

EPIISODE 003

BANANA SLUGS

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Skye Dillon, Skye Design Studios

AND

Sue Harriman and Clint Angus, University of California Santa Cruz

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO

Hi, this is Bryony Gomez-Palacio and welcome to episode 3 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on the new logo for the athletics teams of University of California, Santa Cruz, known as the Banana Slugs. Yes. That is correct. The Banana. Slugs. Competing in Division 3 of the NCAA, they may not be as famous as the athletic teams of Duke or Clemson or even our local IU Hoosiers but their mascot is in a league of its own because, well, it's a banana slug.

The project, designed by Florham Park, New Jersey-based Skye Design Studios, was posted on Brand New on June 16. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast003 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast003, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Skye Dillon, founder of Skye Design Studios; by Sue Harriman, Director of Athletics and Recreation at the University of California, Santa Cruz; and, briefly as he had to leave the mid-way through the session, Clint Angus, Associate Director for Athletics and Recreation at UC Santa Cruz.

In this conversation we go in-depth about the team's decision to do the design process not just in the open but completely driven by the community's input and how Skye Design adapted their process to the challenge. We also wax poetic, a lot, about the banana slug itself and how difficult it was to translate its minimal physical traits into a confident, vibrant, and dynamic logo.

Now, let's listen in as Armin follows up with Skye, Sue, and Clint.

ARMIN Welcome everyone to The Follow-Up. We have a big cast of characters this time. So if you don't mind just quickly introducing who's who you are, what your, uh, your name is and your title so that our listeners can know who is talking.

SKYE My name is Skye Dillon. I'm the Founder of Skye Design Studios, and we are a national leader in branding, primarily focused on sport related properties.

CLINT My name's Clint Angus, Associate Director for Athletics and Recreation at UC Santa Cruz—been with the university about four and a half years.

SUE I am Sue Harriman. I'm the Director of Athletics and Recreation at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

ARMIN Wonderful, so we're, we're going to start with you Sue. So you posted not you personally, but UC Santa Cruz posted a delightful 17 minute long video about the, ah, about the overall process of the redesign of the Banana Slugs. And in that video that tells a story of the redesign, you mentioned that reimagining the slug was one of the first things that you wanted to do when you joined UC Santa Cruz in 2017. How do you kick started the process internally?

SUE Well, I, I joined in January of 2018 and the first thing I did was go to the NCA Convention. And while I was there, I was with two colleagues, one who had been at the university for a number of years and the other one had been there for just a month. And so as we got to know each other, I was familiar with the Banana Slug, I asked, hey, I noticed that

there's no trademark or registered mark... is the Banana Slug, you know, protected or used of the strong slug that we have. And they looked at me and bewilderment. And I, it was immediate. I remember what booth and the restaurant I remembered going, holy cow, we have this opportunity to redesign, re-imagine and to trademark, uh, to utilize and to monetize this brand. And then after that, you know, I got back to the job and it was like, holy cow, but in the back of my mind, I continually saw the need that we had to do this.

Uh, years ago, probably 11 or 12 or somewhere around there, I was at Bates College and suggested, became a Director of, um, Athletic Fundraising, and we needed to do something with, uh, the current Bobcat design. And so, I was part of a committee and the committee hired Skye Dylan to do the redesign. So I was fortunate enough to be able to go through the process. So I had a general idea of what it entailed and I knew after a couple of weeks and, uh, we weren't going to do it that way. We needed to do it, but we needed to do it differently. And being at a state university, we needed to look at what other people were doing and how are the people came to it and what other companies were out there. And, uh, and then it proceeded from there. I started to talking to some of my colleagues about it, and, uh, we spent the next year finding Skye Dillon and Skye Designs.

ARMIN And where you... when you were started to talking to other people about the need for trademarking this character and doing something more to build out that identity, were you, was this a impetus of yours met with glee and open arms from other people, or because as I understand there over the years, or over the decades, there has been some apprehension about officially embracing the slug, but what was that initial reaction from other people in-at the administration level?

