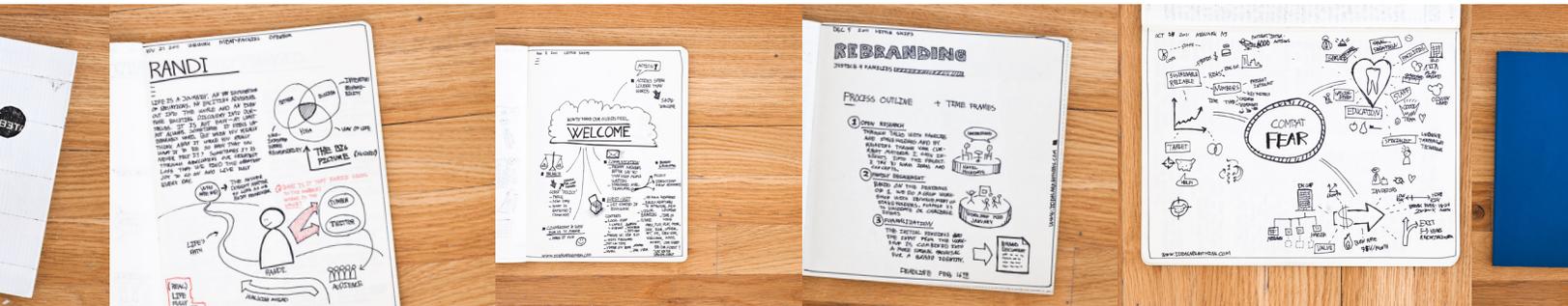
The other type of work I have been doing this fall is called Graphic Recording or scribing. It is a way of visually capturing the essential contents of a meeting and structure it in a way that makes it memorable to the par-

ticipants in a meaningful way. It is done live as a meeting takes place. The images rarely make much sense to people who were not present, but that is not the point either. An example of a Graphic Recording is included on the next page.

The reason I love Graphic Facilitation is because it doubles as a way of making all my creative processes more tangible. So when I work on an art project I use Graphic Facilitation for myself to structure and understand what I'm doing and why. When we did Fashion Week Live in August 2011 I used it to bring the team of 20 people on the same page with truly amazing results. And when I do a website or a new visual identity for a company I use it to understand the brand, the message, the idea and the purpose of the website. In this way Graphic Facilitation allows me to get a confirmation from the company if my understanding is correct. In a very broad sense it helps make ideas real. For me or for my client. Therefore I decided to separate this product into its own name called Ideas Are Nothing.* My next step is to try and bring this type of work into the legal business. Especially in mediation I think the visuals can provide a great tool for improved dialogue and ultimately help resolve the conflict faster.

All of this would not have happened if it wasn't for my good friend Stine who initially told me about Graphic Facilitation and in so many ways has helped me get off to a flying start. If you want to know more about Graphic Facilitation in general I highly recommend stopping by Stine's website www.graphicfacilitation.dk. Also, some of the people I have met here in New York have been truly amazing in helping me get my new business started. Kelly, Sita, Heather & Nora. You girls rock!

* You can read more about Ideas Are Nothing and find more samples of my work, case studies and my visual blog at www.ideasarenothing.com

