

[00:00:00.650] - Speaker 1

For. Or. Welcome to the More Life podcast, or creative problem solvers and entrepreneurs talk about squeezing more out and finding meaning in this crazy thing we call life. Let's dove in. What's up, guys? Welcome back to another episode of the More Life podcast. This week, I'm here with Elizabeth Kosky, the Korski. I said it right. I said it. We've done this for like three or four times. We're going to keep going. Oliver, I'm sorry.

[00:00:39.420] - Speaker 1

Elizabeth Mikulski from Key Press. Apparently my my vocabulary cannot pronounce your name impossible for me to do. So please say hello to everybody of the podcast.

[00:00:56.740] - Speaker 2

Hi, everybody, on the podcast, and thank you for having me. Yeah, it's been ages.

[00:01:05.260] - Speaker 1

Yeah, it's literally been a long, long time. And, you know, it's been we used to work together. That's how we kind of met. And we were working at the corporate office at Staples, Canada, doing a very weird job. But we'll start there in a few minutes. But I want to I want people to kind of understand what you do for a living. But many people do what you do. And I want to make sure that you have a chance to kind of fair.

[00:01:36.250] - Speaker 2

Fair enough in a nutshell, I am a hoarder of very heavy things, and I make them print pretty things. No, so I work. I have my own print shop. I've apparently been running this for eight years now, started off in digital print and have expanded to collecting numerous antique presses, fixing them and printing everything from like wedding stationery to more historical things and kind of now expanding more and more into equipment rescue because letter press and the very analog hands on type of printing is a very much a dying art.

[00:02:23.500] - Speaker 2

It's been really great to see that there's been a revival of it. And I've kind of become the person to to try to rescue as much of it as possible and to kind of be a resource for people in Toronto, for people in Ontario, and basically put my foot down and say, you know, these these things are still doable and we can keep print in Ontario and give local businesses work. So that's a very long winded explanation of what I do, because I've kind of been expanding into this weird little avenues lately.

[00:03:07.510] - Speaker 1

I think people, when they think a print shop or printing house, they believe like digital or commercial printing, the stuff that you do. If I were to describe to like a 20 year old today, somebody who may not have seen some of these things before, logit is going to be like, you know, this is how we used to do math printing a hundred years ago or one hundred plus years ago. So I forget when the printing press was first, I could remember fourteen forty.

[00:03:39.670] - Speaker 1

I don't know why that number came to my head that I just make that up.

[00:03:43.030] - Speaker 2

Well, so the Gutenberg press has been around for quite some time. Yeah. So that's fourteen. Forty is you are correct. Did I just Google that. I may have and I actually have a product with that date on it. I really could at my job. Um yeah. So um the type of printing that I do and you can actually see over my shoulder is my oldest. His name is Hank, he's 100. He turned a hundred back in November.

[00:04:16.990] - Speaker 2

And yeah, basically it's kind of preserving this art. It's become the art of printing. But it used to be just this is how books got done. This is how flier's got done. This is how you advertise your business. You know, if you were to look up any photos from one hundred, one hundred fifty years ago, you have these massive warehouses with, you know, like two hundred of these guys lined up and everybody

doing printing by hand, you know, eventually you would get bigger and bigger presses.

[00:04:46.210] - Speaker 2

Some of them got to be the size of a building. And those are very pretty and very rare these days.

[00:04:52.360] - Speaker 1

And people don't know or they may not realize that the printing press is for if the olden day version of the Internet. So back, you know, people have the right things by hand and then share those things right and make a physical copy. That's how information and idea and thought could be shared at a large scale. Wasn't until we had a printing press where all of a sudden now everybody can read poetry or novels. So think about where nobody could hear your story unless somebody told you the story or you went to a theater to watch a play.

[00:05:33.190] - Speaker 1

And all of a sudden you write a manuscript, you write a story, and then maybe a hundred people could have it. So the rich of the wealthy people and the more became popular, the more democratized the information we're going through. That's the revolution right now with the Internet and how information, if kind of like, dispersed. So it's kind of a beautiful thing. You're talking on a digital platform, talking to me about an ancient technology. And it may seem crazy to call it that, but it is at the time that with technology, with machine, do we work to advance culture, science, history, to advance all these things?

