the Grand Tourist

PODCAST

Frida Escobedo: The Curious Architect

This star Mexican architect struck out on her own almost from the beginning of her career, bringing a refreshing touch to the profession. Dan speaks with the designer about her unique outlook on her profession, the pressures of working on New York Met Museum, and her first-ever residential condo in New York.

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By THE GRAND TOURIST

Frida Escobedo: In architecture, things are changing. People are coming from a world where it was calling it the most specialized architect to do specific things. I've seen a shift because when someone is highly specialized in something, he or she might not hear the same things as someone who's doing it for the first time or with fresh eyes. Hopefully that's what I'm doing. I'm a good listener and I'm just finding a new way of telling the story.

Dan Rubinstein: *Hi, I'm Dan Rubinstein and this is The Grand Tourist. I've been a design journalist for more than 20 years, and this is my personalized guided tour for the worlds of fashion, art, architecture, food, and travel, all the elements of a well-lived life. Architecture is a tough profession, especially if you're a woman and even more so if you're not based in New York, Paris, London and all the usual places. My guest today is, in my opinion, a once in a generation breakthrough success who brings a soft touch, a sense of humanity and elegance to a job that's often surrounded by sharp elbows, Frida Escobedo. The architect, has been a central figure to the renaissance of the design scene in her native Mexico City bringing a unique 21st century sense of modernism to her work with a keen eye on materiality that's so intrinsic to the design culture there for such a successful name that's been constantly bandied about for years.*

She's barely 45, which is a baby in architectural terms, that's probably due in part to her training in Mexico and Harvard, and the fact that she struck out on her own almost from the beginning of her career. She's created hotels, cultural centers, boutiques for the likes of Aesop installations at places like London's V&A Museum, and had a global breakthrough moment in 2018 with the Pavilion at London's Serpentine Gallery. If she was sought after before, she's about to soar to new heights with her commission to design the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new $500 million modern and contemporary art wing in New York.

That project will take a few years to complete, but in the meantime, Frida is completing another first, her residential condo in Brooklyn called the Bergen, with its undulating façade of custom tan-colored brick elements and with interiors by the award-winning firm, Workstead. It's sure to be another milestone of architecturally-driven mega projects in the borough. I caught up with Frida from her studio in Mexico City to discuss her earliest memories, why she feels kindness is key to architecture, her plans for the future, how she's bracing to deal with all of the critics when her job at the Met Museum is done, and what key lessons she teaches her design students today.

With most of my guests, start at the beginning. I know you were raised in Mexico City, is that correct?

That'sright.

I mean, the eighties were a really tough time for Mexico economically, and it was time of surging crime and kidnappings. That was sort of the peak, I believe, of a lot of that. What you remember from the environment of Mexico City and Mexico in general as a young woman or as a child? What was that kind of universe like compared to today?

What I remember the most was the '85 earthquake. I was only five, but I still remember it very clearly. It was the first time that I experienced an earthquake and then the effect on the city. I think that had a huge impact on me because for many, many years after, you could still see some of the scars that were left in the city. You could see torn-out buildings that were not renovated or renewed in 10 years or 15 years, and there were areas of the city that were a little bit more rundown that used to be really magical places like Roma. After many years it has slowly been transformed into a lively neighborhood again, but there were areas and patches of the city that were really just ruins. I remember that, but it was also a very fun place to live in. Mexico City is always very lively.

There's a lot of activity in the street. Everything happens in the public realm. You have a lot of food and energy and I just remember going because my cousins lived in another part of the city, just driving with my dad and just being able to see all these differences. You could go to the south of the city and it was volcanic rock, and I would climb these rocks with my cousins and then I could go back downtown where there are limited park areas, nowhere I used to live. It was being able to have those two worlds.

That's amazing, and so before you studied at Harvard later on in your life, but you studied in Mexico City first and studied architecture, can you tell me about what your school was like for undergrad and from an architecture point of view, what were they teaching you? What was the sort of popular worldview that was being kind of drilled into your head as a young student?

I think it was very focused in preparing professionals because that's what most careers do here in Mexico City. You have a limited amount of time to study and we have a different system than in the US. No, we don't have that major and minor thing. You just go right into what you want to do and as soon as you graduate, you're licensed to practice. It was perhaps a little bit more business-oriented that I was hoping for. They would prepare you for life, for becoming someone who would either work in a studio or own a studio. I kind of missed a little bit more of the conceptual background or the historical background of architecture, the social aspect of it. It was more about how to produce floor plans, very good architecture studios. I had great teachers that it was more about sharing the craft and being able to share everything that you've learned from your professional experience.

