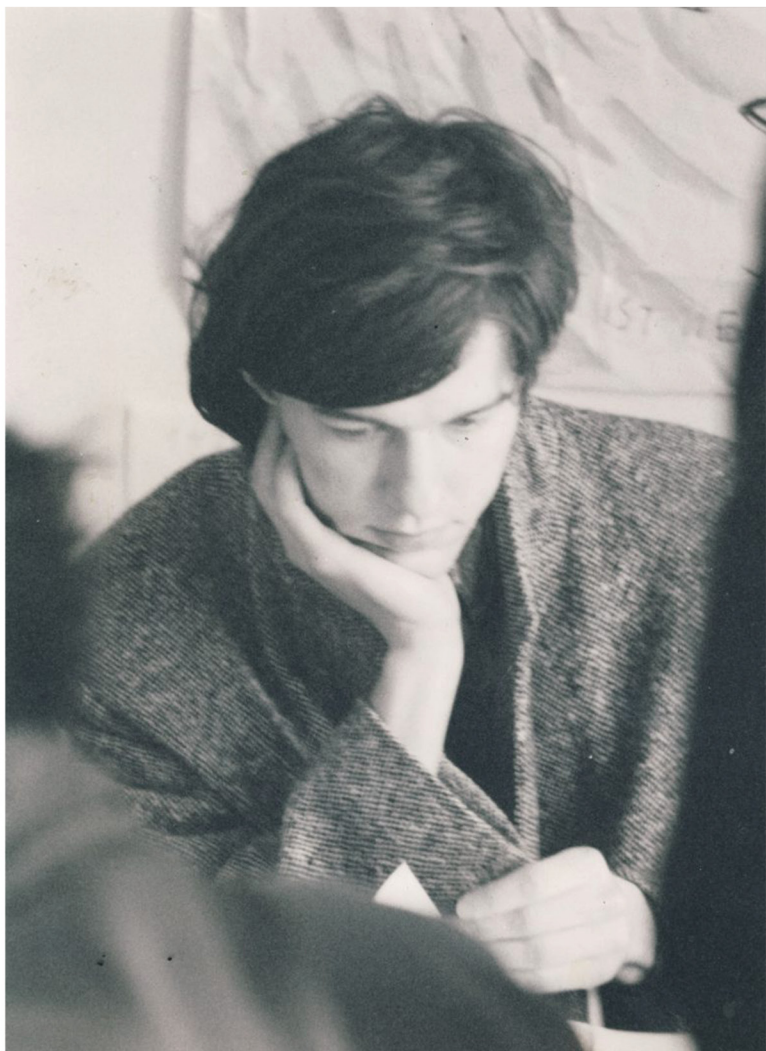


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STEFAN

3



Stefan Sagmeister was born in Bregenz, Austria in 1962. At the age 15 he knew he wanted to be a graphic designer.

“I wrote little articles for a small magazine and discovered I like doing the layout for it better.”

