

Wynne Leon (00:02)

Welcome to the How to Share, a podcast about collaboration in our families, friendships, at work, and in the world.

Wynne Leon (00:15)

I'm Wynne Leon and in this episode, Vicki Atkinson and I are with author, coach, and creative director Pia Mailhot Leichter. Pia is a creative powerhouse. She's written a book, Welcome to the Creative Club, as a way to invite us into our own creative power.

Powerfully weaves agency and awe together in a way that helps bring us alive again. Pia delivers a reminder to move out of autopilot and a perspective to help with adversity and everything else. She tells us the story of how coming undone was a trip back to knowing herself and remembering that she's the creative director of her life.

We talk about creating evidence of our resilience. Pia's view of creativity will leave you feeling empowered, which is part of her mission, helping others to live and lead from creativity. This is a great conversation, full of energy and inspiration. Buckle up for a beautiful ride. We know you'll love it.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (01:27)

you

Wynne Leon (01:40)

Yeah

Pia Mailhot Leichter (01:42)

How you doing?

Wynne Leon (01:44)

Great. I am so excited to talk to you because Vicki and I have have been emailing back and forth We are fired up by you and your creative energy and then to be able to talk to you It's just the icing on the cake

Pia Mailhot Leichter (01:59)

I am absolutely thrilled to be here with you.

Vicki Atkinson (02:01)

So our pleasure.

Wynne Leon (02:02)

hoping that you would start with a story because you start your book at a critical juncture. You you're fired from a job, you're leaving a six year relationship, you're taking the Trans-Siberian Railroad across China, Mongolia and Russia. Can you tell us the story about how you found your way back to your full throttle creative power?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (02:22)

Absolutely. I I think sometimes we have to lose ourselves to find ourselves again. And so that was very much a period of feeling disconnected and lost after my divorce, which was a tough one. But I always say that and then wonder if there are any divorces that are not.

Maybe Gwyneth Paltrow's was not. I don't know. But it was a rough uncoupling. And I...

I was disconnected from myself at the time too, not really understanding what I wanted, what I needed. Life started to feel very small. And so I did what I was able to do at the time with my consciousness level and with the tools that I had. I threw an infidelity bomb into the relationship, into the marriage, because I felt like it was time to leave and I didn't know how to do it. And needless to say, that left some scars and that left me feeling really disconnected from myself and kind of just floating.

on Flotsam out at sea. And I met someone quite quickly who was also in the process of getting divorced. And I think we both look like we were wearing, you know, we were the life vest for the other. Right. And we just felt like we needed help not to drown, which is not a good basis for any start-up relationship.

And instead of really doing what my intuition was telling me, we're really needing time by myself. I threw myself into becoming a creative partner, building a creative studio with two other people, worked through everything I had at work, just avoiding, I guess, everything that was going on within me. And it's interesting because I think we get rewarded for productivity and success. So kind of felt like, well, look, I can do this. I have a good.

Wynne Leon (04:06)

Nothing's wrong with me because look at what I'm doing over there!

Pia Mailhot Leichter (04:09)

Right. And, then just slack at night, busy, busy, busy. And I think the universe got tired of watching my reruns. Saw me speeding in a Ferrari to avoid feeling and just threw the brakes on my car. I just went speeding.

Vicki Atkinson (04:24)

while also hiding, right? Which is like such an incongruous thing, right?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (04:29)

Yeah, absolutely. Well, the movement feels like you're going so fast. just, you don't, you don't have to feel. it's an interesting form of hiding. Anyway, the, got thrown through the windshield and on the ground looking at the shards Yes, yes, yes. Getting fired, metaphorically speaking, was life.

Wynne Leon (04:47)

speaking.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (04:54)

throwing the brakes on my car and saying, that's enough, we're done watching this, this is getting really tired, stop. And I had to stop and look at the shards that were my life. Nothing felt right. My relationship, obviously work wasn't right. I mean, I was fired, so I had to stop. Yeah. And everything just felt wrong. And I remember at that

point, I don't know if I would have called it my intuition, but there was a very strong felt sense within.

Wynne Leon (05:13)  
Yeah.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (05:23)  
that said, gotta do something different. Why don't you do, check that bucket list desire, go on your trans-Siberian alone for four weeks, something different.

