

EPIISODE 025

CANAL BRASIL

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Daniel Escudeiro, (formerly at) Tátil

Rodrigo Saiani, Plau

AND

Camila Roque, Canal Brasil – Globo Group

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 25 of The Follow-up. Just 75 episodes shy of making it to 100!

This week we are following up on Canal Brasil, a premium pay-TV channel in Brazil that focuses on original series and films that celebrate and represent the country's culture. Canal Brasil produces some of the most relevant series in the country as well as festival-award-winning films and documentaries.

The project, designed by Rio de Janeiro, Brazil-based Tátil Design in collaboration with Plau for type design and Globosat's in-house design team for motion, was posted on Brand New on February 22, 2021. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast025 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast025, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Daniel Escudeiro, (former) Head of Design of Tátil (he has since moved on to other opportunities); Rodrigo Saiani, Founder and creative director of Plau; and Camila Roque, Marketing Manager at Canal Brasil – Globo Group.

In this conversation we get to understand the need of Canal Brasil to change its perception among its audience and how the experience of Tátil Design in the cultural realm helped bring them in line with the internal culture of the channel. We get to hear about how innocently the identity started by mixing a few type styles together. But also how it then evolved into a complex technical and design challenge masterfully met by Rodrigo and his team at Plau, who worked on a crazy quick schedule to make it happen. All while never losing sight of representing the country of Brazil.

Now, let's listen in as Armin follows up with Daniel, Rodrigo, and Camila.

ARMIN VIT Hello, everyone today we're going to put the fun in funky talking about the delightfully typographic identity created by Tátil and Plau for Canal Brasil. Camila, Daniel, and Rodrigo, welcome to The Follow-Up.

DANIEL ESCUDEIRO Thanks, Armin. Great to be here.

RODRIGO SAIANI Thank you. It's a pleasure

ARMIN So that our listeners can identify who's who, if you can just tell us your name and title.

DANIEL Hi, I'm Daniel Escudeiro, I'm actually former Head of Design at Tátil, and I was the designer as Head of Design who worked on this delightful project back in 2020.

RODRIGO Hi, I'm Rodrigo Saiani, I'm Founder and Creative Director at Plau, and we make type pop. That's what we do.

CAMILA ROQUE Hi, I'm Camila Roque, I'm Marketing Manager at Canal Brasil and Globo Group, and I was the client in the project.

ARMIN Wonderful. It's a pleasure to have y'all here. I'm just going to let you know that I'm originally from Mexico, so it's really hard for me to pronounce Spanish or in this case, Portuguese names in the natural accent when they do it in English. So I'm just going to say Rodrigo and

Daniel and Camila, instead of the proper way, which sounds more beautiful when all of you say it. So let's get to it. We'll start with you Camila. Since the majority of our listeners are in the U.S. can you tell us a little bit about Canal Brasil? Like what kind of programming does it have? Is it a popular channel in Brazil? And those kinds of things...

CAMILA Canal Brasil is a pay-TV channel with over 10 million subscribers. The majority of its content is Brazilian feature films, fictional documentaries. And besides that, we have an increasing numbers of series produced, and screen original TV shows presented by culture personality. From two years to now, we started to do some fashion international film featured in the most prestigious international film festival. Like films, there were from Argentina, or Chile, or Germany, there being screened at Cannes, in Berlin, and Sundance, or the Oscars. So sometimes we also have some international films in Canal Brasil.

ARMIN Daniel and Rodrigo, uh, on a more personal level. What is your relationship with this channel? Is it a channel that you watched often before working on this project? Did you never watch it? And I'm sure that you have, you'll probably have to say, Oh, I've watched it that all the time, but now I just, like, what has been your experience with that channel in the past?