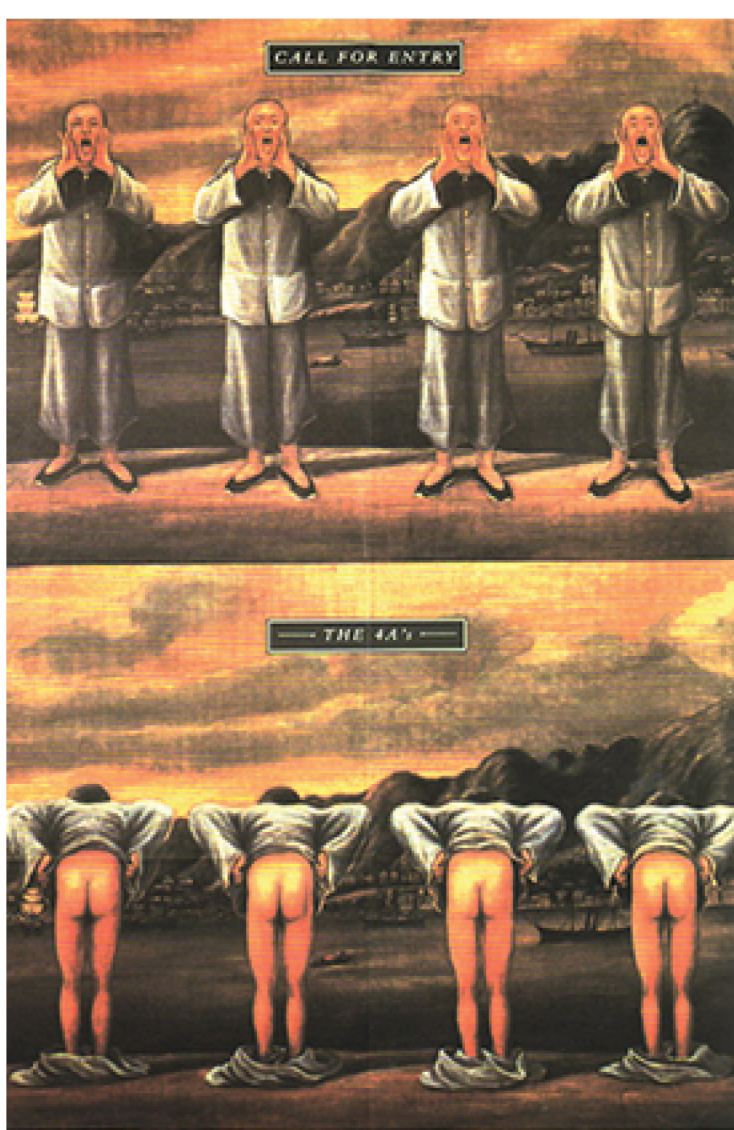
At 19 he made the decision to move to Vienna to apply to a school of applied arts. However, he was rejected on the grounds that “just about everyone was better at drawing” than he was. His hopes weren’t lost and he continued to follow a design career. On a second attempt applying to a private art school he was accepted. In early designs Stefan did not show much of his current methods, nudity, humor and borderline inappropriateness. His posters did poke fun of traditional theatrical images by paring them with rough, grungy, punk typefaces. These works were influenced by the anarchist graphics and punk rock album sleeves from the 1970’s, a style that he has replicated many times throughout his career as a designer.

Sagmeister furthered his artistic education in one of America’s leading Art and Design universities as he received a scholarship at the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn.

SAGMEISTER

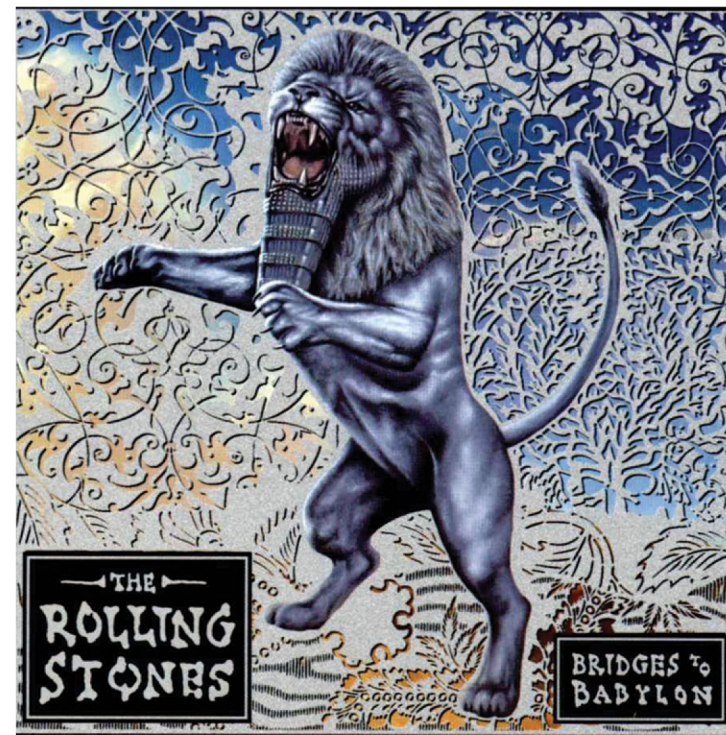
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THE 1990'S



Sagmeister moved to Hong Kong in 1991 and joined The Leo Burnett advertising agency as a graphic designer. Through the design company, in his own true fashion, Sagmeister decided he would test the cultural boundaries in an advertisement he was asked to create for the Hong Kong Design Award, organized by 4A's in 1992. Created by factory painters the poster depicted a traditional Cantonese style, however, the image was of 4 male bare backsides, obviously inspired by the organizers company name gracing us with the great Sagmeister humor. The image was extremely inappropriate by the reserved culture and beliefs of Asian businessmen and women. This led to many agencies boycotting the ceremony. Sagmeister received a lot of complaints but revealed his favorite asked;

“Who’s the asshole who designed this poster?”