Vicki Atkinson (05:38)  
What

I loved about that, you know, your thoughts about that, what I love is that early in the book you talk about really debunking this idea that creativity is just reserved for the, you know, the arts, the people that make things, but you apply it to how we live our lives and the decisions that we make and how we navigate around the things that are obstacles in our path. that was just a brilliant thought.

and one I'd never really considered, but that idea to be courageous and nimble and creative in your choices is such an empowering thought. I really connected with that.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (06:18)  
Yeah, absolutely. I think what the Trans-Siberian reminded me of were three important things. One thing was that, of course, I'm going to be okay by myself. I've been okay by myself since I was a rebellious teenager on our own at 17. Somehow I had forgotten. I was very afraid to be alone. The Trans-Siberian showed me, hey, I grew up in New York City in the 80s. I can navigate different situations quite well.

Wynne Leon (06:41)  
I can't.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (06:45)  
and I can take care of myself. So it was that reminder. The second reminder was, man, is the world big and beautiful. There's so much adventure, so many interesting people, experiences, situations to encounter, to have to, and just like the joy of that adventure. I had forgotten that. My world had gotten really small. And then the third thing was more of an epiphany. I remember when I was sitting, and this is back to your question, Vicki I was sitting,

in a steel car hurdling across Siberia. And I sat back in that chair and I smelled the sauerkraut and body odor. And I looked in front of me and saw a Russian guy in a wife beater hugging a bottle of vodka while punching the steel car door. I thought to myself, hey, I brought myself here. Yeah. I created the scene. Yeah.

Wynne Leon (07:34)  
Thanks

Pia Mailhot Leichter (07:43)

We're talking location scouting, set design, costume design, script, main character, energy. All you. Right? Yeah. I made this happen. Hey, wait a minute. I'm not only a creative director at work. I'm creatively directing my life.

Vicki Atkinson (07:50)

you.

Wynne Leon (08:00)

Ha.

that's so good.

Vicki Atkinson (08:05)

So good.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (08:06)

And you shall

Wynne Leon (08:07)

up to notice all that. I mean, that's the powerful part of it, right?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (08:12)

Absolutely. And you know, I have to say at that point in time, that decision was one of those decisions that just felt like I have to do this.

Vicki Atkinson (08:22)

Yeah.

At one point you traveled and you wrote about your 30 pound backpack that was sort of like your everything, you know, wasn't, you know, at the baggage carousel. And your first thought was panic. And you try to do what you needed to do to figure out where it was. And then there was like liberation. You were like, okay, I'm going to go shop for the things I really, really need. And all that other stuff, just, you let it just dissipate. It just didn't even matter anymore.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (08:52)

Yeah, absolutely. I so many lessons I feel like I was being shown. Like I meticulously packed my backpack, right? Like I had rolled things like little tortillas in plastic bags. I labeled them, written them down. I could totally. Well, yeah, I had everything. I'm like, OK, it's a four, almost five week trip across big countries. I got to be prepared. And then I remember just getting off in Beijing and, looking at Beijing.

Vicki Atkinson (09:07)

Picture it, that's me when I travel.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (09:20)

the luggage going around and around and around. And I'm waiting and like, oh no, it's been half an hour. There's nothing left. Like my bag isn't coming. And I went into this very small office over to the Air China

representative who was working there and I'm like, my bag's not here. My bag's not here. he's like, what flight were you on Air China? Oh, I can't help you. That was a connecting flight or something like that. But if you fill out

If you fill out this form, we'll send your bag to you in a couple of weeks. I'm like, I am traveling across the Trans-Siberian. I no address. And then I quickly saw that there was nothing I could say or do. There was nothing. So I just have to surrender. I had to stop fighting and go, okay, this is what it is. This is what it is. And the minute I stepped out of the airport and into Beijing, the bright signs for brightening facial creams,

Wynne Leon (10:01)  
Right.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (10:17)  
the smell of like nicotine and soy sauce and sugar and all types of plastic, all types of smells and just seeing a bike carting by with chickens on the back of it. Like it was, just, my whole eyes opened with wonder and all of a sudden the bag didn't matter. I was like on this adventure. Not a bit. And it was one of the best things that happened because I didn't have to carry that weight.