[00:06:12.550] - Speaker 1

They were super, super powerful. Like, I love the idea of that.

[00:06:17.020] - Speaker 2

It was for its time. It was so advanced that when the when the printing press was first introduced, people thought it was witchcraft and tried to actually, like, persecute Gutenberg for being a sorcerer, for creating this and that, you know, with one of the. Earliest and most well known things is the Gutenberg Bible, and it's actually the Bible printed on a printing press to distribute, and it's a beautiful, beautiful piece of work and there's only maybe 10 in existence to this day.

[00:06:48.540] - Speaker 2

At the time that that was blasphemous to recreate the Bible in this commercial, widely distributed mass distribution manner. And then you go to say Industrial Revolution. You go like late eighteen hundreds and you can't get away from print. You know, everything is you know, you had your if you want to visit your friend and they weren't home or maybe they didn't feel like seeing you, you would leave your calling card at the front door and you would do this every time to every single place you went.

[00:07:22.200] - Speaker 2

You know, you get your fliers, you get your newspapers. The newspaper industry was a massive, massive thing. And that's the whole other story for me, because that's kind of how I got into it. Just being fascinated by newspaper print history, because that's what cool kids do, is they follow the history of the newspaper printing business. What's really cool is that everybody says print is dead, is a dying art, you know, especially letterpress work.

[00:07:51.690] - Speaker 2

And it was for a while there was a huge shift in like the 80s, in the 90s, when everybody shifted from the the analog to digital and people couldn't give these presses away like they were dumping them in every scrap yard that they could that they could find. I know of a letter press printer and down in the states who casually mentioned to an uncle that he was kind of interested in graphic design. And the next morning he had a press on his front lawn and he's like, well, I guess this is what I'm doing with my life now.

[00:08:22.470] - Speaker 2

And so there was a period of time and there's actually like it skips a generation. So it's now either a

whole bunch of retirement age up master pressmen who started when they were kids sweeping floors in a print shop and worked their way up. And they're amazing. They're their technical knowledge is beyond encyclopedic. And then there's all of us in like our late 20s, mid thirties and on who just had this kind of fascination with old things. And there is a whole bunch of people that maybe like their grandfather or their father was in print.

[00:09:05.970] - Speaker 2

And so they had access to this equipment. But more often than not is just a bunch of us crazy people who are like, you know, it's a great idea is to get something that weighs two tons and figure it out how to use it, because there's nothing. I was really lucky. In the place I worked at before I met you was a boutique print shop. And so their whole thing was digital work. But they had a fleet of this equipment in the back to do finishing.

[00:09:31.990] - Speaker 2

So whenever you go and you handle any sort of printer product, if it's got a numbering on it, if it's got perforations, if it's got one of these, don't look round the corners. If it's got custom shapes, that's still the it is done on newer equipment, but primarily it's done by by these machines that are all like hand operated majority of them, because a lot of the time you get something that the only way to do it is by hand.

[00:10:02.070] - Speaker 2

So there's still quite a bit of an industry, except there's just not a lot of people or equipment to keep doing it. And so in Canada, it's it's been quite a revival. There's a huge sea now in Toronto, there's a big scene in Nova Scotia and Halifax. I know people moving from the Toronto area, from the GTA, from Hamilton out there right now or more recently, like Pee Wee, make the joke. That one, I actually sold the press to somebody that moved to P, and once it moved there, the island sank a little bit because these things are so big and he moved three of them.

[00:10:39.780] - Speaker 2

So it's really fascinating that, like, it's a it's very much a community. We kind of all know each other and we know each other more in some cases by the presses than by our own names. Wow. So like I had I had a particular press that was very unique and we were able to trace it through like about seven different owners over the last few decades because everybody knew that, oh, oh, this thing that is capable of doing like this very specific task was recognized by a lot of people.

[00:11:11.250] - Speaker 2

So it's interesting to see the shift from digital to analog in this way, because people and I find like more in the last five years or so, there's been this big push for things that are handmade, for things that are artisanal and bespoke. And it sounds crazy hipster to say that. But there isn't a. Creation for this craft that we haven't seen in our lives. I think that we kind of like to see reason why young people are into Polaroids now, revival and doing film printing and all that type of stuff.