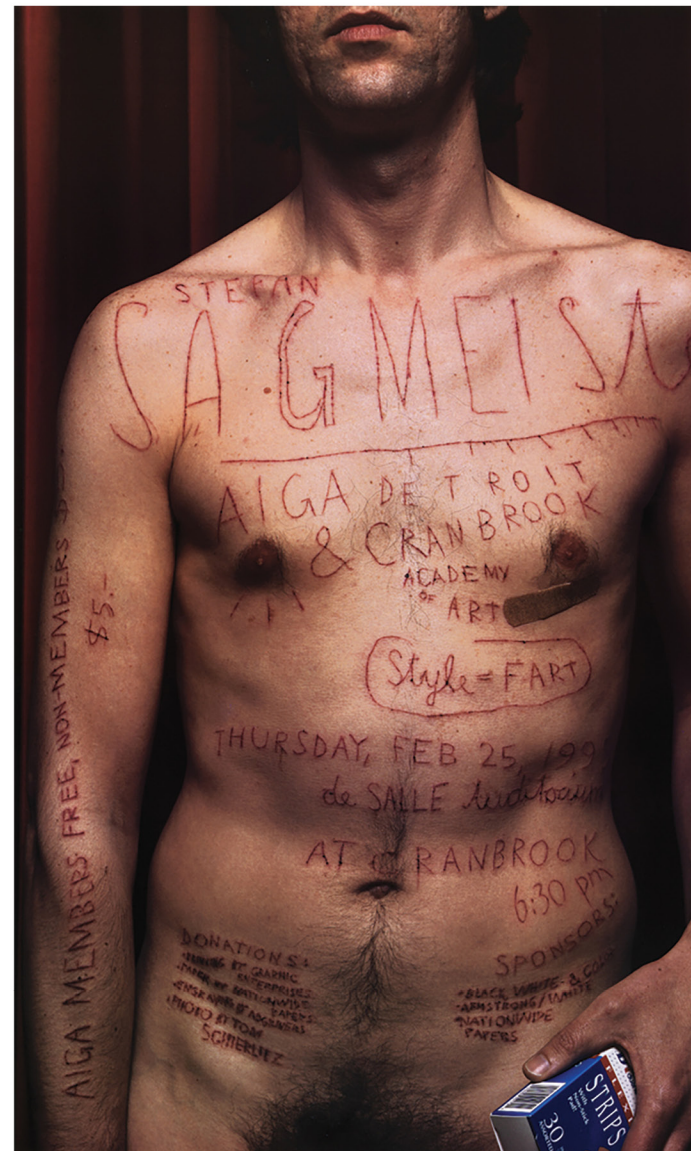
In 1993 he returned to New York. He joined Tibor Kalman's graphic design studio M&Co, which was the company he aspired to work for as a Pratt University student. However only a few months into his dream career, Tibor Kalman announced that he was closing the studio to focus solely on his role as editor of 'Colors' magazine. It was at this moment Sagmeister decided to step out on his own and Sagmeister Inc. was created.

Sagmeister's focus for the company was to break into the music industry and design album covers for the musicians he loved. The record labels which he approached had turned him down in the beginning, so he took the opportunity to design the CD for a friend's album. Mountains of Madness by H.P. Zinker.

After being commissioned to create the Rolling Stones 1997 Bridges to Babylon album and tour, Sagmeister struggled to persuade the band's management to listen to his ideas. He wanted a motif of a lion inspired by an Assyrian sculpture in the British Museum. His argument included that the lead singer was a Leo star sign and the that the image could easily be used in tour merchandise.

SAGMEISTER INC.

“...we tried to visualize the pain that seems to accompany most of our design projects. Our intern Martin cut all the type into my skin. Yes, it did hurt real bad.”