Very few conversations about philosophical questions, just like in general, what is the impact of architecture? I had one professor that did that and I took his class almost at the end of the career, at the end of the degree, and it had a huge impact because this was the first time when someone was really explaining me why things were built in a specific way. It was not just because of economic and financial reasons, but it was also about the spirit of a place. I still thank him for that because I think that shifted something.

What made you want to go study architecture to begin with?

I wanted to do something with my hands. I always like to draw or build little things or crafts. I was really attracted to the idea of making, and I was leaning towards arts or design, but I think I was a little bit afraid of becoming an artist. No, as I was saying, I'm very shy and just thinking about presenting your emotions in any kind of way was very intimidating. Design and architecture felt like a safer place for creativity, and in reality it was just a coincidence. I just thought architecture would provide a broader spectrum of possibilities and that's why I applied to architecture school, but I wasn't really sure, and my mother was always very supportive. Just choose whatever you want if you don't like it always helps to have passed through some experience of knowledge of knowing something in a different way. And I was lucky there was something that aligned and I really loved architecture school from the first moment, so I just stayed there.

You're speaking about the differences between architecture studies in the US. I mean, not only was it not very theoretical, but also when you got out of school, you started working for yourself almost right away, which in New York there are people who they work until their entire career and never leave a firm or they toil for years and doing CAD drawings of air vents or whatever. What were those, I think it was seven years, right, that you worked for yourself and you working with your partner at the time, I think? Tell me about that. What was those first years like?

Yes, I think I was trying to find these little wedge where I could fit in because, of course, I wanted to practice as an architect, but I was a little bit Doubtful about what the whole system was like, do you really want to work in this huge studio? That was the goal for many of my colleagues at the time. It was like, let's go to the biggest firm because this is where you need to be and this is where you're going to do great things. For me, it was like I just want to do some very experimental stuff and even if it's from a very small scale, and I was lucky enough to be working with my partner at the time, Alejandro, who had a similar kind of thinking. We were just two kids trying to have a lot of fun, and we started applying to grants and then his mother asked to do a renovation in his house and we convinced her of doing way more than she needed to do actually.

W were just so eager and so much wanting to do our own thing that we convince people. That's a very nice feeling, not that you can really not get away with what you want, but to find what people really desire. Then a friend of ours asked us to do his house. To me, that was the first actual project. And after a while we split, each one of us followed our own careers. Then another friend of mine who was really influential, Jose Rojas, invited me to do a hotel. I started working with Jose Rojas in this hotel, Hotel Boca Chica in Acapulco. He was also, a non-typical architecture student. He actually is not practicing as an architect anymore. He owns a gallery here in Mexico City, and I think that was the first time that he was looking at doing some other things. So he was always showing me new artists or designers that I didn't know of. He was always looking at how people crafted things and changing them locally. It was really delightful just to work with him because he was such a big inspiration. Then I started working on my own.

With the Hotel Boca Chica, when you look back on it today, what sort of signatures carry through that you think is like, oh, that's definitely mine?

Yes, of course. The project was about renovating a fifties hotel in old Acapulco. It was a very rundown area of the city, actually where it started in Caleta Caletilla. This was the starting point of the golden area of Acapulco, but of course it declined and the crime rates went up and it became a kind of dangerous place to be.

When we decided to come back, it was trying to bring that glamour of the old Acapulco, but also recognizing that the layers of history that had happened afterwards were also very valuable. Their interpretation of modernism with these crazy colors and these adaptations that happened in the sixties and in the seventies and even the eighties were also part of the story of Acapulco. We tried to put them in and also, reinterpreting some of the classic furniture of very iconic designers known like Jean Prouvé, like how can we bring that into the narrative of this hotel that has nothing to do with Europe, but could have a lot of fun, but just mixing it and interpreting it and making something that is fresh.

It was a very successful hotel for many years. Now it's closed. To me, the important thing was just to start looking in different places. That's what I learned working with José, and I loved just going out and seeing little details. There you could read a complete new story of how the city was constructed.

After that period of seven years, you decided to go to Harvard for a program called Design in the Public Domain. That must have been a shot of theory for you and what's the word I'm looking for? Higher values, sort of a higher level of thinking of architecture and society. Why Harvard and why did you decide to, you had a successful practice, you were doing hotels, why then go to leave the country, go to Harvard and get this sort of theoretical degree?