Vicki Atkinson (10:37)  
bit. ~

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, it really came through. And yeah.

Wynne Leon (10:47)  
And my meditation teacher has this wonderful meditation about unpacking our backpacks. So I love that. And I love that you say creativity is not something we do. It is how we respond to the challenges in life. And it's such an expansive definition. I'm going to say one more quote from your incredible book, Welcome to the Creative Club. But your editor, Shanna, writes about that phrase.

Vicki Atkinson (11:03)  
Yeah.

Wynne Leon (11:17)  
My stomach growled. I didn't know I was starving for these words until she served them up to me.

Vicki Atkinson (11:24)  
I know, how beautiful was that, right?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (11:27)  
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Wynne Leon (11:29)

And that's talking, I mean that you're talking about that challenge, all these challenges, not having your backpack, whatever you encounter, being the creative director of your life. And that creativity is that force that helps you deal with them.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (11:45)

Absolutely. I mean, we are in constant creative response with life. We are constantly creating from the moment we wake up until our head hits the pillow. We just might not be consciously creating. And that's really what the book is an invitation to do is to realize that you're sitting in that creative director's chair with your name on the back of it and you get to only eat blue M&M's and you get to direct your next scene.

And you're always at choice. You always get to choose how you respond creatively to the challenges, experiences that life presents you with. There's not much we have control over, but that is what we do.

Vicki Atkinson (12:24)

But what I love is that, you you, you do a beautiful chapter about visualization, but they're, they're all beautiful chapters, but I love that because you, for those that want to be playful and not always kind of think, you know, in a spontaneous way about making those decisions, you use a phrase that I just love the sensory sketch of your desired future. It's that's the best way ever of describing visualizations. So for those that want to pull back a little bit,

and be playful but open at the same time. I think Pia, your treatment of the concept of visualization and how to deploy it is such a great compliment to what you and Wynne were just talking about in terms of respecting your ability to live creatively.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (13:09)

Thank you. also, I think living creatively is also getting curious and allowing ourselves to dream and to imagine what we might desire. What it feels like, what it smells like, what it tastes like, all of it, what it looks like. And then to start living that now in whatever way we can, because we always can bring that feeling.

that we're looking for into our lives today. A piece of it. We can even invite our future self to tell us what steps she would like us to take to move closer to her.

Vicki Atkinson (13:44)

I love it. So good. And write the poetry.

Wynne Leon (13:47)

Exactly. But you tackle money, patterns, gut feelings, fear, agency, growth, uncertainty, love, purpose, so many foundational subjects. mean, you tackle them all, but you convincingly weave creativity through them all. Is it fair to say that we need to be able to or be willing to inspect what's tethering us in order to find our creativity?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (14:12)

Absolutely. mean, I think life itself is a creative process. So removing creativity and putting it in solely the artistic expression camp does us a great disservice and actually doesn't feel congruent with life. Life itself is a creative process. We are creations ourselves. We were born in Egyptian cotton sheets when our parents got together.

Wynne Leon (14:39)  
You

Pia Mailhot Leichter (14:40)  
We are creating, creating our realities, our experiences, and I think getting closer to who we are, what we want, what we desire, what we fear, what triggers us, what motivates us, is the key to expressing our unique creativity in the world and to fulfillment. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson (15:02)  
And worrying less about the audience, you know, thinking more, you know, about your own destiny or, you know, you also write so beautifully about just the concept that time is short and, and hurry up.

Wynne Leon (15:15)  
Yeah.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (15:16)  
I like to imagine the universe is my audience. That I'm putting on a grand show for the universe. Good, I like it. That's the best way to show how much I appreciate this gift of life is to put on the best show possible.

Vicki Atkinson (15:22)  
You know, I like-

Wynne Leon (15:33)  
your line that death is like Caesar Milan poking you in the neck. Pay attention.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (15:40)  
Yeah, absolutely.

Vicki Atkinson (15:42)  
Yeah, and use the good stuff. There are a couple of like really like so relatable clips about, you eat the fancy food, buy the pretty dress, you know, go where you want to go, do all the things, whatever that is. But why are you waiting? Actually, it's a chapter about that I loved about not eating the ripe avocado because I better save it for later because I might need it for a thing.