DANIEL Canal Brasil has been around since '98 and I was 16 back then. And for me, the perception of that channel, which was part of like a basic pay-TV, one of the first basic pay-TV channels... It was very much a classic movie channel back then, right? And with this repositioning on rebranding of this channel, it became much more diverse in terms of the shows that it runs. And now it' feels a little bit more like, I can connect to it. I wasn't very much connected to the channel before. There were some nice stories like Larica Total, which is a hilarious TV show who was actually written by a friend of mine. And I mean, it was so good. It didn't really make me watch it in the earlier days. Unfortunately now I don't own pay-TV subscriptions. I cannot see it

live, but Cacá who worked with me on the project really loves it and watches all the time.

Not only watch the content, but also the on-air programming.

RODRIGO I agree with what it did have a feel of playing these classic old-ish, famous Brazilian films. And this is something to do with part of the problem of the perception of the channel itself, which was that it was a little bit dated, a little bit too niche, too specific to these classic, intelligent, almost hard films to watch sometimes. I did not watch it on TV too much, but I do have, did have this perception of it being also very creative and experimental. Kind of like early ages MTV, you know, when they had so many crazy vignettes and takes on air productions, and it was very free, very creative, almost counterculture. And Canal Brasil also drank into this pot a little bit. It had that rebellious feeling. To me, it was these two things, being a classic movie channel, but also having this very energetic, counterculture, creative vision.

ARMIN Sounds like a very interesting channel. Camila, what led Canal Brasil to want to go through a redesign at this point in its history,

CAMILA Beginning of 2019, we had a new director. That's when I became Marketing Manager responsible for all the communication and branding strategy. We did a big research middle 2019. Rio and Sao Paulo with interviews on site. We had a lot of insights there, the things we needed to change in order to increase our audience, get closer to them. That's what they said, Rodrigo, and Daniel said. People felt kind of, they felt like Canal Brasil was too educational too... maybe old, only old movies. They had this vision. And we knew that, we had this feeling, but we proved that when we did the research. The result was really rich and gave us tools now to a lot of decision-making we needed. Changing schedule grid, the way we communicated with the public, and then we decided it was to do the rebranding. It was a long process and very, very rich process.

ARMIN For reference, when was the last time that Canal Brasil had gone through something like this?

CAMILA In the 22 years? Never. We had changed a little bit, the logo, but never been to a rebranding, like defining territory's... purpose...

ARMIN Yeah. So it was about time. Daniel, how they Tátil get involved?

DANIEL So Tátil has kind of, I believe it has the perception in Brazil of being a very creative agency that has a history of developing and dealing with projects that have some sort of cultural relevance in our scene. Perhaps the biggest project that Tátil has undertaken was the identity, the logo for the 2016 Olympics, that was a huge project, and it did have a very strong, very positive reaction. And it was very deeply rooted in our cultural interpretation of Brazil, of Brazillianess and also different project. I actually talked to Camila before to understand what happened behind the scenes there for them to choose Tátil. But I understand it was a decision based on market options. I understand it made sense for them to go with Tátil because of our history of dealing with projects of such cultural significance I guess.

ARMIN And Camila, did you consider other firms? Or was Tátil the only one, or your preferred one? A little bit more behind the scenes if you don't mind?

CAMILA I talked to over four or five different agencies from Rio and Sao Paolo. By the time I decided for Tátil was a 100% sure it was the best choice. We had a lot of talks, Fred Gelli, the CEO of Tátil was really close to us in these early talks. And during the whole process, he fell in love with the project. I talked to a lot of agencies, but Tátil was close to us and we decided that Tátil was perfect for the history and the talks we had. And also because they were really close to us, physically close. It allowed us to work really together. You know, it's Canal Brasil, the marketing, my team, uh, we had our in-house agency... that's how we say? Our publicity agency that does our spots is in-house. Is a group at Globo. The team was in the process during the whole time also and

Tátil. It was important for us to have this exchange of information and thoughts and discussions.

DANIEL One curious thing about this, the ongoing of the project is that the Corona virus madness happened, right, kind of in the middle of it. So it was physically close, and that way we could indeed have many physical meetings and workshops, right? They were sometimes 30 people in the room and it was actually the last big meetings that I have had as a professional before the Corona madness. Good times, good times when we could meet like this.