SUE Oh, bewilderment people hadn't thought about it. People, you know, everyone knew the history of administration declaring we were going to be the sea lions when we became an NCAA member back in, uh, 1980. And, uh, you know, you need a mascot—you can't just, you

know, show up, not have some type of mascot. And so, you know, true to fashion our student body, we're like sea lions. We don't like that. And, and so for a long time, we'd been the unofficial and then the official Banana Slugs. Uh, but it, it got more with me asking questions, where did we get the strong slug? Like we're using the strong slug, just really masculine, you know, gunned out image where-where'd that come from because it's not protected, it's not trademarked. Nobody really knew the story. Uh, and so I asked more questions about that and all I did was get more people who either didn't know, didn't care, had a problem with it, and wanted to fix it. Uh, but nobody really wanted to go, you know, had the, uh, interest to go down that road. And I had an interest and, uh, that we needed to go as a department. We needed to go down that road.

ARMIN Yeah. And what's interesting is that, even though it seems like you started quite by questioning the strong slug, you know, it's still there, right? Like that's part of, sort of a legacy mark that you're going to still be using. Um, was that part of what you found along the process that it needed to stay, or from the beginning you knew, like this is so unique that we sort of have to keep it some way or another.

SUE I look at it this way, you know, 2020 it's, 40 years that we've been using, we've been an NCAA team and we've been the Banana Slugs and we've had all these variations. And we, I don't, you know, we've lived with the strong slug for this period of time. And, uh, UC Santa Cruz has over a hundred thousand alumni. And so that, that image means something to some people good and bad, you know, they favor it, they, they don't like it at all. Uh, you know, there's student athletes that were very successful and really identify their experience to that image. Uh, so we wanted to, and you, you can't erase history. So it made sense that at some point in the future for alumni engagement and for fundraising and forum nostalgia, and, you know, we're, we're creating history,

ARMIN So Skye, how did you get involved, ah, how did you get roped into this?

SKYE Yeah, so it's kind of the convergence of a couple of different things. So for one, um, we had really been pretty experienced in the sport, um, branding world for about 15 years now. So just through our experience at that level, it really built up our reputation. But also as Sue alluded to when we worked with, with her and her team at Bates, uh, many years back, that was the chance for us to connect personally. So you kind of take our reputation in the industry, combined with the relationship we developed with Sue. So when she started her position at the school, uh, it was a, it was a natural transition to bring us in for the project. And we couldn't have been more thrilled to take a lead on that and partner with them. When you think about UC Santa Cruz, there's, it really is the original, unique college mascot, probably the most famous-unique, uh, famous college mascot. So it always kind of been on our radar in that sense, but to be, it's all about timing, and so when, when Sue arrived and brought us in, it really was the perfect opportunity to be able to, to finally bring it to life.

ARMIN Not to pry too much, but where you, the only, uh, design firm considered for the job, or was it a formal proposal where you still had to prove your, uh, you know, that you were the right person for the job?

SKYE Uh, I'm still not totally in the loop with exactly what went on behind the scenes. All I know is Sue reached out and asked if we were interested. I said, of course, we'd love to partner with you. And a year later, once they were able to iron out all the details on their end, and we're ready to take those initial steps to begin the process. She reached out again and said, hey, are you ready to go? And you know, the answer was yes. So, she could probably speak a little bit more to the formal process, but as far as putting together an RFP or proposal, none of that was involved, it was really just putting forth our track record of work and, um, to give her the, uh, to equip her with what she needed to, uh, basically get buy-in from the administration.

SUE And I can speak to that a little bit, you know, obviously at a state university, you just don't, you know, call up your friends and hire them. Uh, and so, because I did initially, immediately reach out to Skye

because I had worked with them, we had a relationship, uh, he was on the East Coast. And so I'm thinking, you know, I'm on the West Coast, but he still has industry knowledge. And so we touched base and we talked and then it was, um, more than a year later, uh, during that year, it was, we need to bring together a committee. We need to talk to all the, you know, um, stakeholders on campus. Uh, we need to vet other, uh, universities. And so I started looking at other division three schools in California who had recently done a design. I liked some of their designs. So, I look to see what company, you know, did that design and contacted probably more than five initially. Uh, so we narrowed it down to three different, um, companies who are all interested, and all submitted, you know, a price sheet in a very kind of simple, this is what we can do and what we can't do. And then we internally the committee had a variety of, uh, examples—cause this is the beauty of what we do, it's like, you can go to, you can bring up every conference, every division one, two, three, you can, you can pick up and look at anybody's work cause it's out there. And so, and I really left it up to the committee. And so as the committee talked and met and we went back and forth and round and round... a year later, it was like, well, here's all the pros and cons of all these different, but ultimately, Sue it's really should be your decision. It should be your decision on, you know, who you think is best, who you want to work with, you know, so on and so forth.