Although the music industry was the focus, Sagmeister also took commissions from clients outside of the industry. One of these commissions lead to a very famous and one of his most acknowledged designs, his almost infamous lecture posters for AIGA in 1999. It showed a grainy photograph of Sagmeister's naked torso which one of his employees had cut the details of the speech onto his skin using an exacto knife. The idea came about through the play on the name of the speech 'Cutting Away at Modernism'. Although not exactly hysterical, this poster showed his dark provocative humor, if you can see past the mutilation. The inclusion of his 'style=fart' quote also cut into his skin alongside the details is intentionally there to try lighten and lift the dark mood of the poster.

Again, this poster drew a lot of attention evenly split between love and hate for the designer. This unconventional method of portraying a message drew criticism from those saying it was inappropriate and could be a negative influence on others, and normalizing self harm. On the other side his fans had nothing but praise and they believed he displayed the scarifies that he was willing to make to portray a message of the pain and efforts in his work.

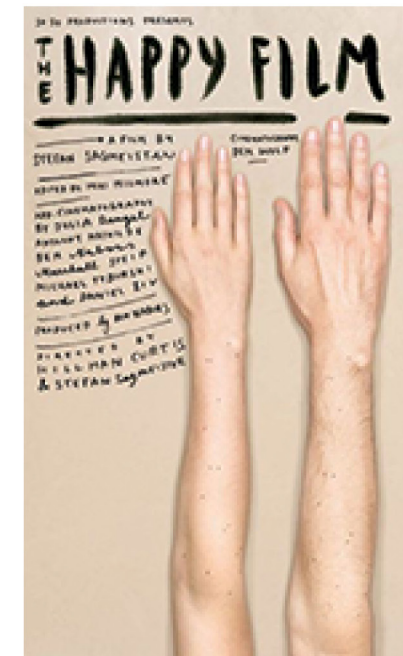
& WALSH

“Nineteen years after the founding of Sagmeister Inc... We are renaming the company to Sagmeister & Walsh.”



In 2012 a huge decision was made by Sagmeister Inc. and they were about to take the company in a new direction.

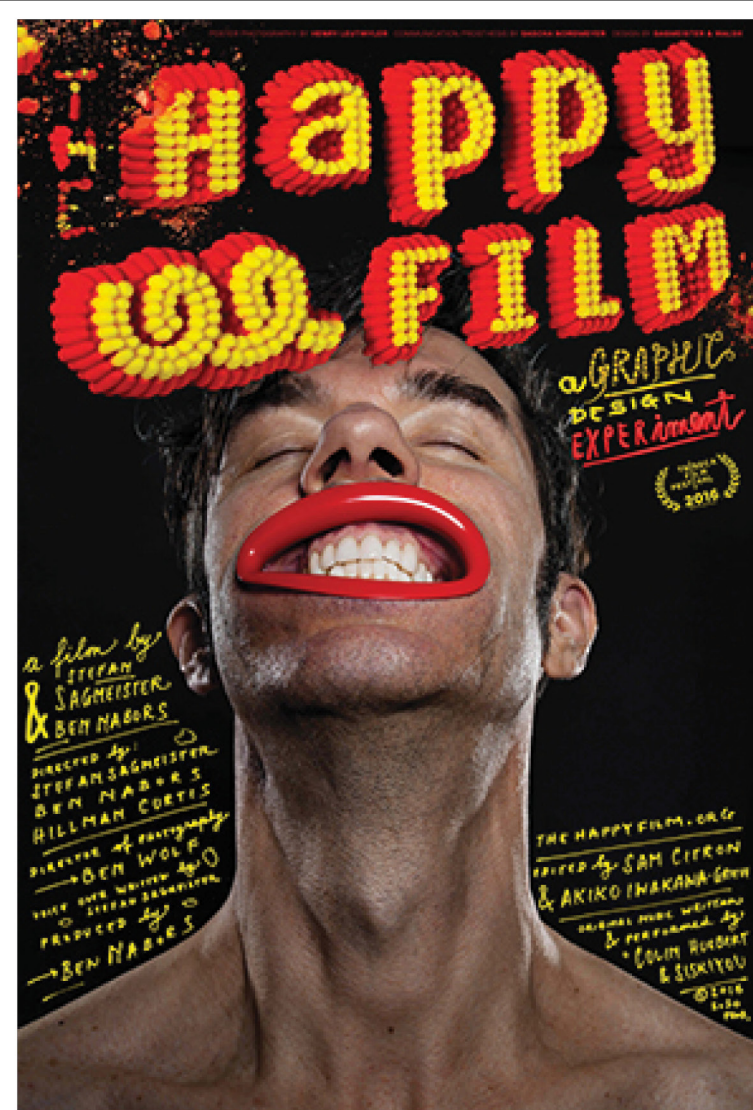
To show this massive development in the direction of the company Sagmeister referred to the original announcement of the opening of Sagmeister Inc., where he posed naked in his office with his arms folded 19 years before hand. The new idea was to stage the same image, however, this would include a naked Jessica Walsh on a pile of new papers and magazines beside him. Clearly showing the beginning of the new company 'Sagmeister and Walsh'. Jessica Walsh was a 25-year-old talented graphic designer working as the art director



