

EPISODE 051

EAMES INSTITUTE

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Tom Crabtree, Manual

AND

Sam Grawe, Eames Institute

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.

ARMIN VIT

Hi, this is Armin Vit and welcome to episode number 51 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on the Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity, a non-profit organization with a dual function. One, to, quote “equip everyone with the lessons of Ray and Charles Eames” and, two, to serve as a steward for a collection of the contents of the original Eames Office at 901 Washington in Venice, California. The Institute is housed in a stunning ranch in Petaluma, CA, which was purchased in 1992 by Lucia Eames, Charles’ daughter, and is now overseen by Llisa Demetrios, Lucia’s daughter, who also lives there and maintains the ranch as a, quote, “prototype for regenerative agriculture, water conservation, and land stewardship”. The Institute joins The Eames Office and the Eames Foundation as three generations of the Eames family have contributed to preserve and promote Ray and Charles Eames’ legacy.

The project, designed by San Francisco, CA-based Manual was posted on Brand New on April 25, 2022. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast051 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast051, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Tom Crabtree, Founder and Creative Director of Manual; and Sam Grawe, Chief Brand and Marketing Officer at the Eames Institute.

In this conversation we get to hear about how Manual overcame one of the most difficult challenges a designer can face: to design an identity for one of the most celebrated design duos in history, the Eames. Key to their success was emulating not their aesthetic and style but their process and approach. This led them to a unique solution that, yes, looked like something the Eames might make but that, more importantly, *FELT* like something they would make. This despite the curveball of having already presented five design concepts with the client team having selected one for further development and then realizing that something wasn't right. Rather than derail the engagement, this further questioning of where the project was headed led the way to the eventual design, which very much conveys a sense of endless curiosity.

Now let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Tom and Sam.

BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO While the work by Ray and Charles Eames and their legacy within the design world is not breaking news these days, the newly established Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity is. And judging by the comments and votes on Brand New, plenty of you are excited not only by the excellent branding, but also by what this might mean for the design community in the future. Tom and Sam, welcome to The Follow-Up.

TOM CRABTREE Thank you for having us.

SAM GRAWE Indeed.

BRYONY If you could take one quick minute to introduce yourselves, with your name and where you're coming from for our audience, I would appreciate that.

SAM My name is Sam Grawe, I am the Chief Brand and Marketing Officer of the Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity.

TOM This is Tom, I'm the Creative Director and Founder of Manual, we're based in San Francisco.

BRYONY Fabulous, thank you for the introductions. Now Sam, I think it's safe to assume that our audience is well versed on Ray and Charles Eames, and it would be helpful to understand now the origin, the purpose, and kind of the inner workings of the newly established Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity.

SAM The Eames are very well known and perhaps probably the best known designers of the 20th-Century, and I think did perhaps more than anyone to establish in some way what we think of, when we think of what a designer is. There's so many facets to their work. What we are about is sharing the lessons of Ray and Charles Eames so that anyone can use design to solve problems. And our aim as an institute is to think about the way in which Ray and Charles tackled problem solving in all different kinds of areas in their own career, and extrapolate their methodology, and their philosophy, and their outlook, and their approach into ways that are applicable today. And hopefully share those with people and make them feel empowered, and that they can bring some aspect of that approach to their own life. Whether it's as Ray would say, "even when I'm laying a table, I'm designing something". We have a very broad perspective on design and what design encompasses—it's not just for the professional designers. In many ways, it's like all of human activity. And I think that once you've unlocked that or think about it, as Charles said, as a plan for arranging elements to accomplish a particular purpose, design is very open-ended and something that everyone can access. That's very much in our aim.