And so again, I wanted to be very fair and very thoughtful about it. And at that point, uh, we had some staff changes and Clint came on board and it was kind of like, I'm going to pass this project and this baby on to you. And that if you can start kind of talking with the committee and really weighing the pros and cons of what to go with, and while he was doing that, this was one of the deciding factors for me is that I came from Maine to California and Santa Cruz is a very unique place. And so each day and month and year that I was there, uh, my perspective of... changes. Right? You get more accustomed, you take things for granted, things like that. And I felt that I had this responsibility to the university

to be able to have someone come in and design this famous logo with a perspective that was fresh, new uncharted territory. We weren't going to do it in three months behind closed doors with a small committee, we had to do it broadly over a long period of time.

We had to involve all of our students. It was going to be very unconventional. And so I didn't feel like a company in California or Arizona was going to have that perspective. And so I thought, you know what? I want someone that has never even been to Santa Cruz and have them come and go like, wow, OK, uh, cause for every day that you're there, you get more and more entrenched in the beauty and the uniqueness of it all.

SUE And so I thought that was ultimately the deciding factor. And so I thought, you know what, I want to go with somebody who can, who's going to be unconventional. Who's going to have the same, awe, and get to know, uh, the creative process and do something that's never been done before. I think it was important to have somebody who's never been here before. Take on that. So ultimately that's what I said and the committee was all in agreement and that's when we were like, okay, great. And here's the timeline and here's how we're going to work it out. And so let's call him up and hire him.

ARMIN Well that is amazing insight and probably a lot more than either me or Skye expected to hear from that question. And I did, and I asked him not to be a gossip, but I think it's a, for most designers, it's a, it's still the most mysterious thing. How do you get a client? And especially as something as fun sounding as the UC Santa Cruz Banana Slugs. So I think that just illustrates how there is a there's, there's both a lot to the process and in the end, not so much in that you're just going with what feels, right. So, um, the fact that you're all standing here with smiles on your faces, I think you did make the right choice. So Clint, you get brought in... and, uh, Sue tells you that you're going to do this process in a way that is not, that is not the usual in that you're going to take feedback from the public, the alumni, the students, the

committee members, for each phase of the project,. When you were deciding to do this, what were the pros and cons of doing it this way?

CLINT Yeah, there were a number of them. Um, I guess starting with the, uh, the cons, you know, it's like we're putting ourselves at the mercy of the community, you know, so it's like, we were really honest with ourselves, like, okay, we're gonna, we're gonna let them help us decide this thing. And we had to live with whatever they voted on. Um, so that was certainly a risk to the process. Um, and we had to kind of just, you know, it's almost like, um, it's an overspill can phrase anymore this whole like trust the process kind of thing, but that's, that's really what, what we needed to do, um, which might be perceived as a con, uh, but when you look at the flip side of it, in terms of how we came to adopt the Banana Slug in the first place, it was really all about a grassroots effort and like the students organizing themselves to want to, uh, adopt the Banana Slug and going to the administration and voting on it in a referendum.

So we wanted to try and be as honest and, uh, and really call back to that process. Uh, so, so that's the big pro to, and it's like, we're, we're trying to match what happened back in the, in the eighties when we first adopted the Banana Slug. And I think that—that pro like significantly outweighed the con um, for the opportunity for us to, to match that process in a new way. Right? Cause you know, obviously the technology is way different and the climate on campus is way different. Um, but those are the two biggest pros and cons for sure.

ARMIN And did at any point, were you thinking about, you know, how easy it is for whenever there's a redesign for a university, whether it's a, the academic level or the athletic level, that there's usually a really big, you know, negative reaction to the change. And there's a, I don't think there was any industry where this happened to soften as in universities where, you know, you go through the process, you unveil the logo and then people just hate it and it's on Twitter. There's change.org petitions... Was that even part of the decision making process that,

you know, we want appease that, so that when we release this, we are not faced with that aspect of, of the public appreciation.