[00:11:51.060] - Speaker 2

The photography revolution switching exclusively to film for that reason, because they like the look of it and the feel of it. And so, you know, it's part of that. I was I like I've been a designer for a very long time and I've always found and this is something that I noticed when you and I were working together. And prior to that, because I was doing production like that's how I started. It was a college job in the summer.

[00:12:17.160] - Speaker 2

And then it kind of just kept going from there is a lot of people do beautiful design, but they don't always design it with the end product in mind or that he's going to make the with the end product, but not with the end materials. Right. So a big thing is like, OK, what paper is it going on? Is it even sized for or for the paper that you that you want your customer to use? Or are the colors the right saying?

[00:12:49.140] - Speaker 2

Are the colors calibrated for the equipment that it's going to go on? So right now, when I was doing

because I started with production, so we were doing this like overnight shift and we would be doing everything from flowers to your books to business cards and everything in between. And and so much of it was realizing how much adjustment still needs to happen after a designer submits it for production. And so by the time that I was working in the boutique shop, our job was literally like we would get the job, the art would come in, we would sit down with the art director.

[00:13:23.010] - Speaker 2

And then it was our task to go from point receiving it, to point shipping it out, everything in between. So we would be printing, cutting assembly, you know, we'd come in at 5:00 in the morning to do the actual assembly of the magazines, for example. And I love that being able to see the physical product, even if it's not your own brand, that it's somebody else's you made and you still made it.

[00:13:48.900] - Speaker 2

You made it. And you see the final outcome. You see where maybe where you could improve next time. Or you see like you had a crazy idea of using gold foil on something that your customer never even considered. And then it comes out, you see it in your hands, and it's this beautiful final piece that speaks so much to the craftsmanship of it, but also elevates the final design that much more. So I love working with other designers and actually coming up with these solutions of like, OK, you have a great concept.

[00:14:23.280] - Speaker 2

Here is the equipment that we have that can do so much more and they can get you something so much cooler. And so now we're kind of in a in a in this revival of of letterpress where it's partially it's rescuing these things from the scrap yard because that's the the honest truth of it, but also trying to adopt new technologies. So something that we're working on is actually 3D printing Ridgway's, because a lot of it was you know, we started with Cast Lead and carved wood and it went into steel.

[00:14:59.850] - Speaker 2

And I have so much light in my life. And and now it's magnesium and polymers, which is like a photo exposure plastic to, you know, and a lot of that stuff just isn't sustainable over it. It's not healthy to use these chemicals to produce these items. Were playing with hot molten lead most of the day. Oh, yes. Fun is the zounds. Probably not long term healthy. And so now we're kind of working. I know a few people that are working with 3D printers and there's like specialty polymers that have been developed for letterpress work that can take ages.

[00:15:38.550] - Speaker 2

They can take this. So so, yeah, it's it's been really interesting, the fact that, you know, it's it's this past year with covid and all of us being at home has been such a boom for this kind of work, feast or famine.

[00:15:55.350] - Speaker 2

It it has not just for the actual work. Like I've seen some incredible letter press printers coming out of the woodwork and beautiful, beautiful pieces because people now have time to maybe work on a piece of equipment that's been sitting in their garage for however long. But also it's definitely connected. A lot of us, the like the Facebook groups and the Instagram accounts and Twitter is has been so much more active, I find lately, where these old pressmen are getting a platform and training us because like, I was lucky to be able to reach out to a gentleman in town and who's kind of like walked me through it and has has been.

[00:16:34.910] - Speaker 2

Teaching me for the last 10 years of how to use the equipment and kind of to troubleshoot it, and then I'll come to him and come up with my own ideas, and it's so helpful.

[00:16:45.830] - Speaker 2

And I realized just how lucky I am to have that resource. A lot of people don't. And so now we're there's a great, great website called Brierre Press. And that was kind of always the community forum. But it's not always you know, people don't even really know about it sometimes or it's a little bit slow

to respond. There's a few phenomenal letterpress printers that basically, like I've called up and said, I have no idea what I'm doing with this particular thing.