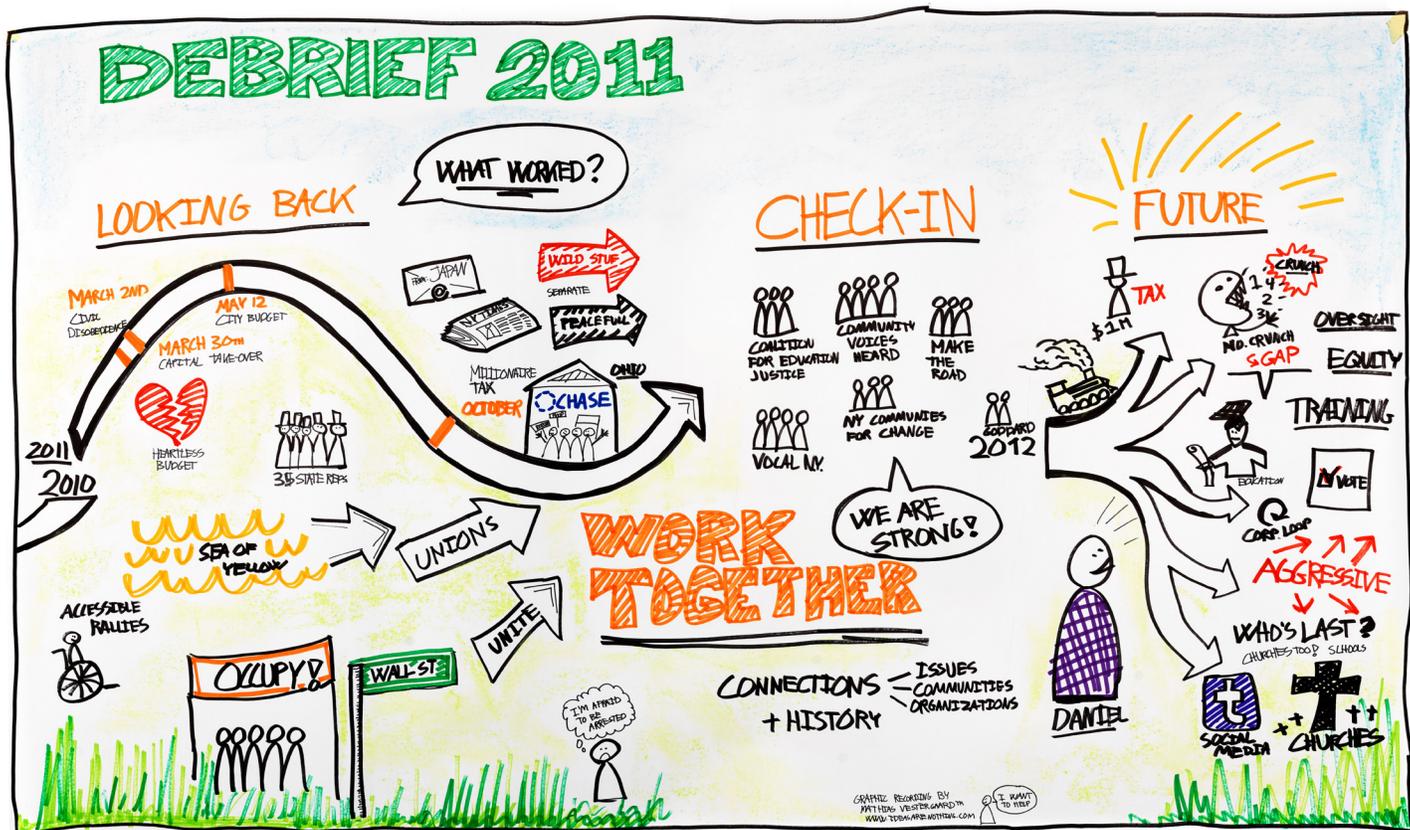


Visual coaching session with www.randizinn.com

Personal notes

My pitch for a rebranding process

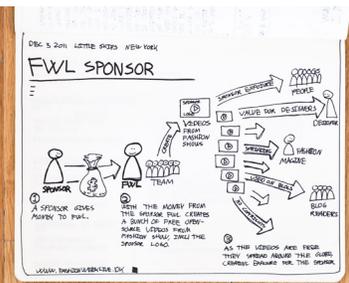
An early mock-up of a visual business plan for Dental Kidz. The full case study of this project is on www.ideasarenothing.com



Graphic Recording done for the Strong Economy For All coalition. The original drawing is approximately 3x1.5m. December 2012.



Process outline for the production of one of my own art projects: The White Shirt Project www.mathiasvestergaard.com/whiteshirt



Sponsor-overview for Fashion Week Live



Planning a work shop for The Water Tank Project



Personal network-map



Personal notes

What I have Learned





From Efficient to Effective

One of the most important life lessons I have learned in 2011 is the distinction between being efficient and being effective. It might seem plain and simple to you, but for me it has taken several years to reach this understanding. Let me explain with an example. Let's say I have 10 tasks to do every day. When the day is over the list is cleared and next day there are 10 new tasks. For me, being efficient is trying to do all 10. In the end I might not get all 10 done, but most likely I will get 8 or 9 done. The important thing is that time and energy is divided between the tasks and you allow each task only enough time to not interfere with the others. Being effective on the other hand, is realizing that one of these 10 tasks is more important than the other nine altogether. Instead of running the risk that I only get to do the nine less important ones, it might be better to focus all energy on this one task. Then I might only get one thing done, but I will get it done so much better, and if it is really more important, getting that thing done right will lead to much better results.