RODRIGO I actually refused to go to a meeting with the whole team at the Globo Saatchi and with the Tátil team, because it was exactly at the moment where things were going to close. And I was really worried about my kids, and my wife was pregnant at the time. I was like, guys, I love you so much. I want to do this project like my life depends on it because it does, but I cannot go to this meeting. Can we do this on a Zoom call? And it was really... not a very, you know, standard thing to do. And they went with it, which was super nice of them.

CAMILA Because we had like two different phases of the project. We had like a strategy phase that was 2019. I don't remember when, like September, do you remember? Then later, late 2019... a lot of meetings, and workshops, and discussions, and talks, and was really rich. It was like taking the brand therapy you know? We would bring people from Canal Brasil, from programming, from digital, from financial, everybody talking about the project. And then we had a second phase. There was after the main logo was approved by the board, we started to do the whole design thing to develop the On Air. And one designer was in Portugal. Everything we approved was by Zoom. We did the whole changing the On Air, everybody in their houses. I didn't see anybody during the whole process. It was challenging.

ARMIN Daniel turning back to what Camila was mentioning about those initial meetings in 2019, what were some of the findings that came out of that initial strategy phase that then started to inform the design?

DANIEL By the time I got in, there was already a ton of findings to understand what Canal Brasil wanted, where they wanted to move from, what kind of difference in terms of perception, public perception they were striving for. And then we took a very long look at all of the graphic and visual, not identities, but the graphic and visual exploration that Canal Brasil has done over its many years. Then that's why I say we had that feeling of being very rebellious early-MTV-look like because they did have all of these. They had extremely experimental, highbrow, hand animation, 2D-hand animation styles, mixed with early 3D stuff, and lots of stuff with type with animated type. In the beginning, we had that feeling two things, okay—there's the movements that the brain wants to make to take in terms of perception, and then this very rich, very elastic history that they had themselves in terms of experimentation and their expressions really. Very challenging, but very fun starting point for us.

ARMIN Yeah. It sounds like there was a lot of material to work from to move forward with. So Camila, did you have something in mind that you wanted to achieve based on all these findings? Some kind of guidance that you gave Tátil to start with? Or was it more like, alright, good luck. Here's all this stuff. You figure it out.

CAMILA Like we said, it was a big process and we started from scratch. We had this goal to get closer to the audience with a new brand. We knew that we were seen as old, as cold, to quote only for really smart people, and educational. Sometimes people would confuse us with TV Brasil, which is a public television. We need to get some distance from all the TVs that were focused in education and cultural subjects, really cultural subjects. We needed to rejuvenate the brand to reinforce the image that we were a TV channel that is entertaining. A reflection of Brazil, like a fun and cultural Brazil, far from the educational TV. So I think that was the main goal, to rejuvenate and to reinforce the entertaining image.

ARMIN Yeah. That sounds like a good brief to start from. Rodrigo we're going to get to you. I know you're quiet and you're sitting there, but at some point you're going to be the one answering all the questions. Before we get to you, I have one more question for you, Daniel. How did you first arrive at the idea of a multistyle typeface that would extend into everything from the logo to all the identity?

DANIEL This process was so rich. It's funny. People tend to view this from a variable font technology only, point of view. And of course it's there, but to me it's actually much more of an exercise in combining type. And that's how it kind of began for me in terms of the exploration. The early studies were more in terms of the identity and On Air basic scenes and styles, and more than the logo itself. And we were mixing typefaces and combining stuff, which is kind of a natural path, but then things started to get really interesting when these type combinations began to happen inside words. In one main title, we would have sometimes three or four different fonts coexisting. And then I remember in the early beginning, people inside, we would kind of join our teams and some people would look at it, and Tátil, and immediately, they would be like, it looks really cool, but it's absurdly difficult to recreate for somebody else to kind of work on this identity.