Wynne Leon (16:11)  
Yeah, that one hit me where I was, live. I was like, my God, I got to go back up to my closet and get dressed again in the good stuff.

Vicki Atkinson (16:19)  
Yeah,

but that idea of having had, you know, trauma, small T, not a big T, but just, know, those, trials that we all face and you talk about those in the book, you know, with, with your mother. But I think that idea that we have to be in self-protect mode all the time and safeguard the things that might be good or special, because I might need to deploy them at another time when the shit really hits the fan. So I need to hold back about that.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (16:46)

Or they might make me porous. Maybe if I allow myself to enjoy the pleasure of this moment and everything that's in it, then I'm not guarded. And I won't be protected if and when something comes my way that's challenging. And this is also the voice of little me. And my therapist did say, and chaos did usually come. So there was a part of you that was just trying to remain strong and...

And I remember that chapter was very much inspired by that epiphany I had in session where I was like, ~ my God.

Vicki Atkinson (17:18)

Yeah. And sometimes referred to in the work that I've done as the living in the in-between, because you know that even when the pockets of calm come, and they do, and the joyful stuff, in the back of your mind, you're waiting for the next wave. then, you know, it just, yeah.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (17:36)

And I think what we can do as adults or what I'm teaching myself is that I can be so porous and open and enjoy and feel pleasure in this moment. And no matter what comes my way, I trust that my future self will be able to manage it. She's so resilient. She's so fair. She's fine. We don't have to worry about this. We can enjoy it all now.

Wynne Leon (18:01)

Well, and you write in your chapter about fear, you write, the more you release into it, the more joy starts to flow. That feeling of aliveness permeates your bones, synchronicity start to occur and serendipity follows. Wow. It's just powerful.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (18:22)

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I feel like I going to be continuously practicing to the end of my days of releasing into uncertainty and trust.

Vicki Atkinson (18:34)

You do such a nice job. And it's one of the reasons actually why I needed to get a hard copy of your book, a tool that I've used a lot with students for years is this idea of a life graph, you know, where this the Socratic thought about an unexamined life is not worth living. You also need to have the courage to see where you've been to see the potential that that has to propel you forward. And you do a beautiful segment in the book, you know, throughout where you offer fieldwork ideas about

applying principles. when I got to page 143, where you were bringing the idea of a life graph forward about moments in time, you know, that had impact, positive or negative, was like, you know, this is this is a way



to get grounded, you know, to not run away from the things, but to look at those high points, the low points, but see all of that is the facets of, of who we are.

I love that. was one of my favorite parts of the book because I felt like you were talking directly to me.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (19:34)

And the, thank you for sharing. And the beautiful part, I think about that is when you see the low points that you have overcome and you creatively responded to and found creative solutions for, you create evidence for your own resilience and creativity and your own capability. Because you say, ~ my God, I got myself through that and that and that. Look how creative I am.

Wow, normally when we encounter challenges, we get very creative. And that's evidence. Evidence of our own power. Like, whoa, of course I can do whatever I intend to do next. Look where I come from. But we have to have the courage to look at it because those are also painful moments.

Vicki Atkinson (20:18)

But having that tangible that you can look at and see that time passed, other things happened, successes came, know, it's a terrific visual.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (20:26)

Exactly. And I have a dear friend of mine, name is Paul, he's in Ireland, and he told me something that stayed with me. Am I allowed to curse on the show? that okay? Okay. wanted to make sure, you know, whenever there would be like, he was facing a really big problem. I might even call it challenge. I'm gonna call it what it is, a problem. One of his friends said, oh, Paul, it's just an FGO. It's like, you talking about?

Vicki Atkinson (20:37)

I I

Pia Mailhot Leichter (20:54)

It's just a fucking growth opportunity. yeah. And so honestly, I found that so helpful when something is either creating friction in my life or my room. just go, ~ it's a FGO. Yeah. Hey, all right. Yeah. How is this helping me to grow? Right. And even that reframe, I don't know, it just it just changes things.

Vicki Atkinson (20:58)

I like.

Well then you can go bring it on. I'm ready, right?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (21:23)

Exactly.

And how would I creatively respond to this? Yeah, yeah. is a growth opportunity. All right, let me think about this. Let me sit back and see how I want to creatively respond to this one.