I'm not saying that effective is per definition better than efficient. My point is merely that I have learned that there is a difference, and that I have for too long been focusing mostly on efficient. This means that I have produced work and projects in great quantity. I don't mean to mock my own projects, and I don't regret my past decisions, but in my view, most of what I have done is only 90% of what it could have become. Sometimes those last 10% take 10 times as much time (hence, why I left at 90%) but they are sometimes also the 10% that makes the big difference and makes work stand out from the pack.

Therefore one of my goals for 2012 is to become better at making these priorities. Instead of making 10 projects that are 90% good, I will begin practicing how to make just one project that get's closer to 100%. Part of this practice is to become more patient and for someone like me this is not an easy task. I must often refrain from throwing myself into new projects and adventures. When my energies are low I have a natural tendency to try to make something new, since it is usually in the initial phase of a project that there is most energy. The result of this tendency has already been elaborated enough. Now, I am allowing myself these low-energy periods without seeking new adventures. Instead I read books and restitute for more intense times.

Rebranding

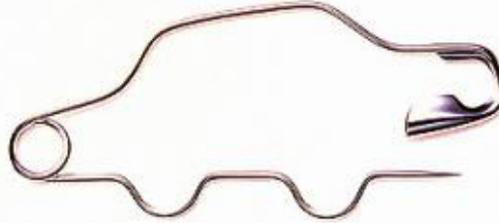
Building on the life lesson learned above, I also wanted to rebrand myself and my activities. Since 2005 I had become synonymous with the very cocky tag line on the back of my infamous business card. The tag line and attitude that made me the subject of several lectures and an entire chapter about the future work force by future trend researcher Anne Marie Dahl. "Google me!" was all it said. For the past five year the Google-me brand has served me very well, no doubt. It really captured the attitude and quantitative focus of my work. When people searched for me, there would be pages and pages of articles, projects, ideas, interviews etc. Google was my constantly updated resume.

As I have grown older and wiser (I turned 26 this fall, but sometimes I both feel and talk more like I'm at least 60) I have much less need to show off, as mentioned in the story about discovering my purpose. Also, I am beginning to understand the value of doing fewer project in order to get closer to 100% instead of leaving at 90. Thus I could no longer identify with either the attitude or functionality of Google me, and I decided to initiate a personal rebranding process.

I think branding has often been wrongly accused of being merely a way to sell more unnecessary shit at higher prices, with Pepsi as a shining example of a clearly inferior sugar-water-product branded as the choice for popular music icons. And it is true that branding has often been used that way, however, I also believe that branding can be used in a very productive way to change our perception about things that matter.* Thus, personal branding is as much about understanding ourselves as it is about communicating this understanding to others.

I embarked on this journey to rediscover myself in a branding framework. A journey that has already been much longer than anticipated and I am still not sure if I have arrived at my final destination, but I have a feeling that I am at least getting close. For those readers who are not working with branding, or who might have an equally valid but different opinion as to what branding is about, I will just briefly sketch what I think of when I say branding. As I see it, branding is about simplifying our understanding by highlighting one thing and one thing only. This does not imply that the world is not complex. In fact, it is exactly because the world is so extremely

Show it don't tell it”



VOLVO
Acarısu en güvenli.

Iconic Volvo ad

complex, that we need to pick one element and allow it to be the anchor for all the other details. It is the thing you talk about first. Doing this consistently over time makes a brand easier to understand. Volvo serves as a good example. Almost all Volvo ads focus on the same thing: that a Volvo is safe. First and foremost safety is the key feature of this car. In advertising lingo this is called a single-minded proposition. Is a Volvo unreliable then? Of course not. It would be very unsafe if the airbags were unreliable. But reliability can be spoken of in terms of safety, thus anchoring the detail to the single-minded proposition. This should preferably be a unique feature for the brand, at least in the sense that you are the only one who focus on it.** Of course there is much more to branding than this, but this serves to understand the process I was going through in the search of a new way of framing myself, besides the cocky Google me-attitude and a focus on projects in quantity.