And I was like, Oh yes, of course it's not practical at all. So that's kind of how it started, which was a very careful, very thorough look into combining type, which is something I really much enjoy doing in kind of, experimenting and studying. There's actually an interesting story as well regarding that first pitch, which is when we pitched the first logo with this variable logo and a little bit of an idea for the variable typography, all animated in After Effects because nothing was done as actual variable font files yet. So it was a lot of work to just show anything in that sense. But then we showed the first logo and it didn't have all of the stylistic variants that you later come to have, although we were already wanting to make them. But because of a matter of time constraints, just, you know, manpower, we didn't have the logo with lots of stylistic variants.

And then I remember the client, they really liked that pitch. I mean, they chose that one, the typography, but I remember they came back kind of asking to see a more toned down version of the logo, which did not have style variants, which would only have the, width variations. What we thought was, Oh, okay, they're not seeing the full potential yet. So what we brought back to them was the exact opposite from what they asked in this case, which was to bring back the logo with a lot more variants, and a lot more type styles, and type individual glyphs for us to make really lots of versions. And then they were like, Oh, okay, now we are really on board with it. And then of course it was a very picky time of choosing the individual actual lockups of the logo, but it was fun to see that we kind of really strive to push it to its full potential, and the client got 100% on board with it. That was the fun part of the process.

ARMIN Camila let's hear your side of the story. 'Cause it sounds like they should have gotten fired from doing the opposite of what you asked. The question would be like, what was your reaction to the first round of design ideas?

CAMILA Yeah, we kind of like it from the beginning. I remember the first time they showed, we were like, okay, that's really new. That's really different. But then we just love it. It was kind of exactly what we knew we needed, but we couldn't ever thought about it. You know? When you, you think, you know, you need something, but you don't really know what, when they showed it to us, we were like, whoa, okay. That's all we needed to say without saying [laughter].

ARMIN It sounds like—we often joke that, Oh, the worst clients are the ones that they don't what they want until they see it. But then sometimes when that does happen and you show them something great, they're like, Oh, I didn't know that that's what I wanted. Thank you for showing me that. And let's move on with that. It sounds like diverging from the feedback a little bit Daniel, paid off.

CAMILA The really interesting thing that happens. It was like we got that. They showed us the design and we were like, whoa. We started to present, to show to the board members. We showed to one board on person, and then it was like Zoom presentation to the board. I was the one presenting the brand alongside with Fred Gelli, the CEO of Tátil and the board members and seeing their reaction—it was so rewarding because I think the sensation I had is that we were like in this creative bubble, this extremely wild and authentic where we were allowing ourselves to be whatever we wanted. And then we kind of got out of this bubble and go to realize, and show to the board and everybody loved it. We were like, okay, that was good. Yes. Okay. Was worth it, all the paths we had all the trouble, all the discussion, all that was really, really awesome.

ARMIN Sometimes you're so deep into the process that everything seems to make sense to you and you're excited, but when you're bringing in someone with an outside perspective and you get that positive reaction, I'm sure it felt good, especially with something that... it is pretty different, and pretty unique, and wild, in a relative way to other TV channels. So Rodrigo, how do you officially come into the project? What was the initial direction that you got? Just get us started on your side of the story.

RODRIGO So estimates were okayed and everything was set for the work. And I saw Daniel's presentation to the client to Canal Brasil, and I was like amazed by the sheer diversity of styles. Daniel is a superhero. He can make any type look beautiful. It's been a long time since I wanted to work with him on a project. And by the time everything was okayed, I was super excited to dig in. We kind of pretty much got it going because we didn't have that much time to have things done. It was pretty much three months until delivery dates. And that was really stressed out by the project manager and everybody at Canal Brasil. So we pretty much got right to it. Like, Daniel had a very unclean to say the least panel of Illustrator file with all the letters that he designed and tweaked from different typefaces.