[00:17:14.750] - Speaker 2

Walk me through it. And now we're really good friends. And I know now we've we've had a couple. It started off as this like big Facebook feud between the youngins and the old, where one gentleman would kind of shake his fist at everybody and be like, what are you what are you kids doing? You know, you're ruining it for the rest of us. And he got so angry that he started posting lessons instead. And so we'll get are like on the weekends, your post maybe two or three big things of like let me walk you through paper.

[00:17:45.710] - Speaker 2

And while we have the sizes that we do and why we have the materials and let's talk about pants and that's like that's so helpful.

[00:17:52.190] - Speaker 2

And and it's just somebody, you know, you get kind of in somebody's good graces or upset them enough, I suppose that that's how we learn. And so a lot of it, you know, is taught and learned just by practice. There were some amazing programs before, like Ryerson, I believe they've reintroduced a print production program. But there were there were these like amazing, amazing resources that have disappeared over the years that we don't have anymore. So the only way to have this art survive is by literally figuring it out on the fly and hoping to find somebody that knows a little bit more than you do.

[00:18:35.540] - Speaker 1

That's crazy. I want to talk to you about, I guess, the business of it all to because you still have to, like, eat and make have a shelter and you have kids and all these other things. Right. So it's like I don't know if you even know this. Before I started working, I worked in a printing house in Toronto and downtown and I was the Playboy. So I was making press plates nice, getting all the stuff ready and making a few mistakes along the way.

[00:19:06.380] - Speaker 1

And I also help with a free press and all this type of stuff. And it's pretty flat in some documents. And the whole industry was just even back then, people were kind of a very scared of print fading away. This is back in 2000, probably 10. And like like you mentioned, there's so much revival of it, which is so cool. I think if people like like the way you said there are some people in your lives who have kind of mentored and shown and been able to share, a lot of people, I think could find out the intricacy or the workings of the business side.

[00:19:46.540] - Speaker 1

I think some people might be interested in like her. Maybe I'm an artist, maybe I'm somebody who have that skill. But I'm also very passionate and want to understand about like, how do I make this actual, like, be real life? Like, how do I once I've designed that, maybe how do I get it on paper. Yeah. So talk a little bit about how ethnic press kind of started. How did that all start.

[00:20:10.520] - Speaker 2

So it started the first job I ever did was me figuring out my printing press and that was my own wedding invitations because that's a brilliant way to go about this is let's print, you know, a very, very large print order that that is incredibly complex and has so many parts that on a piece of equipment that I've never before seen in my life until we picked it up and started running it. And I find I hear the story so many times, like I know so many little press printers that got into the business because it was either their kids wedding or FWS their own or they saw it or they saw like a little press at an antique shop and they thought it was cool.

[00:20:57.470] - Speaker 2

There are amazing printers that have way more business savvy than I do. They are significantly more creative. It is very much a community. So as I mentioned, like it's the business side of things has been really cool to see people collaborating and people getting together and people teaching each other.

And, you know, there might be the complication arises from what equipment is available. So what's the things that I have somebody else might not. And so we do work together on that.

[00:21:30.320] - Speaker 2

Or like if somebody wants to create something really specific, then you. Follo, who can make that for you and then maybe down the road, so cool. So thank you then look down the road, I'll have somebody look, I'll have work for somebody that I know is able to do something else. You know, the business side of things. I've kind of I started with cards and I realized I'm not nearly witty enough to do greeting cards.

[00:22:00.340] - Speaker 2

There are amazing, incredibly hilarious printers out there. And that's all they do, is they do cards and get picked up by major retailers. And they're still doing this by hand, one at a time, one color at a time. And a lot of it is just luck, force of will and knowing your equipment and knowing your capabilities and taking big risks. That's a big one is coming up with something really creative. And so I find that right now the industry is like just that right amount, that there's so many people doing this, but it's not oversaturated like you would have with your regular coffee shop.

[00:22:47.080] - Speaker 2

That's, you know, the corner shop that you go in and get your photocopies out. So it's finding your niche, whether it's greeting cards, whether it's invitation's. We're not going to be seeing big weddings, I think, for a little while. Not all the states are wide open for business, but in Ontario, I think it's going to be a little bit different. And so for me, what I ended up doing is actually reviving old illustrations.