SUE Yeah. Let me, let me answer that. Because... think about it, it's a Banana Slug, it's a yellow worm, the phallic-ness of all of it. The, uh, color of it. Um, during that year that we were looking at other companies and I'm looking at other schools, obviously I'm paying attention to every school that comes out with a redesign. And there was a school back East that, you know, they went through their process and here's our new logo. And it was like a female genitalia, you know? And it was like, Oh my God. And they had to scratch the whole mark, throw out all, you know, and lost all that money. And I'm like, wow. And I'm, you know, and here I'm working with a slug? If there's not a challenge, one-oh-one for graphic designers, it would be working with something with no arms, no legs, not a face, a hermaphrodite, like this was going to be difficult. And we were, we were going to take a difficult image and try to do something that no one's done with it before and be unconventional about it. And then leave it for public opinion. It's like, are we out of our minds? We don't have a regular mascot. It's not an eagle or a, a bison or a gopher. It's like, this is going to be hard.

And so doesn't it make sense, uh, to involve 18,000 college students and alumni of an unconventional place, there is a tremendous amount of sticking your neck out there. And so, uh, that's why I was like, I'd rather have this take three years and get it as right as we can and try to rush it because of money because of that's what everybody else does... and you have to know your audience, right. And so we knew our audience and our audience needed to decide and be part of the process. As nervous as I was about it—I had faith that we were doing the right thing.

ARMIN Wow. Um, so, so Skye you're presented this minefield of a mascot where everything, every little decision can go wrong with any minor gesture that you do the wrong way or size the wrong size, you know? Uh, and then on top of that, there's this whole process that's going to be in the

open, ah, which is, I think one of the most uncomfortable thoughts for any designer or design firm. Why, why did you do it, man?

SKYE That's a great question. You know, honestly, our approach is always about meeting our clients wherever they are. It's less about us and it's all about them. Uh, we obviously have the expertise and the track record in the industry, be able to deliver and have the confidence to deliver, no matter the circumstances. I feel like the best results come when you really put yourself fully in your client's shoes and the beauty of branding and something that just really inspires me every day is the fact that everybody's brand, everybody's story, their purpose, or identity, it's all different. That's what makes branding so special.

So, to think that you're going to use this same exact approach with every single client, just isn't realistic. And it's something that we've really been intentional about embracing over the years is, yes, we have our core checkpoints for trying to achieve, you know, we're trying to learn about the client, or in our discover phase, or identify strategies and recommendations in our defined phase, that we're designing in a collaborative way, but who says that it has to look the same and be packaged the same with every single project? And so, it might be perceived as being uncomfortable in our essence, from our perspective it's actually something we really get a lot of energy and excitement from, is the idea that every project is different.

And so rarely would you ever have a chance to do a project like this. So for myself, and I know speaking on behalf of the rest of our team, as soon as this project, you know, came across our desk, I sat down with Sue, we had our initial meeting during, during the summer last year during my initial visit to campus. And we just kind of hashed it out and just thinking about it from a broader perspective, learning about the history of the school, learning about how they arrived at this incredibly iconic mascot through such an incredible process, so many years before... you have to have an open mind about how you approach it. And so doing it in this way, in this manner and keeping

people engaged through the process like we did, it ensured that there would be a sense of ownership. Once we did arrive at the, at the final product, it was just never about us as a firm, we're simply interpreters of whatever the client's vision is. And in this particular instance, the best way to gain buy-in was to make everybody feel like they had a voice, make everyone feel like they were involved. And that was a way to really ensure that the final product was really a true reflection of the collective voice of the entire university community.

ARMIN Right, and speaking to that collective voice, um, I was looking through some of the PDFs as they were posting the different phases and how you include the, the actual polling numbers and the number of votes. And to me it seemed like a good amount of votes, I would, I would have imagined that maybe a hundred people would vote, but you were getting like 2000 votes or certain things. And maybe this is a question for both you and Clint, were you expecting this kind of traction with the, did you want more? did you want less perhaps? Or was this sort of, uh, kinda like the sweet spot in terms of involvement from the community.