Wynne Leon (21:34)

Yeah, it's part of the name it to tame it tribe, right? and I love speaking of evidence. One of my favorite chapters is your one on gut feeling. And you talk about Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, that one of the things you say is a hunch is let me see if I can get this right. A hunch is creativity trying to tell you something. And that's a quote from Frank Capra.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (22:01)

Right.

Wynne Leon (22:02)

really trusting your hunches, your gut, yourself, bringing out that evidence once you have that it works. Yeah.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (22:11)

Yeah.

And imagine what might be possible if we live and lead from our creativity and our intuition and hunches. I love that thought. Yeah. For me personally, and I'm releasing more and more into it. And again, it's a practice, right? It's like, okay, even though that might not make perfect sense right now, I'm going to trust that. I'm going to move in that direction. And the more that I practice it, the stronger my muscle gets, the louder my intuitive voice gets.

or that felt sense gets. And the more exciting and interesting my life becomes in so many ways, the more uncertain, sure, but also thrilling. It's like, okay, let's see.

Vicki Atkinson (22:53)

deepens your understanding of self, don't you think? Right? You get to know yourself better.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (22:59)

Yeah, absolutely.

Wynne Leon (23:01)

You write that as a requirement. You talked about this as a practice, you say tapping into your intuition starts with meeting yourself every day.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (23:13)

Yeah. Yeah. You can't just...

Wynne Leon (23:17)

Have left yourself on that trans Siberian rail way You need to come home to yourself.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (23:22)

Absolutely. And I think it's no coincidence that my life track on that Siberian ride, that moment, the Trans-Siberian, I felt like, you know, when a train is changing tracks and it starts to move in a different direction, like that physical sensation of moving on to, I felt that

happening. And it's no coincidence that it was when I slowed down. Yeah. Feel myself to be with myself, also alone.

I met wonderful people and sometimes didn't feel like I was alone at all, but alone.

Vicki Atkinson (23:52)

Yeah. But the image you described being on the train and the images that could have been interpreted as frightful, different, the smells, the sights, the man, the violence, that he wasn't hurting someone. He was maybe hurting himself, beating on the steel wall of the train.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (24:09)

Don't

know why. actually the cops got called and he got carted away and that looked like something you would not want to happen to you in Russia. Let me tell you, those cops were not joking around.

Vicki Atkinson (24:21)

interesting.

don't think you wrote about that part that after. But your response to that was like so beautiful because you took all of that in except for the police arriving and your response was, but I'm here because I chose and I'm and I'm going to be at peace with that and let what happens next happen.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (24:23)

That was the after.

Absolutely. And also New York City upbringing. Yeah. Like he did look over at me and I gave him like one of those looks like, mm. Yeah. Yeah. No, no, no, no, And he immediately looked away, you know, like I guess there's the fear was not present. And that was that was a part of the reminder of like, of course, I'm going to be OK. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson (25:04)

also liked you tell the story about being on the subway late at night and having an encounter, you know, with someone that might have otherwise been, you know, a scary person late at night, just the two of you on the train and, you know, he handed you what might've looked like a stick of big red gum, but you know, you both knew, right? There was a blade inside, but it was, you have to look beyond people's appearances, you know, and try to see heart, behavior, intention. He was actually being protective of you.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (25:33)

Absolutely.

Vicki Atkinson (25:34)

But he was also gauging your reaction to him. You allowed him, I think, to engage you when you described that because you weren't, you were

hesitant maybe, but you weren't full out terrified either. You were another human with another human.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (25:50)

Absolutely. I didn't feel scared of him. I felt scared when he left. Right. No, think that's also a gift of growing up in chaotic pinball machine that is New York and meeting so many different characters. He taught me not to judge people by how they might appear, how things might appear.

Vicki Atkinson (25:55)

Yes.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (26:19)

to look a little deeper and to trust myself in the situation. And I take that with me.

Wynne Leon (26:26)

Well, you you write in your book, Welcome to the Creative Club is a bold invitation to take back our creative lives or maybe our whole lives. And you tell all these anecdotes of your journey. It's like you've shared with us. You include your poetry and then you provide research backed evidence and the field work or homework assignments. The book itself and your

And that description of how you worked with your editor, Shanna, Is such evidence of the creative process that we can live. I mean, the book is evidence of what you are writing about. It's this incredible full circle thing. What do you think that this book is going to do for the world or for the readers or what do you hope?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (26:54)

Yep.