And we couldn't start from those. We could be inspired by that, but not copy that literally, or copy curves from that, you know? It's just not okay. So we got that inspiration and we tried, and we started with the most neutral version of the typeface. And then that was the starting point for that. From the neutral grotesque looking sans, then we built upon and made it work. So it's very much getting your hands dirty, making things work, trying to put a little bit of our own twist to it. One of our key contributions would be the counter shapes of the neutral versions of the typeface, which has more squarish counters inspired by Ziraldo, who used a lot of Ad Lib, which is a big ITC if I believe, typeface from the '80s and he used it all over the place, big stories using that. And we tried to make it a little bit of a feature in the typeface. And we had a blast just looking at the references that Daniel brought. So it was a delight to work on this project.

ARMIN Because you ended up with six different styles. Did you explore other styles that didn't make it into the final?

RODRIGO We did. We didn't have a lot of room to experiment on wacky, totally different ones. We had to filter down some. In the end, we have six masters, right? So six main designs, but within each design you have like kind of maybe seven or eight different styles within it. One is more like Cooper Black style version. The other is more like very Latin Serif with a triangular shape. These things, they are styles within styles. In the end, we actually designed way more styles than just the six masters that the typeface needs. I think that was it. We didn't have that much room to experiment since time was of the essence, but it was already very rewarding to work on those—and just to make them from scratch, getting our own hands on it, you know? Like, making something that was inspired by that, but making it in our own hand already was enough inspiration and work.

CAMILA It was an amazing job. It was really fast. They did this huge work in one month to do everything—I can remember Rodrigo. Three months?

RODRIGO It was three months and we worked on a beta schedule, every week or every other week we would send. There was a team behind at Canal Brasil and the animator who was located in Portugal, who had to make sense of the whole thing so that it would work in animation. So they were just making the whole graphic package. So there was a technical challenge of getting this to them so that it could do the work to make, you know, actions on After Effects like really nerdy stuff. Because many software, many animation software just don't have support for variable fonts. The challenge was to prototype fast so that we could learn with them on the process on how to make this work technically, and then to see if they need the whole thing done before they can actually get to their part of the work. Or if we could do things in spurts, say like all the basic uppercase in this single style, and then they could take it from there.

But because it was so many different paths, like really vector points and different styles. For example, if you'd take the letter "A" there would be like two or three different versions of the letter "A", and the neutral style would have to look the same, but the stylish styles, they would have many different vector points. Design the basic ones, design the crazy ones, and then go back and forth to just add the—plot the vector points so that it would animate. This was a lot of work on the channel identity and branding animation part, but it was really interesting to see what they did. A little bit of nerve wracking to see... are they going to use it as we intended it to? Are they going to take advantage of the technology? And in the end they did an amazing job with it.

ARMIN I was going to eventually ask about the whole motion graphics, because I do know and have seen a lot of the global motion work. And it's amazing. It's great to hear about how you had to work with them, especially in such a fast schedule and how that worked out. So another part of that question is for you Daniel, were you also relying on Rodrigo's work to continue what the identity would look like and start to develop a visual language?

DANIEL I was very much in the process of reviewing what they were bringing in terms of new styles. Because again, for me, it's more than this whole super complex exercise in designing a variable font is combining types. So it has to look, even though all of the styles are very different between each other... it has to pass a cohesive feel. I remember I read someone on your blog review in Brand New said, Oh, I see chaos, and then somebody replied, I see controlled chaos. And I loved reading that because that's exactly how I feel. It was kind of a controlled chaos. It's not chaotic. So there was a very fine tuning in terms of which styles did not come in at all. If you look at it with a fresh pair of eyes to feel like, wow, they did not make choices at all. They just threw whatever they could draw in here. But that was definitely not the case.

ARMIN I think control chaos seems like a good philosophy for the whole project. So you have the typeface, you have the motion work, you have the identity work, you put it all together. It comes out great. At least, you know, from my point of view, and you release it into the world. What is the reaction from the public like? I don't know if in Brazil it's like in the U.S. where, if there's a mainstream logo redesign or a brand redesign, everybody complains about it. Even if they don't care about logos. What was the reaction like in Brazil?