CLINT From, as somebody who works on the, on the committee to like trying to listen to those survey responses. I was always setting the goal too high. You know, I want to get 3000 survey respondents. And then when we only get 2,500, it's like, oh man. So we really wanted, we always wanted to get more survey responses. I don't, we ever could have gotten enough of that because what it does is create a better sample size for us. Uh, now, as far as the amount of survey responses we got at the end of the day, it was like over 18,000 survey respondents—responses, I should say. Uh, so there was plenty of input from across multiple, um, populations on our campus, students, faculty, alumni, and even some members of the community got involved towards the end. Um, you know, so I think we had an appropriate amount of community involvement considering that was our intention. Uh, but I would have always liked to see more, you know, part of this campaign was also just about raising awareness of our department and what we

offered for our campus. So, you know, it served a couple of different purposes there. Um, and I think it, this campaign helped put our department back on the map for, for our community.

ARMIN Yes. It almost becomes a project in itself to manage the, that input and get people excited about it because it's easy for people to say like do whatever you want. Uh, but it seems like part of the reason why you went this way is because I think you expected that you would get that involvement, that students would be into the idea of contributing to this in one way or another. Skye, you designed in the first round 18 different slugs and presented like 10 different word marks. Like that's a lot, um, was that well, is that just a natural for how you approach the first round? Or was it just that with this being in the open, the more options that people saw, the more engagement you would have.

SKYE Whenever we start a project, we always assess what makes the most sense for our client. We try to give them flexibility with the amount of directions we present. A lot of times a client might have a very specific vision for what their needs are. When we worked with Sue and Bates, they knew specifically, we just need our same Bobcat mascot, but just updated. So we really just honed in on three initial concepts for that particular project, because that's what made sense. In this case, we're trying to essentially create an identity for the first time ever for colleges most unique mascot and doing it in a public forum where we don't necessarily have the freedom and the nimbleness to go back and forth with the client multiple times each week or each month, like you would typically, um, with a lower profile process.

So when you took all that into account and you and you, and we were considering their ideal launch date, which was June 5th, when they had their spring sports awards banquet, we had four months to work with and we had to do it all in a public forum. And we had to somehow ensure that we would arrive at a place that felt like it was the right solution as Sue mentioned, but that didn't feel like we short changed the process. And so based on our particular format doing a

public vote, as we started working through initial concepts, the initial idea was to present 10 fonts and 10 slugs in our mind, that would be sufficient—that would be a great way to show a full spectrum of ideas. And as our team of designers and myself were working through these initial concepts, it was, there were so many different things that we're trying to balance based on the input that we received during the discover phase in the Fall. That, I mean, there's so many different ways you can interpret, interpret a slug and knowing we didn't want to short change the process. We kind of made an executive decision at the end of that first round to say, hey, let's just present more. It's—it almost becomes a process of elimination when you present it in a public vote like that. So it ended up being the best approach, I think possible because it really gives a chance to not only showing that full spread gave people a confidence in the direction we ultimately chose that we were thorough. And we were thoughtful and we explored the full range. In addition, it gave everyone a chance to identify with a really specific interpretation of a slug. There were so many different opinions that the more concepts we showed the greater the probability was that you would have something no matter who you were, when you saw that spread of 18 slugs, you'd be able to identify with one. And that was a huge part of our objective at the beginning was to make people feel included, to give them a voice and to empower them throughout the process.

So that was kind of the rationale as we went through the process. Yeah, I think Sue did a great job articulating the inherent challenges that come with this particular mascot. First and foremost, something that immediately came to the surface during our research in the Fall was there was a large contingent of respondents that felt like if you're going to have a crazy mascot, like a Banana Slug, it needs to have a personality. It needs to have some type of caricature to represent it. On the other hand, you had a huge contingent of individuals who felt like one of the beauties of the Banana Slug is its anatomy and what makes it so distinctive is it's four antenna and let's really play that up.

And so when you take that into consideration, you're really, I mean, there's everything, you know, in the full range of creative options that kind of fall in there, which again, was another justification and rationale behind us going with so many initial concepts, the idea behind this was to do this once to do it right. And that was a way to ensure that we were really, again, very thorough with the process.

