

DIE PHILOSOPHEN KOMMEN

MARION FUGLÉWICZ-BREN

Marion Fugléwicz-Bren, *Die Philosophen kommen*, lud den TEDx-Ambassador Niki Ernst zum Interview. Anlass ist die TEDx San Francisco Konferenz zum Thema „A Day To Remember“. Ein Thema, das mehr verspricht, als das auf Anhieb vermuten lässt. Einen ersten kurzen Blick darauf gibt ein (englischsprachiges) Interview mit dem Kurator der Konferenz, der erstaunlicherweise nicht aus Kalifornien stammt, sondern aus Wien. Mehr rund um das Sujet *Erinnerung* folgt hier. Bleiben Sie dran.



Days To Remember: „Rather embrace than try to understand them“

„We are shaped by the past, we mold the present, and we seek to predict the future by inventing it. *A Day To Remember* honors the past, celebrates the present, and heralds the outcome. And we ask, what are the big ideas today that will reign relevant in 50 years?“

Just a short first glimpse: An interview with the curator of TEDx San Francisco 2015, Niki Ernst.

By Marion Fugléwicz-Bren, *Die Philosophen kommen*. die-philosophen-kommen.at

MFB: Niki, as part of the TEDx-community you are TEDx Ambassador in Europe, you are running a design company in Austria and are somehow California-bound, how come? And how did you come across TED-conferences?

Niki: In her talk at TEDGlobal 2014 in Rio de Janeiro, Taiye Selasi has phrased the term "Multilocal" as for someone who would perceive his origin as "earthling" rather to being - in my case - Austrian. So yes, I reside in Vienna, with a wonderful and highly supportive family. Together with my wife, we run "planetsisa", an advertising agency with a clear focus on packaging design, corporate design, publishing design and communication strategies. All the companies who have employed me in my life, were ad agencies. You can state advertising as my professional background. Whereas I would put advertising as

an industry who helps their customers building compelling stories around and about a product they have. Seeing advertising as such, being related to conference curation is not such a big step. Today's position of advertising is the industry that turns products into free products, which is probably one of the reasons, why I cannot really relate back to what I have done in the past, from today's perspective.

To answer your question, in 2006, a friend of mine sent me the recommendation to watch JEF HANS talk about the Multigesture Interface. JEF spoke at TED 2006 and until today, his talk has been viewed 8M times. However, a year later, the iPhone was introduced to the market. When I watched his talk, I decided to watch one TED talk a day. In 2008, I signed in for my first TED conference: TED Global 2009 and attended every TED event, since. In this year (2009), TEDx was introduced and I applied for the TEDxSalzburg license. In the coming years, we produced 5 TEDxSalzburg conferences and in total about 20 other TEDx events, mainly in Europe.

At the TED conferences, TED began to invite for Workshops for the TEDx community. And I jumped in for various topics and started co-shaping the program. In 2011, TED invited me to being one of their TEDxAmbassadors for Europe. Today, I am more of a TEDx Ambassador without a region which is explainable thru my extensive traveling: I spend 10 days a month in Vienna, 10 in San Francisco and the rest of the time on quite random places - where people "book" me to help out with speaker coaching or moderation.

Two Austrians in the curating team of TEDxSan Francisco 15, you and Florian Brody, born in Vienna – this is rather remarkable. Can you explain how this was going to happen? How did you meet, which common interests do you have, which ideas do you want to share?

Since I felt San Francisco as being the place that I would call my "second home", I always wanted to work with the local TEDx team to help them with their events. The TEDxSanFrancisco team never answered my mails. So I applied for a license and it turned out that the previous team did not renew their license which made it available and TED trusted me to produce this event in one of their most important subbrands (Monterey, 2hrs south of SF, which is the birthplace of TED).

Respecting Florian as a wonderful friend and inspiration, we decided that it would be fun to produce this conference together. Florian ran the communications team at this production.

„A Day To Remember“ – what a great motto – probably everyone of us has at least one such day – what does the slogan mean to you personally?

You are right, I have a special day to remember, popping up, instantly, but: This is personal - and I dont want to share it with you.

Which is actually the number one answer I get, when asking people about their day to remember. Of course I have a lot of them. My life has always been very colorful and attracted numerous days to remember, full spectrum on the scale of pain to joy :-)

Lets rank the day when I watched my first TED talk number one on today's list. It created a snowflake that turned into an avalanche in my life.

What are – generally – the things we should not forget in life, what is relevant for all of us – also for our future? What do you think?

Interestingly enough, being surrounded by so many beautiful minds with their riveting thoughts on where the journey of our planet will be going, if we speak about the core, it always comes back to very basic

things, like dreaming, embracing failures, daring greatly and remembering, where we come from. As profane this might sound, but with this ubiquitous hunger for the "next big thing", so many around us disregard the fact that we should maybe first do one thing right, before we are greedy for the next.

What is most important: The Past, Present or Future? And why/how do they belong to one another?

The past has shaped us, the present creates momentum to shape our future. I don't see those three separated. They are one family of what we breathe in and out, every day. No one should tear them apart.

Do you believe in historical importance? What's the first thing that occurs to you in this context?

Just because of the fact that history has never taught anyone anything, I would not disrespect historical importance. By definition, historical importance means, "worth studying". How could one understand the present and the future if taking the past out of the equation?

There are days that change our lives – what can we do to preserve them?

I think we should rather embrace them than try to understand them. Days that change our lives are not always the most convenient days, prolly the opposite is true. We all have a different approach to those days. Ignoring or thriving to understanding is very commonly seen. I disagree with both approaches. While I think, at least ignoring is better than understanding. For me it was a huge learning curve to accept, that we do not have to understand everything.

Can you spend a few words on your speakers?

My Speakers reflect my global travels. I spend most of my lifetime in conversations with people who see things that others don't see. Some of them, I invite to speak at my events. I love stage virgins, they are so humble and excited and it's always a huge risk. I terribly failed with this decision, but where I succeeded, the success was the highlight of the whole events.

About Niki Ernst

Niki is passionate in working with people, helping them to develop or strengthen their skills in being entrepreneur, staying curious and being able to get other people excited. He is serial entrepreneur with experience in advertising, design and innovation. He has joined the global TEDx program in year one and has been designated TEDxAmbassador in 2011. Niki is running a design agency in Austria, touring people in the Silicon Valley ("Silicon Valley Inspiration Tours"), coaching ~100 speakers a year, founder of "my School of Talk", Author of a book about "Liars-as the better storytellers" (soon on shelf), Co-Author of a book about "Silicon Valley and Europe - a best of both worlds cocktail", and working on his PhD, developing a new global currency. He commutes between Vienna and San Francisco and spends 10 days a month traveling to random places, working with local conference organizers to help with speakers and curation.