[00:23:18.130] - Speaker 2

So I have I came across a collection of prints of Toronto from the 30s, and that kind of became my first big run of of pieces, just postcards and coasters and like little things like that. But it's artwork that hasn't been seen since the 30s. And it's been sitting here.

[00:23:38.620] - Speaker 1

You posted this on your site, the fellow.

[00:23:41.590] - Speaker 2

So I do have a few of them on my site. I have some stuff on Instagram. And so basically when I saw success from that, like there was some feedback and interest, I've kind of gone further down the rabbit hole of doing old reproductions and rescuing big printing plates like old printing blocks and just kind of working with that. And and that's when I started getting customers kind of coming to me for the specific knowledge of, OK, can we do something that's, you know, made on this equipment, made locally, has a historical component to it, because I will research the bejesus out of anything.

[00:24:22.500] - Speaker 2

And, you know, I don't know if you know that about me. Rabbit holes are where it's at. Yeah. But um. But so that's that's kind of my little niche is how historically accurate can we get because.

[00:24:39.790] - Speaker 1

It is that kind of how you got led into you got a cool opportunity to make a really cool product for Queen's University in Canada. Is that part of that type so beautifully? Because there's so much history and dialog about the history of Queen's University and you guys were able to produce a very special piece for them. Talk about that a little bit, because that's so cool.

[00:25:04.970] - Speaker 2

Thank you. Know, that was that was an incredible opportunity. And I'm fully honest about actually I mean, the origins of even what I do is because I had an incredible boss at the time who kind of encouraged me when I was at university doing design and communications work for for a university group. And I'm I, I say this jokingly, and he doesn't believe me. But I like part of part of the reason I'm still doing what I do is because at one point this person believed me me enough and said, like, you know, your art's kind of pretty, let's put it on a poster.

[00:25:40.510] - Speaker 2

And so it's amazing. And so in October of last year, I was about ready to close up shop, like I'm fully transparent about that. I hadn't seen a wedding since last since February before. And I wasn't going to see another wedding for quite some time. And so it was just kind of figuring out what to do. And and this person reached out to me to say, hey, you know something about print? We're trying to get some quotes.

[00:26:07.090] - Speaker 2

What could you do? What could you just recommend some information? And I said, well, if I were to do if I were to take this project on, this is how it would be done. And what ended up happening is I could I was able to supply them with getting this project done from point A to point finish all in Ontario. Basically, my my policy now is if I cannot drive there in an afternoon, I will not work with with that supplier.

[00:26:38.920] - Speaker 2

There are certain exceptions. There is a beautiful paper maker out in Montreal and they they've been hand making paper since the 70s, trying to keep it local.

[00:26:49.540] - Speaker 2

But I do try to keep it local as much as possible because, you know, if it's very much a case of at the time there was all of the conversation about supporting local and shopping small, it was small businesses in Ontario really got hit hard. I don't know if you know that, but we've been we've been having a hard time because normally I would I would do Archos. I would do, you know, particular like print events and stuff like that where we network and we kind of drum up business, you know, my my vintage prints, the Toronto prints, I would take them to our shows over the summer and around Christmas time and stuff like that.

[00:27:26.230] - Speaker 2

And none of that happened. And and so the fact that they were kind of shopping around and I said, well, if you if you want to put your money where your mouth is, basically why, why, why not support local. So everything even even the item that we printed out at every opportunity we said like this is made hand hand assembled, made in Ontario. You know, it's not shipped out. It's I can literally give you a list of every single person that worked on this project that they were able to buy diapers and pay for their gas and pay for their rent.

[00:28:05.500] - Speaker 2

It's a big deal and it is a big deal. And it kind of expanded. And so what started off, as you know, let's let's see how much we can do. And then I would get phone calls from my contact at Queens being like, OK, what else like how much more can we do with this project? So we ended up researching through the university archives and found artwork from one hundred years ago from the previous pandemic. So the design of the book is actually based on university documents, courseware and stuff like that from one hundred years ago when students were dealing with the Spanish flu.

[00:28:45.160] - Speaker 2

And that was a really big part of of the design and the inspiration for the design of like there is a resilience that echoes, you know, a century later the you know, we we have to just look back a little bit and, you know, people survived that and people thrived and grew grew out of that pandemic. And we will, too, because what the project was, it was a gift to the graduating class, the class that wouldn't get a convocation.