CAMILA We had a lot of good social media saying good things about it. And of course we always had someone say, Oh, I like the old one better. But overall we had a lot of people saying good things about it. The team, the board, and people saying to us, even inside Globo, other channels, or other people that work with us, but in social media, most people were thinking, wow, this is so different. They're so bold to do. That's so Canal Brasil, especially the people that knew the brand a little bit more deeply, you know? It's kind of, for me, the brand is kind of exactly like our personality. You know, our brand personality became our logo.

ARMIN It gave... the identity and logo gave voice to what you already knew was in there. It just hadn't come out and flourished, I guess.

CAMILA Yeah. Like we had that written what we want to be, what we stand for, what we're doing here in Brazil, in this business, what we want to do, what our programming is, and the logo came and like, okay, that's it.

DANIEL I remember talking to Camila a while after we delivered everything. And then the whole thing went actually on air, on the TV. And then we started seeing people talking about it and commenting and posting, you know, videos and I mean these things started to surface in many places. Because again, it's not like Canal Brasil was the, you know, big guy in the block that popular guy, but it appears what we were doing with it was really making it as cool as it should be perceived as, because it's super awesome. I mean, really in terms of our audio visual and cinematic culture Canal Brasil, co-produces most of the films that we will see later, uh, you know, being nominated for the Oscars, or winning these major international awards. Independently of awards, stuff like this that builds on our cultural productions and make cinematic creators have actually a home.

I mean, it was such a heartfelt project in terms of, this is really special for us in terms of country, really. In terms of, you know, nation. And also in terms of looking at where we could take this channel that, you know, wasn't too sexy, but we really wanted to make it shine and make funky and make it really interesting and resonate with lots of different cultures. Most of what I have read or heard really were majorly positive reactions from it. So not just from the client side, from the actual people who are watching it, who are the ones we actually want to, you know, win over. I have a tendency to believe that it really hit home, and it was very well received.

RODRIGO May I add to that. Just the biggest favorites part of this project for me was to see the birds controlling the typeface, the blank TV. I kind of like... that image sums up Brazil, like the whole channel idea, the fact that you can actually see things in a very optimistic and nice way. I just loved that bird controlling the typeface. There wasn't a better equalizer to what a typeface could do.

ARMIN That's great. Actually, my last question was what was the most exciting aspect of working in this identity? And you have both answered that question. I can clearly see that you both are pretty passionate. Now, Camila for you, what was the most exciting aspect of working on this project?

CAMILA It was a huge project for me. From the beginning to the end it was a project that I wanted to do for a long time. I was always trying to convince the director of Canal Brasil to go for it. So it was really rich, was really intense. We got to develop the whole market, strategy, the communication of Canal Brasil. And by then to have a logo that was so consonant. How do you say that it was really... exactly everything you wanted to say? I'm super proud of what we did and really, really happy with this project. It was like a baby being born [laughter].

ARMIN I think there's a lot to be proud here. And, you know, I think the identity is something that could almost only come from Brazil. Like it's not a channel that could exist in the U.S., not even in Europe. There is a richness and a loudness in a good way, and a vibrancy to it, and the textures, and... Even the bird, like there was something, there is something about that bird Rodrigo that makes it special. I do think going through the process, through the pandemic, through the strategy, through the tight deadlines, working all that magic of the variable typeface into motion, that all paid off. And I think it is a wonderful project. I want to thank you all three for sharing your time with me today. And thank you so much for being on The Follow-Up.

RODRIGO Thanks, Armin.

DANIEL Thank you so much. I loved it.

CAMILA It was a pleasure.

BRYONY More often than not, when a client provides a specific bit of feedback it's our job — and in our best interest — to provide a solution that satisfies the request. In this instance, however, the team at Tatil did the opposite of what was requested. They had a strong belief in their

idea and were confident that they could explain and visualize it better instead of abandoning it only to satisfy the client request. As it turned out, it was in the best interest of the project that they respectfully rebelled in a way that improved the project and set it on its course to become so vibrant, rich, and diverse. So now you have a precedent to point to for those times when you need to answer feedback the quote-unquote wrong way. Proceed with caution, though.

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