It sounds like I was being a very successful architect, but actually we were doing things on a very small scale. We were working from José's home, and when I was practicing on my own, I was working on my own kitchen counter. It was tough. It was tough for many years. I started to realize that I either had two paths, I would stick to what I was doing, which I loved, which was something that had to do with my own curiosities and how to develop this idea that architecture was a language that would allow me to see the world in a different way, or I could make some profit and just work for a larger studio. I didn't want to do that.

I just thought like, "Well, I need to figure this out because it's not working for me financially. Maybe this is not what I want to do." Then this program just appeared, no, I was thinking maybe I need to go into the arts or just design or something that is not attached to these financial constraints. This program appeared. I was constantly checking the new programs, and I also applied to the Royal College of Arts to a similar program. One of the GSD resonated to me more because it was a multidisciplinary approach. People from all backgrounds were allowed into the course. To me it was like, "Well, maybe this is the way about thinking about my career again." Well, here I am. I'm still a practicing architect.

Once that program at Harvard was completed, A, what did you feel like you took away from it? What kind of person emerged from the program that was maybe different?

Yeah, I think a more confused architect emerged, but that was a good thing. I started thinking that there was a possibility of doing other things that were more related to art or to expressing my own ideas or feelings or intuitions about myself or the people around me or the space around me that I thought of. That was very liberating because then I was not attached to just making more traditional types of architecture. Also, that gave me the possibility of acknowledging that I could do many other things. I could write, I could do an installation, and it was equally as valuable for me as doing something that involved a larger scale of a project.

Did you ever think about staying in the States afterwards, or you definitely wanted to return to Mexico?

Not really. I always wanted to return to Mexico.

What did your peers think when you came back that you were, what was your world like? Did you have a sort of a reverse culture shock when you come back to your own culture and you're kind of jolted a little bit because you've been immersed outside for so long? Did you have anything like that?

No, I actually started to value many other things. I missed them, but actually I was never separated from the context of working in Mexico, because at the same time that I applied to my Master's degree, I did a competition for the first public building that I did, La Tallera. I finished the project, I started school. In Mexico, usually public buildings either start right away or they are put on hold until something happens, and that can take years. I was expecting for the construction not to start until I'd finished my Master's, but it didn't happen that way.

It started one year into my program, so I had to fly back and forth almost every month to check the construction site. That kind of kept me grounded because there was these higher thinking happening in school, all these theoretic conversations and philosophical questions. At the same time, I had to deal with a budget, very restrained budget to do these public building, and I had to deal with, I don't know, the plumber, yes, exactly, to resolve some issues. I think that's when it clicked. It was because I had these two worlds that I was able to find my middle happy ground. Yeah.

Tell me about La Tallera. It's a gallery, but it's also public? Tell me a little bit about what it is.

It used to be the home and studio for David Alfaro Siqueiros, a Mexican muralist. When he passed away, he gave this atelier and home to the state of Cuernavaca for it to turn into a public cultural building. It was active, but with a very light program. No, there were people coming in, but it was really not too strong. Then decided to renovate the whole space to provide more opportunities for more formal artists to participate in exhibitions and to also do artistic residencies and just the general public to be able to engage with the archive and collection of David Alfaro Siqueiros.

The whole collection that was here in Mexico City was to move to Cuernavaca, and they organized a competition, I think it was like five young offices that were participating at the time. I did a proposal from my kitchen counter and I received the project. What was important was the relationship between the street and the plaza that is adjacent to it, and two very monumental murals that are facing the plaza. The whole thing was about reorganizing the space, allowing for these new programs to come in, but to have the art that was already in the space to be the main protagonist, and also to allow for other exhibitions to happen.

How is your practice set up today? How do you, tell me a little about how you're set up with your team, and also if you met someone at a proposal where you have to demonstrate, talk about your firm as you're pitching for a job, how do you describe who you are and what you do?

Well, the practice slowly grew from being one person to two to three. Then it gets really exciting when you start having a team of five people. It starts feeling like you have an extension of your family because then the conversations become a little bit more rich and a little bit more horizontal when it's one-to-one, it becomes a little bit of a different dynamic. We started doing small projects, many of them art installations or projects that had to do with Biennales, architecture Biennales. I was questioning many of the ideas of the public realm and space. I met very interesting people around that time that have become very important friends. Then it started to grow into some other projects like hotels or social housing projects. Then, I don't know, seven years happened and we moved studios. We started working on projects in the us small projects, again, exhibition design, some other installations.