[00:29:13.900] - Speaker 2

They wouldn't get there's big like nice party. You know, people that have spent four years or more on their education that, you know, obviously they get the degree and they get the result of it. But it's nice to be to have that finish recognized. Right. And so this was a gift to them. And so we definitely utilized as much as possible, like. Of small businesses, all the resources that we had, you know, the historical aspect of it just came together so beautifully that it gave me a chance to not shut down my business,

but grow it instead of always great, which is always a very nice.

[00:30:02.800] - Speaker 2

Getting groceries is nice sometimes, but out of that and it was it was it was an interesting thing. So part of the project was there's a donation component as well. So there was an amount donated to a charity selected by students. And and that was always something that like I'd been really passionate about. And the university was passionate about acknowledgment of indigenous rights. So I think one of the first things we did when we did the design, like they were trying to find as many businesses as as they could support that were also either indigenous or people of color or any sort of mental health outreach.

[00:30:48.940] - Speaker 2

Like we tried to kind of cover as many of those things as possible because it's like, why not support that if the opportunity is there? And so I ended up finding all of the printers that I could do that. And I'll tell you right away, like a majority of the printers that I work with are from all sorts of communities. Right. As opposed to just hitting print and sending it off overseas and then having it stuck on a boat in a canal for several months.

[00:31:18.370] - Speaker 2

So that was that was very much like a lot of legwork on my part, is just trying to, like, make it as as positive as possible. We ended up donating over forty thousand dollars to food banks Canada, which was a big thing, especially with covid. And I ended up actually outside of of that donating more to food banks. Kingston, because having lived in Kingston like that, had had such a big impact on me at the time that I wanted to give back on my own to that community.

[00:31:50.530] - Speaker 2

And that seemed like a good way to do it. And so then it just kind of builds and builds. And so somebody else finds out about this donation or somebody finds out about the project or something else. And that's kind of how it grows, how the business grows, how you've been doing a lot of like organic growth by working with the community, by doing, you know, the hard work of like researching your industry and finding those people who are literally like who were the Allyssa third generation.

[00:32:24.170] - Speaker 2

There might be one person in Ontario that knows how to do a particular thing. And so it was my job to try to find them something that I didn't get a chance to do, that I tried to do the research, but there was quite a bit of there is a time crunch and it just was not feasible at the time. But I'm hoping to to incorporate into further projects is actually working with indigenous communities because we have like a family cottage up near Sudbury.

[00:32:55.180] - Speaker 2

And so we drive past all of these communities. And I called them I actually called a couple and I said, well, you know, how can like I want to give you guys work and I want to work with you because why not support the local local incentive? And so that's something that I that I actually did hear back from a community near where we are up near Sudbury. And so that's that's a group that I really want to work with.

[00:33:22.750] - Speaker 2

And they're artists and printers and and crafts people just just because I think, like, that's a significant thing that, you know, if we can do it, why not? And then out of this project as well, and I think it was part of this project, was I had to get a part for one of my presses because, you know, when machines are one hundred years old, if something breaks. Yeah, you have to hope that that piece still exists somewhere.

[00:33:52.990] - Speaker 2

And there was there was a supplier in the city, it was called it's called the black line casting. And it was a two generation, multi generation business that all they did was do parts. They started off actually casting tape. So when you have your your piece of text, you have your individual letters that

you assemble. And and then they got into line casting, which is where you would cast a whole line of text. There's a really cool equipment to do that.

[00:34:21.880] - Speaker 2

And it kind of goes along. And then they got into parts and dealing with pressies and reselling because as these companies were switching to, um, from from analog to digital, they were, you know, throwing these presses away. And so they were able to pick them up and store them and fix them up and resell them. And so the the younger of the of the of the people running the place, Craig had passed away two years ago and his dad was still running the business.

[00:34:52.980] - Speaker 2

And once covid hit, they couldn't they couldn't operate anymore, unfortunately, anymore. So they were very much reliant on the letter press business in the States as so much bigger. It's more robust. And so a lot of the people buying stuff were big people coming up across the border from the states. That wasn't a thing that wasn't happening anymore. And so when I came in, I needed a part and I came in and asked for for for that part and I bought it.