at 'Print Magazine'. After emailing Sagmeister to look through her portfolio, she got the response almost immediately; “When do you want to come work for me?”. The next day she quit her job to work with Sagmeister. With all the changes to the company the logo also changed from an 'S' to a '&'.

In 2012 the duo put on their first show together, “The Happy Show”, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. The show contained visual data and graphic representation of happiness throughout a community set in the colors of yellow, black, and white. Sagmeister also used his own handwriting style as a juxtaposition to the fixed visual data.

The Happy Film



Seven years in the making, The Happy Film began as an attempt to find a design solution to a pressing problem: Sagmeister was at his creative peak, but he wasn't very happy. At the time, he was reeling from the death of his mother and a difficult break up with his girlfriend of 11 years; his happiness, frankly, didn't stand a chance. But as a designer who methodically confronts challenges with creative solutions for a living, it was frustrating to suddenly have a problem he couldn't solve. So why not approach it like a designer, and frame his happiness problem as a creative brief? First, he'd have to find the right format.

Like a true designer, Sagmeister created the opening titles first. They're charming, but monkeys and bananas do not a film make. So, he dove head first into research, reading books and speaking with experts, namely psychologist Jonathan Haidt, author of The Happiness Hypothesis (and later a Happy Film consultant). He plucked his favorite data points from various sources and used them in TED Talks like 7 rules for making more happiness, but it still wasn't turning into a movie. The unwieldy topic of happiness was turning out

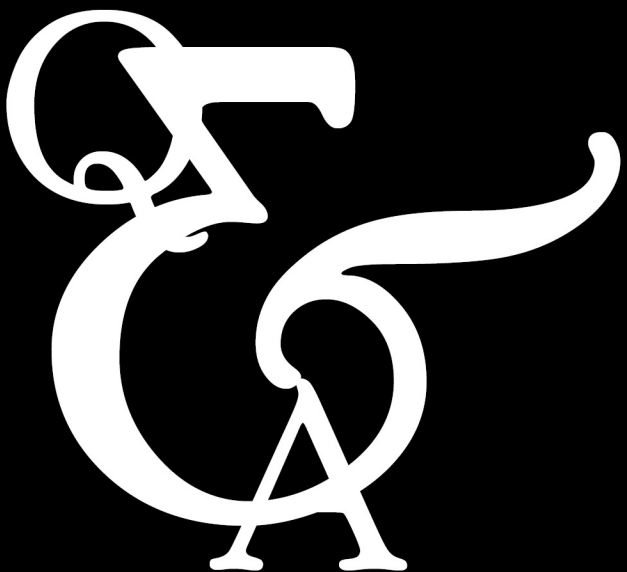
to be a lot harder to tackle than he anticipated. Fortunately Sagmeister's friends, filmmaker and fellow AIGA Medalist Hillman Curtis and producer/director Ben Nabors came on board as co-directors to help him locate the narrative that would turn an increasingly self-involved exploration into an engaging story with wider appeal.

Ultimately, Sagmeister embarked on a three-part happiness experiment that consisted of isolated, month-long

periods spent first meditating, then in therapy, then using prescription drugs. During each experimental period he would track his progress. At the very end, calculate his happiness number based on a rigid system he'd devised to measure his emotional well-being. He would take a break, come back to "normal," and begin the next experimental period. At the end, all he'd have to do is look at the numbers to see what worked.