As we began the exploration, and yet to give huge credit to our team who really have an eye for that tech detail, the anatomy, and take pride in the idea of trying to thread this needle creatively. And by far, the most challenging element was how do we create a personality while still be an anatomically accurate with eyes on the end of the antenna. You obviously want to be taken seriously as an athletic and recreation department. You got student athletes that are competing and that's a very, obviously a serious endeavor for them. At the same time, you want to honor the sense of whimsicalness and personality that comes with a Banana Slug. So that idea of how do we stay true to the anatomy without, you know, going into any of these off roads that could be perceived, uh, inappropriately, but also feel like we're staying true to the, the true form of the slug. So by far it was, how do we connote personality? The antennas, the eye, the face now is that was by far the most challenging part of that initial round.

ARMIN Well, you definitely nailed it. And I can't, it seems like an, almost like an impossible challenge. So, really, it's an impressive feat. And what's interesting about looking at the results from the first round of presentation is that whatever got the highest percentage of votes, that's what you went with. And throughout the process, did you just go by the numbers? And just pay-whatever, got the most votes that's where you were headed, or where there, where there, any moments where is was just like the numbers are wrong. We have to go in this way.

SKYE The idea behind the process was really to be all in with this inclusive, popular vote approach. I think the minute you waiver from that, you

lose the trust of the community. And so that was a decision we made last summer when we began the process was from start to finish, whether it's during the research polling or when it's actually the design phase, we're always going to honor the majority, the consensus of the community. And that's just something we had to basically trust throughout. There were a couple of key junctures where we had to make decisions as far as, as far as how much we cut and how many options we eliminated, where do you draw that cut line? That became a little bit subjective, but knowing that we had four months to work through the creative process, we essentially took the mindset of if we can trend the field of candidates in half each round, that's a way where we can arrive at two final concepts for that final ballot in May. And that's essentially how it played out. It was almost like our version of March madness, if you will, where each month we were trimming the field of candidates in half.

ARMIN Yeah. It's really amazing how, from the beginning, you can see that the top vote-getters is what, what made it through 'til the end. Like that's, you can see the seed of the final design from the very beginning through the percentages. So, ah, it's really interesting that you just committed to the, to the voting and that it yielded an amazing result, um, because it could easily have gone haywire. So in the end, you know, you have, you have all this process, it's all very well documented from start to finish, so that when you reveal the logo, in case of emergency, you can break out this whole thing and say like, look, we showed it to the students, we showed it to alumni, we showed it to the committee and this is what they chose. And, you know, as you mentioned, like you really committed to it. So there was no... there's really no room for doubt that you listened. In the end, even with all this at your disposal, what was the reaction to the new logo? Once you, once you unveiled it?

SUE All we've gotten is great feedback. You know, you're always going to have the critics. And that was part of why I wanted to go through the process. 'Cause love it, hate it—if you didn't know about it, and you

didn't know that you had the option to participate in it, we want to know kind of where that rock is and enlighten you as, so that we might do this big process.

And then I think as unconventional and as out there, and as difficult and as crazy, and as many ways as it could have gone wrong, or we lost control of it or whatever, a lot of people don't realize that a Banana Slug is an actual real creature. So we had the boundaries of this real creature, who has a real job, uh, and that job is eating all the fungi, uh, around the base of the trees of the Redwoods. That David and Goliath kind of like there, there's this real creature doing real work for these giants that are in one place in the world. And that's what our students are doing. Our students are at UC Santa Cruz and they're, uh, they're studying Marine Biology and trying to clean up the oceans and we're trying to cure cancer and we're discovering new galaxies in the sky. And so it's like, we're doing all these great things and we're humble about it, and, you know, we have no known predators. We're not competing with anybody. We're doing great things and we're unique, and we do it our own way, and we're unconventional. Uh, but it's real. Uh, so that boundary, uh, purpose of a Banana Slug in real life, it was grounding. And that was kind of like the roots of all of it.

So as crazy as things could get, there was still a truth to all of it. Like there was still a place that we knew, no matter what you did, we were still going to end up in a good place. We didn't know what the place is going to look like, but it wasn't going to be some fantasy. It was going to be something real. And I love that it came out real good.