Then in the last few years, things really changed. I started doing a residential project in New York in 2020, but that's when the pandemic hit. The plans of maybe traveling a little bit more often to New York, maybe thinking about setting up a studio there were kind of put on hold because of the pandemic. By the time we emerged from the pandemic from working remotely, we were twice as big, so we had to rent another studio here in Mexico, join them. This is where we are right now. Then we realized that we were getting more requests from abroad, [inaudible 00:25:01], a hotel in Amsterdam, another residential project in New York. Then we got the invitation to do the competition for the Met. That's when things started to really move faster to open the studio in New York.

Before when, you mentioned the Met Commission, but before that, in 2018, the Serpentine Pavilion was a major moment for you tell people it's a gallery and a public space and a park in London, and usually there are these pavilions designed by architects and sometimes by artists that are somewhat temporary and they're quite monumental and experiential. Tell us about what it was like to walk into your Serpentine Pavilion and what that was like.

It was a major moment, of course, because I was the youngest at the time to do the Serpentine Pavilion. When I received the intimidation, the intimidation, when I received the invitation, it was quite intimidating because all of these major figures that I respected a lot had already done a pavilion. Everything that I was thinking of was like, that has been done and it has been done beautifully by this and this and that. Then we had to really review, it's almost like an introspective exercise or just thinking, "What do I want to say, but also what do I want to question?" That's when it starts making sense. To me, it was this idea of this pavilion being temporary and site-specific, but then it's acquired by an institution or a private collector or someone else, and it moves somewhere else. It was almost like designing for a place that you didn't know.

It broke the rules for this idea that architecture is site-specific and permanent. This was none of the two. It was like, how can we link it then to time and space known to these very precise moment of the Kensington Gardens in 2018 with all of these ideas? The way to anchor it was to think about other ways that humankind has grasped this idea of time and place in a more abstract way. Because actually, it's just an idea of how we grasp and relate to each other in terms of space and time. We anchored it by aligning it to the Grinch-Marinia line, which is located very close to where the Serpentine Galleries is. There was this moment where it became almost like a sundial or a compass where you could feel that you were in that space in that moment, and it was going to be unique and fleeting, but then when it moved to another location, of course it would remind of that first experience.

It was almost like spiraling up, creating memories on the same principle. What was really nice as the first time I was coming in and one of the photographers approached me and said like, "Hey, so what is the money shot? You need to tell me what's a money shot so I can take it and we can publish it." I was so glad to not have one precise moment where it was like, "This is the angle that you need to take," because it was more about how you would move around the space or how you would sit in the space and just see things happening around you rather than you happening outside of the space or inside the space.

I'm also curious to learn a little bit about your ongoing relationship with Aesop because you've signed many of their boutiques around the world, and they're so known for their experimental and very sort of serene and thoughtful approach to retail in a way that no one else has really been doing for quite some time. Of course, people have copied them now, but they were kind of the first. Tell me about that relationship, how that started, and how many of these boutiques have you done and how's that going?

Yes, that's a very good point that I forgot about, but yes, those were some of the first experiences outside of Mexico City, those on the exhibition designs and these interventions with Bienales that I was just talking about. It was something that was almost in between. It was retail, but because product is so particular and so well-defined, what they wanted to do at the time was to create a very different environment for each one of the shops and something that tied with the surrounding neighborhood.

It was almost like it required to do a little bit of analysis, but it was not just like a typological analysis, it was like, what is the spirit of this place? Then it was more like stage design, which was really interesting for me. We worked with them for maybe seven years. During that period we did five stores, one of them in Miami, a temporary one in New York, then the Park Slope one, another one in Miami, in Tampa. It was a very nice relationship because we had creative freedom, and it was also a way of getting to know these new neighborhoods and how they were changing and also, doing experiments with materials and finishes and just creating these little environments that would connect to the neighborhood.

As someone who's navigated a very successful career at a young age, for an architect, if you don't mind me saying, I was curious to see something that you had mentioned to our friends at Madam Architect and an interview where you said that kindness is a very surprising tool. I was wondering if you could explain what you meant by that.