While he was on the happy pills, Sagmeister did indeed feel happier, though he compromised the experiment. Sagmeister fell almost immediately into mad, deep, crazy love, & got engaged he'd recently met. He's the hero of our story, who doesn't want things to work out for him? Especially since he's been trying so hard for so long to be happy, and now he finally feels it; but it's drug-induced and fanned by the flames of new love, his favorite drug of choice.





How would you describe yourself as a designer?

I am interested in creating an emotional connection to an audience. I have always been jealous of our music clients, who can often achieve this much deeper, quicker and more immediately.

How do you go about inspiration/having ideas?

The process I've been using most often has been described by Maltese philosopher Edward DeBono, who suggests starting to think about an idea for a particular project by taking a random object as point of departure. Say, I have to design a pen, and instead of looking at all other pens and thinking about how pens are used and who my target audience is etc., I start thinking about pens using.....(this is me now looking around the hotel room for a random object)....bed spreads. Ok, hotel bedspreads are... sticky....contain many bacteria...., ahh, would be possible to design a pen that is thermo sensitive, so it changes colors where I touch it, yes, that could actually be nice: An all black pen, that becomes yellow on the touching points of fingers/hands...., not so bad, considering it took me all of 30 seconds. Of course, the reason this works is because DeBono's method forces the brain to start out at new and different points of departure, preventing it from falling into a familiar grove it has formed before.

Can you share some surprising places you look for inspiration?

Taking train trips. The forward motion together with a view out the window and enough space for a sketchbook; this works very well for me.

What do you feel is the biggest block to your creativity?

Boredom, uninteresting content and fear of not being able to come up with anything.

How do you fight boredom in your work and is it really the greatest designer's challenge as you once said – not to get bored?

Milton Glaser once told me that his proudest achievement in over 50 years of being a designer is that he is still interested and feels engaged. I myself find that sabbaticals to be the best cure.

Is it possible to have both, making money and doing good work?

I remember a sentence in a Minale Tattersfield book that said: "In my experience, every designer whose prime aim in money while at the same time producing good design, failed on both counts. I believe that designing is something you have to do for love. If you are committed first and foremost to producing good design then you'll make money as a by-product because good design is something people are willing to pay for. But that financial reward will be a bonus, a gift." I agree.

What advice would you give to designers who are looking for more happiness in their daily lives?

1. When opening the inbox in the morning, single out one mail for a special thank you/praise. 2. Exercise. 3. Have low expectations and display incredible surprise and joy at the anomaly of something - against expectations - going right.

When you hire someone at Sagmeister & Walsh, how much does a person's happiness affect the outcome?

About half the decision is portfolio related, the other half how much we like the person. Do we want to spend serious amounts of time with each other? We tend to gravitate towards up, positive people. I myself do my best work when I'm in good shape, when I'm depressed or sad I don't get anything done at all.

What music do you listen to the most these days? I'm also curious to hear your thoughts on today's pop music.

Right now I am mostly listening to music bought because of their great cover. This would include: SBTRKT, FKA Twigs, Beach House, Darkside, Sufjan Stevens, Karen O, Washed out, Gabriel Garzon Montano.

How are design and happiness related?

Every single profession, in fact every single act that I perform, is in some way related to happiness. There's a famous quote by the French mathematician Blaise Pascal who says that even the person who kills himself, does it because he thinks this will make him happier, i.e., he'll be better off dead. So of course, happiness is also related to design: Can I become happier as a designer? Can I make other people happy with my designs?

Where/how do you think you need to grow still?

Plenty of room: Being able to turn the other cheek as well as not shying away from confrontation. To know what to do when.

Could you explain the purpose of the project "Trying to look good limits my life"?

My grandfather was educated in sign painting and I grew up with many of his pieces of wisdom around the house, traditional calligraphy carefully applied in gold leaf on painstakingly carved wooden panels. I am following his tradition with these typographic works. All of them are part of a list I found in my diary under the title: "Things I have learned in my life so far." We displayed them in many cities around the world in places normally reserved for straightforward advertising. All of them were commissioned by clients. For example, broken up into 5 parts "Trying/to look/good/limits/my life" and displayed in sequence as typographic billboards, - worked like a sentimental greeting card left in Paris.