ARMIN My next question was going to be, how happy are you with the design? But from that answer, you're clearly very happy with where you arrived at, not just in terms of the design, but I think telling the story of the mascot that is so special and unique to UC Santa Cruz. So, I know you're happy... Skye, are you happy with the—with how this turned out?

SKYE Definitely. Yeah, no. So we couldn't be more thrilled. And I think, I mean, it's, it's why we love doing what we do, you know, is, is being able to serve our clients, meet their needs and, and really exceed their expectations in a lot of ways. And like I said, each project we approached with an open mind and the beauty of this project was there was so many opportunities to do it in a fresh way to kind of piggyback off of what Sue is mentioning, the key to this entire process was defining a strategy that was completely comprehensive, and that would identify with anybody within the UC Santa Cruz community. And so, uh, as she mentioned, there were certain parameters where the story of the slug, there was an authenticity that had to be honored in that sense. And it was just kind of how do we go about interpreting that?

But when you think about the slug in the ecosystem, it really does take on this heroic persona in a lot of ways in the same way that anyone who's connected to the university of California, Santa Cruz really is on their own personal mission in life. And the campus is really kind of this incubator for where those identities and those dreams and those missions come to life. And so we, that needed to be the essence of the overall mark. It could've looked like a number of different things, but overall the persona needed to feel like it was confident, it was focused, it was on a mission—but it was also having fun doing it. And it was in the context of it's Redwood home. So once we established that strategy, the creative takes care of itself. And so that's where, when we arrive at the conclusion of the project, you're asking me how we feel about the final product going through the process, the way that we did arrive and where we did, it's a reflection of the full community. So from our eyes, that's a success,

SUE Probably one of the greatest things is that we don't have football. Uh, and so anytime, but our mascot's famous, so it gets invited to all professional Division One, all kinds of mascot type of gatherings. And so every year we go up to Levi Stadium, uh, with all the professional and Division One mascot playoff and they have all these signing

ahead—we always get invited. And so we show up and, you know, we walk around with Banana Slugs and there are people screaming from the stands “go slugs”, uh, yeah, Banana Slugs. How could I get that shirt? And everyone can be our fan, uh, because we don’t have a football team. So you can be whatever mascot fan that you went to school or that you’re a fan of cause cause where you live, but everyone can be a fan of the Banana Slugs. And I’m very thankful, and very grateful, and thrilled with the results and all of the work that we did with Skye Design and with his team. And so it’s been a great partnership. I think everyone’s really bought into it and everyone’s really proud of it. And you know, I can’t wait to send you, uh, some type of gear that has it on there. Uh, so you can say that your a fan of the Banana Slugs as well.

ARMIN Yeah. I’m a big fan of the Banana Slugs. And, uh, it’s just, it really is hard, like you mentioned, there’s a, it’s hard to... not like it, like it’s such a genuine, authentic, unique thing that in parallel to not having a football team, which means you don’t have a big rivalry and no one hates you. So, and it’s also impossible to hate the final logo just because it’s so full of energy and optimism. I think what’s wonderful about it now, listening to the stories, how, how that mark reflects the, uh, the culture and the vibe of the university. And, you know, I think if you had done the process, the regular old fashioned way of, you know, the three behind closed doors and reveal something, I don’t think you would have gotten into what you arrived at, which is something that reflects the student body, the alumni, as well as the, this damn cute Banana Slug that only exists there. So a really big, it’s a really big feat. And it was a, it was a joy to review that project and also see the reactions from the people on our, on, from the comments on our website. And I want to thank you Skye and Sue for your time. Clint had to leave, uh, the call, unfortunately, but, uh, again, congratulations on the project, on the process, on sticking to the poll results, and going by the numbers, and how amazing it was that that led to such a wonderful result. So thank you again, Skye and Sue for joining me on The Follow-Up.

SKYE My pleasure Armin.

SUE It's our pleasure. Go Slugs!

BRYONY What a process. Can you imagine your design directions being driven by more than 18,000 votes? Well, in a way, now you can, thanks to Skye Design who took on this unconventional process along with a committed client team. And if, in the end, they could design such an amazing set of logos — based on a banana slug no less — the rest of us don't really have any excuses to not nail down our next assignment. Lastly, to echo Sue's closing statement: Go slugs!

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.