I had forgotten about that interview, but it's true. I'm in a very male-dominated industry, still, even though things are changing, I don't think it's a complete change. When I started practicing, I encountered a lot of resistance because I was very young, I was working on my own and I was a female. It was like you have no idea what you're doing and you need to prove yourself all the time. I noticed that some of my colleagues, usually my male colleagues, had this very strong attitude, not like they had to have a presence that was very solid, that was almost like invincible.

To me, it's like it's not who I am. I cannot be like this tough woman all the time. I need to be what I am, and I want to be kind to people and just listen to them and just make them understand that I have something that I can put in the table that might be valuable for them. In many cases, it worked. I was glad to see that just the idea of making someone feel heard was almost equally as important as making your voice be heard. That was another way of introducing yourself into the conversation.

If I were to ask you from a 30,000-foot view, a more open-ended question, but if I asked you what kind of architect is Frida Escobedo?

I don't know. It's so hard to define oneself. Hopefully, I mean, from a 30 million miles, I hope people think that I'm a curious architect, and from inside my studio, I hope that I'm a good leader for my team and that they can feel that they have creative freedom and they can flourish in the studio.

If I, how does this curiosity that you've spoken about a few times, how does that translate into, let's say, your first condo project in New York, Bergen, which is coming up, which of course I'd love to talk to you about. How does that curiosity find its way into this enormous residential complex in Brooklyn in New York?

It comes with complexities because of course there's a little bit of resistance because when you start seeing things in a curious manner, you want to experiment and explore. You're not just going to repeat what is the right way to do things, you're just going to try to find your own path. To me, it was about integrating the idea of having a community, but also, that there was a community that was already existing. Of course, coming from a Mexican background, that had to do with interaction and interweaving and this idea of contact, whether it's visual or physical, that was something that was very different in the neighborhood and the developments that were happening. It was more like beautiful buildings that had a world on its own, but there was little friction with the street or with the neighborhood. I wanted to create a little bit of that.

Doing anything real estate-related in New York, especially on a large scale, is quite difficult. There's a lot of code and there's a lot of restrictions and a lot of fingers in the pot. Tell me a little about what you feel like you brought to the project that maybe only you could do.

I think I was asking a lot of questions at the time. I was asking a lot of questions because I was curious, where does this code come from? Is it really necessary? Is there a way to interpret it? And of course, I wasn't trying to break the rules, but just thinking, let's not make it the obvious way because it might be the safest option, but it might not be the best option for this project. Usually, there are parallel answers that are not breaking the rules, but are finding a different way. It becomes a slower path. It creates some frustration for some people, but in the end, I think it's great because then you have something that is really different and that has a spirit of its own.

Tell me about the materiality of the facade of Bergen, because I know it's quite unique, but for a project like this in New York, but also seems, forgive me if I'm wrong, but seems to be kind of also part of a signature of yours, this kind of material. Tell me about that, what you chose and why.

Yeah, we chose brick for the facade, and at the beginning it was like white brick. We could do all of these experiments with beautiful materials. There was, I imagine, a little bit of resistance because of some of the precedents in New York that have a negative connotation that are made out of brick. At the same time, it is a neighborhood where that type of modulation and detailing is very important because it's creating a specific rhythm in the streets. It kind of aligned also to my personal interest in modular systems that rearranged in more complex ways can create an infinite amount of arrangements. The brick has been a creative tool for me to experiment in many different aspects. The idea of it shifting direction, creating shadows or open corners or little windows that you can peek through, it's just really interesting to see how an industrial module can create all of these possibilities in a very simple way. That's why we try to introduce it.

How would you say the architecture of Bergen will influence how people will live there and what their day-to-day experience will be?

Well, the idea was to, it's a relatively large housing project, residential project. The first thing was let's divide it into smaller spaces and create a contrast. With the DXA, they already had provided a master plan of a zigzagging façade. That made a lot of sense because it was kind of modulating the rhythm, and we just echoed that gesture of positive and negative, using the smaller brick, creating a screen that would allow for some views, but then some opacity depending on which side of the street you were coming from. What that felt for me was the opportunity for people to be connected to the street, but also to have little corners where they felt they had a lot of privacy. Intimate spaces, collective spaces, and then the relationship to the public areas of the building and finally to the street were modulated and in a gradient that was just regulated by the use of a single module.

And putting Bergen aside for a second, and without going into any specifics, as I'm sure you have a lot of, you're buried under a mountain of NDAs, how are you feeling about the Met coming up and your impending deadline?

