



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: Ryen Motzek and Atlas

Episode # & Date: Episode #48 – September 23, 2020

About this Episode: Judy showcases a business leader and fascinating retail store that brings vision, art and style to downtown San Mateo.

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/ryen-motzek-and-atlas/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus. As long-term residents who have raised six kids here, we thought it was high time someone shined a light on the good things in San Mateo to enrich the lives of those living here and the businesses that serve them. If you want to know the best places to eat and play, the events not to miss, *and* want to know how San Mateo became the crown jewel of the peninsula, tune in every Thursday and please be sure to click the 'subscribe' button on your favorite podcast app. Now, onto this week's episode.

One of the reasons that people really like small businesses in their city is that many times the person who is helping you is the business owner. If you frequent their business, they learn your name and your preferences. You will eventually go out of the way to make sure you give them as much of your business as possible, because that relationship has been established. I'd like to say that was my situation with Ryen Motzek, who owns Atlas on 2nd Avenue. But, since I'm not immersed in the local skateboard scene, I haven't become a regular there. I've only been in the store twice over the years, when I was buying some shoes for my son. I know about Ryen from the work that he's done in San Mateo to help facilitate a few public murals downtown, so I asked if I could talk to him about his business, and his work with the artists. It was enlightening to hear about his early life, and how he used his focus and organizational skills to get his dream job as a teen and overcome some financial challenges.

When Ryen was in college studying art direction and advertising in San Francisco, he found himself in a pretty difficult situation. His tuition and family responsibilities made him feel like he was being pulled in a lot of different directions. One day, he was locked out of his apartment, and he couldn't afford to pay for a locksmith to come help him out. So, while remaining a full-time student, he decided to start a valet parking business in San Francisco. He hired a bunch of his friends and built the business up so that he could remain in school while working. Although skateboarding was his passion, valet parking paid the bills.

In his teenage years before college, he worked for the San Mateo Deluxe Skateboard shop. He said that when he heard Deluxe was opening a shop in San Mateo, he decided he had to work there. He made that dream happen and ended up being the first employee that they hired at the store. Deluxe was founded by influential skateboard entrepreneurs, and Ryen learned a lot about the business while he was there. He liked working in San Mateo and getting connected to the community here. After the Deluxe store closed, and Ryen had completed his education, he opened up Atlas on 2nd Avenue in 2007. Atlas serves as a retail store and art gallery that features a well-curated stock of like-



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

mindful brands as well as a place to host events to coincide with special projects. The store and brand are the result of hard work and collaboration by a group of dedicated individuals driven by passion over profit, to preserve the true definition of skateboarding and the culture that surrounds it. The elements that are in the store are similar to skateboard components: white walls represent the wheels on a skateboard, metal represents the hardware, and the plywood represents the wood on a board. It was a conscious choice to create a store that doesn't apply to a "time," their approach was to be classic.

Atlas has never been busier. People are wanting to be active, the number of female skateboarders is growing fast, and Nike shoe releases are creating a frenzy. Since you can't line up in front of the store when a new shoe is released, the demand is handled by a raffle.

Ryen's sense of design and organization have benefited downtown San Mateo from a public art perspective, too. He says that he works well with artists because he can use his creative vision, and then help an artist organize the project and get it done. That balance is what helped bring to reality *The Good Life* mural at the downtown train station by San Francisco artist Brian Barnecko, the mural in the main street parking garage by Israeli artist Enlo, and the tropical themed mural by San Mateo artist Todd Lanam called *The Beach Back Home* at Tilton and North B Street. When downtown San Mateo was ready for a rebrand in 2014, Ryen approached artist Michael Schwab, who has established a reputation as one of America's leading graphic artists, to design the logo for downtown and the downtown business association.

Ryen believes that when a community is directing and pushing the feeling of an area, and when people play a part in doing something community oriented, then you can create a special place. Ryen would love for there to be a consistent creative push for art in the city of San Mateo. Outsiders sometimes say that San Mateo is just a suburb of San Francisco, but Ryen doesn't think that's a fair representation. He'd love to see San Mateo become known as that town outside of San Francisco with amazing restaurants, shops, and incredible art. He acknowledges that it is a difficult task and requires developing a plan and providing for a way to keep up the momentum over time.

One type of art Ryen has created himself is the design of a limited-edition Nike skateboard sneaker. As Nike devotees will tell you, their limited-edition shoes created in partnership with prominent designers are an artform unto themselves, and quite valuable, too. Ryen crafted the colorways of the new Nike SB 'Dunk High,' Atlas "Lost At Sea" sneaker after a famous incident where a cargo ship encountered heavy seas and lost 20 containers overboard containing 60,000 pair of Nike shoes. One of these ended up on a San Francisco Bay shoreline containing Nike Air Flight 90s, the design upon which Ryen based his Lost At Sea edition. The design features cracked leather and pre-yellowed details inspired by the 200 days the lost sneakers floated around the Pacific. If you are interested in seeing or maybe even owning your own pair of Nike SB Atlas 'Lost At Sea' sneakers, *Here's The Deal...* Visit the SanMateoFocus.com website to see photos of the Lost At Sea design, and then visit AtlasSkateboarding.com to enter a raffle to buy your own pair. Or if that's not in the cards, pick up a Lost At Sea-themed skateboard deck, t-shirt, hat, or other item to commemorate this epic moment in footwear history.



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Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Don't forget to subscribe to San Mateo Focus on your favorite Podcast app. As always, if you'd like more information about the topics in today's episode or any of our sponsors, visit sanmateofocus.com.

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HELPFUL LINKS:

[Website: Atlas San Mateo](#)

[Webpage: Atlas raffle of Nike SB Dunk High Pro sneaker](#)

[Website: Artist Todd Lanam](#)

[Instagram: Artist Elna](#)

[Webpage: Artist Brian Barnecló](#)

[Webpage: Murals of San Mateo](#)

[Video: Unveiling of downtown San Mateo logo](#)

[Webpage: Field Perspective Creative Studio](#)

TAGS:

#atlasskateboarding #fieldperspective #nikesb #dunkhigh #lostatsea

— end of episode information > podcast show notes below —

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PODCAST SHOW NOTES

Podcast Name: **San Mateo Focus**

Logo:



Description: We created San Mateo Focus to shine a light on the good things in San Mateo in order to enrich the lives of those living here and the businesses that serve them.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

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