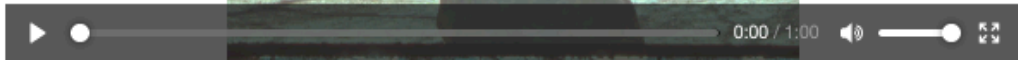


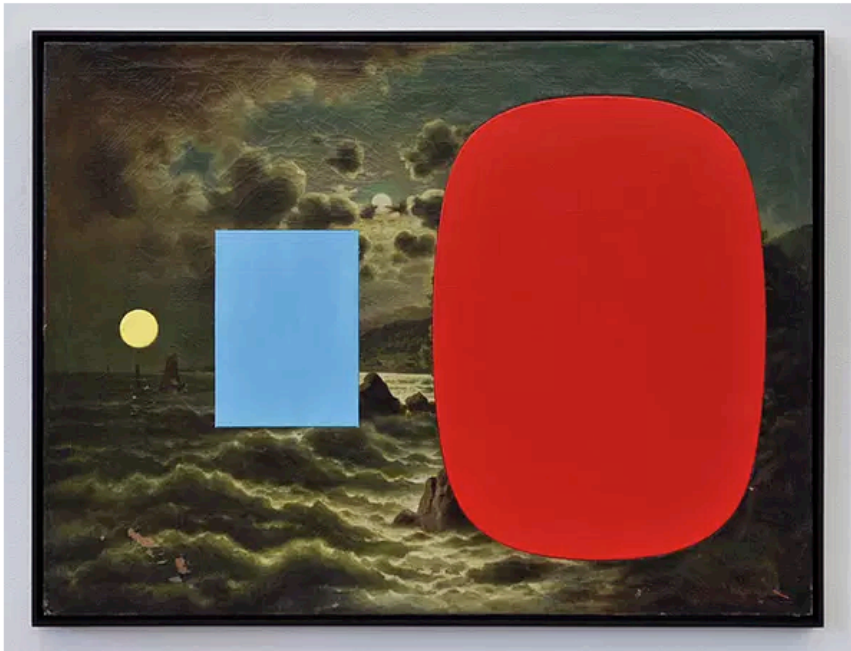
Steven Heller  · Apr 12 · 2 min read



The Daily Heller: Stefan Sagmeister, Searcher-at-Large



Even before Stefan Sagmeister retired from commercial practice, he was on a quest to learn and acquire knowledge. Every seven years he took a year-long "sabbatical" to investigate niches of life that he subsequently explained through performative design pieces using many media. Sagmeister often is himself the investigator, the investigated and, you might say, the experimental lab rat. In *The Happy Film* (2016), he is his own protagonist as he searches for bliss and undergoes the unforeseen results of unscripted evaluation; he is not afraid to put his body on the line and sets up three methods for himself to find happiness—meditation, therapy and drugs.



Carbon.

Sagmeister's latest journey to the center of the interior world is an exhibition, *Beautiful Numbers*, conceived in 2020. In his new art, Sagmeister is once again his own protagonist—searching for bliss, collecting the unforeseen results of his unscripted acts of discovery and evaluation.

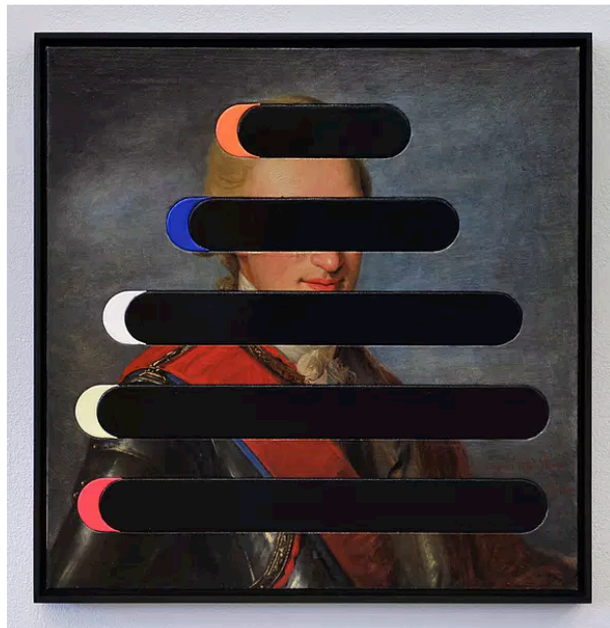
"Short-term media, like Twitter and hourly news, create an impression of a world out of control," with democracy in peril, ubiquitous crises and an overall sense of inevitable doom, he says. "But if we look at developments concerning the world from a long-term perspective—the only sense-making way—almost any aspect concerning humanity seems to get better." He conceived this daily lived experience project to reflect an optimistic world that can be saved.



Woman.

He combines art and data (as is often his metier) to get across facts, like, "Fewer people go hungry, fewer people die in wars and natural disasters, more people live in democracies—and live much longer lives—than ever before. Two hundred years ago, nine out of 10 people could neither read nor write; now it is just one out of 10."

Sagmeister visualized such stats collected from over 100 years and transformed graphs into inlaid 19th-century genre paintings, embroidered canvases, lenticular prints and hand-painted water glasses—all of which will be on display for the first time at the [Thomas Erben Gallery](#), now through May 15.



Democracy.



Famine