It's another big surprise. I have to say, every time I have an interview or a conversation with people who are asking me about my job, I see these constellation of projects, no, going from a pavilion very early on to the Serpentine Pavilion to the first project in New York, and then getting this when it feels equally as exciting but amplified. I never imagined that I was going to be doing a project in such an iconic building. This is the dream of an architect. It's a huge responsibility, but also it's really fascinating to be able to interact with an institution that is a city on its own. It has all of these layers. And yeah, it's just diving into a new world completely.

No matter what you do with the Met, the critics are going to come out from and from every angle. It's a little bit like touching the Met is a little bit like, I don't know, like a Catholic redesigning the Vatican. It's really just, it's up there. How do you deal with criticism yourself in your entire career?

Well, I think, that's the story of my career because I was always working on my own. I never was under the wing of anyone telling me this is the right thing to do, just do it. I've always had questions. I think when you have questions is that you have fear. The fear is precisely that. Am I doing the right thing? Am I going to be criticized? It has to do with the idea of the self. When you cross that fear and say, "This is what I need to do, this is what I need to say," and of course, it's not going to be perfect for everyone, but I'm confident that every time I do a project, I'm putting all of my soul doing it, and it has worked in the past. I will just continue to do it.

Because at the same time, I feel like in architecture, things are changing. People are coming from a world where it was calling the most specialized architect to do specific things. I've seen a shift because when someone is highly specialized in something, he or she might not hear the same things as someone who's doing it for the first time or with fresh eyes. The possibilities open up a little bit, and hopefully that's what I'm doing. I'm a good listener, and I'm just finding a new way of telling the story of the Met.

Is there a slated completion date that's supposed to-

Let's say 2029.

All right, so you've got some that sounds like it's so far away, but actually as you know, it's probably not really. Not really. Well, we're all rooting for you for sure. Your work has done some product as well. Of course, as you mentioned, it's been a part of, you have a museum project, it's kind of this sort of crown jewel of any portfolio. How do you see the next 10 years evolve for your studio? Because, well, you've got the Met coming up in the next, maybe let's call it six years, five years. Beyond that and the next five years after that, how are you thinking about your firm? Do you want to continue to do these big projects or are you kind of also interested more in smaller things like furniture, smaller scale?

We still have a lot of projects happening in Mexico City now. We're doing hospitality projects. We're developing a furniture line. We have the limited editions of furniture. We are doing a couple of residential projects for people that are important to me, that had started way before the Met. Thinking about it and talking to my team, I think that for me, it has been a gradient of doing small things that matter to me, to doing these huge commissions that have a lot of attention, but that have a lot of pressure. Hopefully for me, the next step is to be able to have that same level of engagement and of things that really matter to me, but having a little bit more time to develop them. There's no feeling that there's these compression and you need to deliver something really fast, not particularly with the most important ones, like the Met or other institutions or the Pompidou, but even with smaller projects. Can you find someone that you can partner with that would allow you to iterate a little bit more on a project?

Or could you find a way, and this is something that is very important to me, that allows you to have these bigger commissions that are a huge value to you, but that also, allow you to do a more interesting practice because you're able to do more pro-bono work? Can you start experimenting more with materials? Do you have clients that allow for that kind of budget? No, it's not necessarily something that is big, but that has more of a social responsibility or those are the goals, not finding better clients and being able to become a better architect by finding them.

On top of it all, you've been an educator of architecture of various universities. Not sure how you find the time per se, but what do you think is the most important lesson in today in the year 2024, to impart on design students to kind of make sure that they're prepared for this industry and this discipline today?

Well, when I was in school, I feel like it was like people were teaching me how to provide answers. I would like to shift that idea to be able to give my students the opportunity to ask the right questions and the right questions come from their own experience and what they're curious about. I think we have been successful on a couple of courses in doing that, had students that really say, "I have no idea what to do." Then two months later they say, "This is the best course ever." There's something nice about people finding their own voice that I love.

What's next for you? What's the end of 2024 look like for you when this will come out?

Lots of travel.

Oh yeah. Where are you traveling to next?

I'm traveling to Baja, California to see a new project, so I'm looking forward to that. After that, I'm going to New York and then Paris, and then San Francisco and Napa, and then back to Mexico.

Oh, wow. Okay. That's quite the whirlwind tour. If I had to ask for you to describe who Frida Escobedo is in three separate words, what three words would you choose?

Very shy person. I don't know. It's hard for me to define myself.