[00:35:22.320] - Speaker 2

And then as we're chatting, he's like, well, do you want the rest of them? Like, what do you mean? Why do I want the rest of them? Like, what does that even mean? He's like, OK, you see that whole corner of the warehouse that's going to go to scrap if somebody doesn't buy it and me being me couldn't let it go. And so it kind of came together that, you know, doing this project for Queens, this opportunity came up to to rescue.

[00:35:51.780] - Speaker 2

And originally I just agreed to parts. And then I walked away with 30 printing presses. And did you say 30? Yes, there. Little babies there. But it's well, looking at one right now. So it's about the size of like a team of people, like a box of paper.

[00:36:13.230] - Speaker 1

And what can you do with what could you do with it?

[00:36:16.110] - Speaker 2

So the for these ones, they're called tabletop presses and normally like hobbyists would would would use that. I've seen a lot of people kind of start on them. I've had my three year old print on one and then she gets really mad that she's only allowed to do a couple of passes and not run like what Mom does and read a thousand copies. But yeah, there is quite a hobbyist market and a lot of people getting into letterpress. They don't have the space there may be running it out of their basement or their garage or their shed or something.

[00:36:49.170] - Speaker 2

Yeah, a lot of people running it out of their dining rooms, like I told several people that have a printing press in their dining room.

[00:36:57.720] - Speaker 1

And you have it in your and you have like I will even call it a garage. It's a workshop. It is a workshop. Yeah. Yeah. It's a two story. It looks like a garage, kind of like a mini like a boathouse. If you have like a lakeside property, look like you've got like a boat house, a lot of deep for a boat, but it's, it's like a workshop. It's been converted into a workshop.

[00:37:19.620] - Speaker 1

So you now have a lot of précis. How are you housing them and what are you how are you going to make this work?

[00:37:29.520] - Speaker 2

So I am again, extremely lucky that my partner is in the construction business and knows a lot of people. And we were borrowing warehouse space because when when when that whole warehouse

of parts things happened, it was you have to move it within the week. And I stopped counting at about 20 tons of stuff that we literally as we're driving away. I didn't get an explicit no, this was a bad idea. I got to OK, let's call around and see who's got the warehouse space, because we both realized that if this stuff disappeared, that's it.

[00:38:16.050] - Speaker 2

There are literally two people in the city that are still trained in fixing this equipment. And there is there are a lot of people still running it. And so what my shift has been, it has been lately, I'm still printing and I'm still taking on, you know, the really creative, really cool orders because, like, we just we were the only ones with the equipment to do it and the resources. But what we're starting to shift to is fixing this equipment because some of it is literally just in a thousand little parts, like I know I have 30 presses worth of of stuff, but maybe 15 of them are complete.

[00:38:56.790] - Speaker 2

And then I know the rest are in a box and parts right now. And so we're learning how to fix it. We're, you know, stripping it down to the bare metal and repainting it and recasting the parts that were missing. You know, I'm working with a few great letter press people in the states that have kind of made it their life to to source parts and to to recreate them. And we're learning how to fix the more automated machines because, again, there's not like once the people are gone that are currently able to do it, there is no replacement and both of them are very well in there years.

[00:39:39.120] - Speaker 2

So that's that's kind of become a thing and and as word spread, so basically I ended up buying out nonblacks and they're incredibly lovely humans and have passed my name on to to others now, because what happened is when somebody would get a machine, they would call Don and say, hey, do you want it or what? We're going to scrap it. You I'm getting those phone calls now. So that's how I ended up with an extra three presses.

[00:40:12.030] - Speaker 2

That was last week. So I am getting a bigger shed. I in retrospect, I felt like if I hadn't agreed to any of this, like, I probably wouldn't be moving and I wouldn't be agreeing to a fifteen hundred square foot space that that I have to expand into and expanding into a new location during a pandemic with the hundred year old press equipment. Like none of that seems like a good idea on paper. And yet that's the plan is to basically become the next nonblacks in a way to rescue this equipment, to fix it, find it homes, keep some of it.