I began exploring what I do and how I do it. I found a few old vanity e-mails that I have saved because they contain a bit of praise by some of my friends (after I, in 2009 had directly asked what they thought I was good at). One e-mail from my long-time friend and work partner Jakob said I was good at everything from creating new ideas, leading a project and all the way through implementation. Most people seem to be much better at one of the phases, so having them together is a unique (and useful) skill. However, this is hardly single-minded. It is three propositions connected by the word “and”. I kept looking for that one thing that would bind it all together in a meaningful way. Being a Leader (in a broad sense) was something I explored. Leading idea generation. Leading development. Leading implementation. In many ways I feel Leading, Leader or Leadership could all be good focal point for me. However, it does imply that someone is following, and even though it is sometimes the case,

* I recently discovered a TED video with advertising guru Rory Sutherland, who seems to be thinking along similar lines. It is available here: www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_life_lessons_from_an_ad_man.html

** For a strategy like this to really work, it is also worth mentioning that substantial effort has to be put behind the proposition. You can not promise safety and then have your cars score badly in a crash test. Volvo serves as a good example of honest branding since they also used their brand internally. Thus, Volvo has pioneer most of the safety equipment we today take for granted in a car. Laminated windshield and 3-point safety belts to name just two.

Rebranding



My new business card.

I often work on my own, and I felt leadership was not able to contain that. Maybe in another five years it will be more suitable.

A little before, and especially during my temporary job at Hatch & Bloom in the fall of 2010, I gradually developed a very keen interest in ideas. Hatch & Bloom calls itself an “idea- and design agency” often stressing the idea. I began exploring and developing ways of thinking about ideas and what an idea means for business, entrepreneurship and design. I don’t believe that ideas are a scarce resource. There will always be more. Good ideas can feel more rare and seem precious, but so long as they are just ideas they are nothing. The quality of an idea should be judged by how well it is executed. An idea might seem good when you talk about it, but it proves to be hard to build in real life. Thus you can only recognize a great idea once it has been turned into a great design/product/company. Until then it is most likely just a crazy idea. This passion for ideas has grown and I began to

see it as the connection between the three propositions above: I’m an idea-person and what I do is I make ideas real. It can be my own idea, somebody else’s idea or a mix. I am unsure of how to communicate this precisely. As I said initially, I have not yet reached my final destination but I am getting closer. From these insights I also finally managed to design a new business card to replace google me.

Without going into a full analysis of the design, I will only say that what I really like about the final version is the correspondence between my new title as “creative misfit” and the rotated and cropped off design. This, I feel is in many ways a continuation of the idea-person. Being a misfit is an idea of avoiding entrapment in fixed categories. It is the way I can make ideas real, i.e. by not being too narrowly focused on one phase. And this idea is unfolded visually in the design. Thus, the card shows how I create ideas and make them real, instead of merely stating it.

Stakeholder involvement

No annual report without an update on primary stakeholders. This year has been tougher and much more challenging than any year before, but it has also been extremely rewarding and exciting. However, the most exciting thing about relocating to New York was actually not the move itself. For me the move was surpassed by a very prominent visitor and primary stakeholder in Mathias Vestergaard Corp.: my grandmother. She is 25% genetically invested in me, and the last of my genetic grand parents alive (I now have to extra and very wonderful grand parents). Since our move my grand mother and I have mostly been in touch over the phone, Skype, e-mail and most recently on Facebook from her iPad. However, she has long been talking about visiting me in New York once I moved, and this fall she decided to do it. She invited my sister to travel with her, and they booked a direct flight and a stay at a fancy downtown hotel.

She is 86 years old and she has travelled the world. She has been to South Korea on multiple occasions and she visited New York for the first time back in the 90s. From the beginning she loved the city and she was looking very much forward to come back. She is getting older and weaker and it was a tough trip for her. She caught a cold on the last day in the city and was in bed for more than a week after returning to Denmark, but not once did I hear her complain about anything. It had been an amazing experience for her to revisit this city that had made such a big impression on her more than 20 years before. For me, seeing her, here in my new home, was the biggest event of my 2011. Her appetite for life is strong. She doesn't fear death. The only thing she is afraid of is dementia and other types of mental disorders. She inspires me and shows me how you can get old and yet remain as fresh in mind.

Happy New Year from New York



My grandmother resting and knitting in the bed at The Mondrian Hotel.

See you in 2012

Mathias Vestergaard Corp.

1323 Myrtle Ave Apt 3R

Brooklyn NY 11221

USA

T: 347-987-5098

M: m@mathiasvestergaard.com

Twitter: [@ideasarenothing](https://twitter.com/ideasarenothing) & [@mathiasnyc](https://twitter.com/mathiasnyc)

www.ideasarenothing.com

www.mathiasvestergaard.com

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