Well, my biggest hope is that people reclaim what's always been theirs and that's their innate creativity and that they use it and access and apply it to the design of their lives. Because for me, creating your one experience of life is the ultimate creative act. I can't think of anything more creative than that. And it's more of like a reminder, you know, we.

Wynne Leon (27:33)

Right.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (27:37)

We're born creative and then we forget in this book, it a reminder of your creativity and that if you're a human, you're a natural born creator. You are an artist at play. And it's so easy to forget as we get older, know, responsibility and duty overshadow awe and mystery.

and we might start following paths that other people have set forth. It's easy to get lost or disconnected from our creative power. That's why I felt really important for me to share my own stories of how I lost and

found my creative power. Those were vulnerable stories. I didn't anticipate writing or sharing them.

Wynne Leon (28:26)

Why did you come to that format?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (28:28)

The former.

Wynne Leon (28:29)

We're

out of anecdotes and research and field work. did you? I mean, was that something that you knew?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (28:36)

No, I didn't know. mean, it was so interesting because what got in the way of my own creativity, as usual, was myself, but it was the idea of what I thought the book needed to be. You know, in the beginning, I was like, oh, I'm going to write a book about this, and this is what it's going to look like. And the more that I was forcing this, the more that I was starting to block myself. And then I gave myself a pep talk and said, all right, all right, fine.

or give my book a pep talk, my creativity a pep talk and say, okay, whatever it needs to be, let it be. Whatever is meant to come through, I'm going to step out the way and just let it come through. And that's how I wrote it. Like I had themes that I was gravitating towards, but I just allowed like, okay, well, what's coming up? What's important to say? How do I connect these pieces? And the memoir component, it's just, I have a little rebel inside me.

I don't really like when people tell me how to do things. I'd much rather they show me how they did it. And that requires having some skin in the game. Because when we show how we overcame something or how we did something, it's a vulnerable act. But the vulnerability is what creates connection. We're to see each other in it because we're all vulnerable, humans spinning on this rock across 200 billion galaxies. And I think...

it's having the courage to then share that in hope that it's in service of the reader and it's in service of the story. So there is a purpose behind it. And that felt really important to me. And the way that the field work was, well, I'm not going to write a book about creativity and have it only be consumption. You know what I mean? It felt so important to have these sort of prompts to invite people to practice, like give it a try, experiment, play, see what comes up for you.

Vicki Atkinson (30:14)

Right

Pia Mailhot Leichter (30:24)

That felt just like it needed to be a part of the book. And the reason I call it filled work and not homework is because, again, I really want to be at eye level. not a teacher, I'm not a guru. I'm not here above you

telling you how you should do things. I'm just sharing my one full flavor, full fat, terrifying and beautiful life in hopes that maybe I'll create an impact or maybe I'll poke you in all the right places and remind you of how beautifully, wonderfully creative and

powerful you are and that you get to direct your next scene. And that felt really important to me, more important than my ego or my fear, even though it did, of course, come up right before I hit publish.

Vicki Atkinson (31:04)

But I also love that you tell the story about your relationship with Shanna and the feedback that she would give to you. And one of the insights that I thought was super powerful was this idea that, and she brought that to you, that she's looking at what you're sending her to read. And then there's a segment that I love where she talks about all the value added in her life for having been in that role with you, which is like,

talk about bonus material that really was just fabulous. But she gave you some feedback about being slightly repetitive with things. But you took that. And then the drill down about it I thought was really powerful because I think sometimes people that have had the experience of not being seen, not being heard, that desire to articulate, let me tell you this way. OK, let me come at it this way. And when that comes up in your writing, I thought that that was just

a beautiful insight between the two of you and the trust that you had because the vulnerability was there, but that you connected with it. was like, oh, that's little me. Like see me, attend to me, but it's coming through in my writing. I wanted you to know that that really, I took all of that in. I felt every bit of it.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (32:22)