[00:40:54.420] - Speaker 1

But when you're passionate about something, you're going to have to lead with that. And then when you're sad, because, you know, you may play yourself down, but you're really smart. You're really savvy. I'm a big fan of yours. That means you're going to find creative ways to make the things that need to work, work, you know, whether it's business wise, whether it's some of this repair stuff, all of this stuff comes to the people that listen to this podcast.

[00:41:24.540] - Speaker 1

Our audience are young entrepreneurs. I want them to hear this story as something to kind of hold close to their hearts, because when you are passionate about something, you can help with the drive and a big thing entrepreneurs need. You've got to have lots of drive. You have to see it before anybody else. And you've got to be willing to put in the work of the sacrifice. And that's kind of what I'm hearing with with you. Unless you're willing to put in the work and the sacrifice, because it's something that you're deeply passionate about.

[00:41:56.790] - Speaker 1

And sometimes it could be whether it's a bust, you know, like that happens to other times. If you are able to be creative and be a problem solver, you can find ways to make things that seem old, be new and be used in different ways and be modernized and to be relevant even in like twenty, twenty one.

[00:42:22.260] - Speaker 2

That's the plan. And I mean, we're going to have to lean heavily on digital for over an analog business. We're going to have to lean heavily on social media and having a proper online catalog. Like part of the thing is, you know, there's all these parts and bits and pieces and presses, but half of them people don't even know they exist. So our plan, once we get into the space and and start pulling boxes out and cataloging every single cog in gear is to create this online catalog that that is available globally so that people have access to it, that they can see what what is available, what's there, the condition of it.

[00:43:05.220] - Speaker 2

And, you know, hopefully, hopefully that go somewhere. And then with these 30 presses, I keep seeing it. And then one day I'll believe it. That's that's the number that I agreed to. But the plan for that is, is to get them out. And that was actually a business that used to exist in the 70s. You could get a little printing press with everything that you needed. So you would get your stack of paper, you get your set of tape and the inks and all of the little bits and pieces and parts that, you know, it used to be a gift for the entrepreneurial boy.

[00:43:39.330] - Speaker 2

That's how it was advertised. And I actually found a letter press printer that had the original packaging for these things and the catalog of all of the the components that you would get. I might just be doing a little something a little bit blasphemous with these. And once we repaint them, painting them in really garish colors and exciting things and naming them after comic book characters, however, that's very this is, you know, still trying to revive it and and still trying to keep it alive and relevant and and fun.

[00:44:08.760] - Speaker 2

And if somebody else can can benefit from it and grow their own business out of out of this rescue that would otherwise just not exist anymore, then that's all the happier.

[00:44:20.630] - Speaker 1

I'm so thankful that you are here today and Nikki Press is all over the Internet. I think it's an expression of that, right. Where can people find you guys at any express on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, any key press dossie online soon to have a podcast on print history, because I could keep talking about this for four hours. So I figured why not talk about it for hours and key press anywhere you your your little social media heart desires.

[00:44:57.640] - Speaker 1

Also, this is no more live podcast gave tock, they'll be called there is a lot of before we before we cut. OK, this is a bonus. Come on, tick tock. There is this older gentleman. I think his name is Gus. And he I forget where he's from, but he has it's an older guy and he has the old presses. He talks about all the stuff, all the different things that it does. And it's really cool.

[00:45:26.650] - Speaker 2

It's the Sacramento History Museum and he is amazing. I have I have been in contact with them as well as the History Museum in California. They're all the most wonderful human beings. And yes, they're Tic-Tac is phenomenal.

[00:45:46.990] - Speaker 1

I love their ticktock and I love Gus. You such a sweet old man. Like, I just whenever I hear him talk about it, he also like plays subtle, like cultural, relevant things like also like heel print, like, you know, I mean, like just funny things that are happening, Meems, that are happening on tape talk at the same time, like the whole shoes, all of that stuff. He he'll print it in like show it and like do the fight and do he's hilarious.

[00:46:12.970] - Speaker 1

He's so good at what he does. But yeah, that's just a little bonus for everybody who still listening to the podcast. If you made it this far, please like and subscribe clearly to a five star rating on Apple podcast. We really appreciate it. This has been a more live podcast before.