It was really interesting working with her because she was an editor, a cheerleader, sometimes a very self-aware, observant, reflective editor. And so when I wrote the one, there's one chapter in the book that's just memoir about my divorce. And when I wrote that chapter, the first draft, she said,

This doesn't sound like the Pia who's in front of me today wrote it. Said, what do you mean? Sounds like you're looking at your divorce through the lens of an older version of you. I don't really see the compassion or the self-insight here. You have a duty to your readers to show up as the woman you are today. And I was just blown away.

because I read it again and she showed me what she meant specifically and she was right. And so that ended up being a very healing and kind of transformative experience. Again, not intended. Being able to rewrite my story and parts of my past that were very difficult from the lens of the woman I am today with more compassion for myself, more insight. I was stuck in an old way of seeing myself, but I didn't realize it. I didn't realize

Vicki Atkinson (33:36)

Also, it spoke volumes about the other point that you make in a couple of places, but that idea that we're always going to be better together, better together, choose wisely. But finding those trusted ones, that it matters, and it makes a huge difference in our lives.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (33:51)

Absolutely. mean, we're social creatures and we create together, we build together, we make together, we grow together, we're reflective mirrors, we're able to share intuitive hits, energy combines, we get enmeshed. mean, for me, happens in partnership and what is transformation if not creativity?

Wynne Leon (34:14)

And you also talk about storytelling is an experience of empowerment, a way of honoring your journey and creating from it. It's a way of reusing what's happened and understanding it.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (34:27)

Absolutely. It's a very positive... I would invite anyone who is having challenges integrating past versions of themselves to maybe write about it from the lens of who they are today and really feel the healing power of you rewriting your own story, or at least a portion of it.

Wynne Leon (34:49)

Well, tell us, because we know that this book represents a version of you that is, you know, you're taking care of your book, but you're also out there creating today a new project. So tell us what else you're up to and where people can find you.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (35:03)

Sure. just launched yesterday a spoken word album called Famished, which is based on the 11 poems in the book. I, through the book, met a very talented musician producer and we got together and started to experiment. And I said, hey, would you consider making a piece of music that expresses the emotion in one of these poems? And he said, hmm, that sounds interesting. Let's play.

And so we did, and it was really fun. It was wow, to see something that you've created and have someone interpret that through their craft and their lens, and then have those two things come together to create a whole new composition was just joyful and exciting and interesting, and I learned a lot. And it was ~ also process of letting go, allowing, collaborating.

It was a very eye level collaboration, which reminded me again of when we let go of our ideas needing to be the best or our darlings and really kind of open to other people's way of seeing and being and trusting each other very deeply. Wow, what can come the creative potential of what we might create when we're in that kind of space is just I'm going to use this word to true sense. Awesome.

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson (36:27)

Amazing.

Wynne Leon (36:27)

That's awesome. So spoken word album, where do we, where can we find it? can listeners find it?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (36:34)

Everywhere music is streamed Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal. Yeah, those are the three that come to mind, the most popular.

Wynne Leon (36:36)

You can stream.

Great. And you have a wonderful newsletter that you send out. How do people sign up for that?

Pia Mailhot Leichter (36:50)

So home base is kollektiv.studio That's where people can find out more about me and my work and book a chemistry call find out more about the book, which is also I narrated it by the way and it's on Audible. So I launched that a month ago. So I narrated the book. That's where the idea for the poet, the spoken word album came through because I was reading some of the poems and saying, it's like this rhythmic music. Maybe there's something interesting here is like that I could do with this.

And yes, so everything about the book is there. Famish will be there soon. I've to give myself a minute, but I'm going to get it up there. And the newsletter is there as well.

Wynne Leon (37:32)

Great. We love your invitation to step up and be the creative directors of our lives. your book is amazing.

Pia Mailhot Leichter (37:39)

Thank you so much for sharing your energy and all the wonderful, wonderful feedback. It means the absolute world to me to get your take on what your experience of the work was and also just to get to know you both better. It's been absolutely joyful.

Wynne Leon (37:55)

Likewise.

Vicki Atkinson (37:56)

Our pleasure. All the best.

Wynne Leon (38:03)

Thank you for listening. Our music was written for us by the incredible duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig. For show notes and more great inspiration see [avitiva.com](http://avitiva.com) ~

Pia Mailhot Leichter (38:21)

you