SAM There's sort of two major facets to what we're about. One is the Eames Collection. This is a collection that historically has been with the Eames family. This is material that came out of 901 Washington

where Ray and Charles worked for over four decades, and saved everything let's say. There's a ton of material in the collection that documents that process and that methodology. After they passed away, arrangements had been made for their documents, and their drawings, and their papers, and the films, and the photography to go to the Library of Congress. So that material went there. Select items, went to the Vitra Design Museum, they were very early collectors of Ray and Charles, they were focused on early plywood. And then the conference room went to SF MoMA and the entry room, the lobby, went to LACMA. There has been this sort of dispersion of material that was historically with the family. More recently, the Mathematica Exhibit that was at the 1964 IBM World's Fair was purchased by the Henry Ford Museum and restored, and installed there. But all the rest of it is in our collection. And there are certainly tons of treasures that range from handmade plywood sculptures, to the crayons that were in the graphics room that the Eames and their staff used on their presentations. So you have this enormous range in the material. And we are obviously documenting, archiving, preserving, and taking care of this collection, and digitizing it and making it accessible to people, and making accessible to other institutions in a way that had just kind of been through word of mouth before.

A lot of this material has traveled in exhibits that were done both at the turn of the century for the Library of Congress and the Future Design Museum... recently traveling show organized by the Barbican Museum—that was at a few locations in Europe and the United States, maybe around 2014 or so. At any rate, this material is a big part of what we do. And we also use that material, not just as a historical exercise, but as this lens to look outward and forward. The other aspect of what we do is we are based in Petaluma, California at this ranch that Lucia Eames who is Charles's daughter built in the early 90s, designed by one of the architects who designed Sea Ranch, if you're familiar with that. Donlyn Lyndon, two structures, a barn and a house, both of what I refer to as indeterminate buildings—they can be used in a multitude of ways. I don't think office was intent ever,

but right now we're sort of camping out in one of these spaces. All the rooms also, you can drive a forklift into. This ranch has been the home of Lucia Eames and Llisa, her daughter, who is our Chief Curator for three decades. Lucia passed away in 2014, but Llisa still lives here, and also works with us as the Chief Curator and is a huge part of our storytelling, and our experience that we create for visitors.

Right now, we're not open to the public because we're going through a multi-year renovation to make this place more accessible to all, but we're investigating using it almost as like a prototype for both the kind of museum experience we might create in the future, a place to experiment with these lessons and to share those with the visitors that do come by word-of-mouth, and then as well based in agricultural land. So all of our neighbors are farmers and ranchers, and so we're using it almost as a prototype for sustainable, regenerative agriculture. And thinking about ways in which that can become a part of what we do as well. So I apologize if that's long-winded, but sort of covers most of our bases in terms of what we're about as an organization.

BRYONY You're definitely a curious bunch, that's for sure. It's like having the library, the playground, the everything a designer can dream of all in one place, it sounds quite heavenly to me. Now, I understand you joined the Institute after the branding process, but can you speak as to who within the Institute was involved in the process?

SAM John Cary who's our President and CEO was very much involved. Llisa Demetrios who's our Chief Curator and the grandchild of Ray and Charles Eames was also involved. And Joe Gebbia the seed funder, and our main patron was also deeply involved, he's one of the co-founders of Airbnb. A temporary Creative Director on board named Andrew Schapiro who really led, I think the day-to-day process from our end. But it was really that quartet that worked with Manual, and set the brief, and then worked through all of the process of where we got to.

BRYONY I also wanna know how Tom got involved with the project.

TOM We received an email in, gosh, June, 2019 I believe it was, from Andrew @ eamesinstitute.org, and was immediately excited just by reading the email address. We actually knew of Andrew Shapiro. We'd met him at Airbnb, just getting to know each other potentially for another project—and we'd met in person. Andrew had reached out and explained very high level what this new institution was about. Not as eloquently as Sam, as it was in the very, very early stages. And they actually invited us to take part in a creative pitch. We typically don't get involved in, we often say no to pitches, but in this instance, of course, we had to say yes, and it made sense as well. I think the Eames team had to find the right partner who just really deeply understood the subject matter. The initial brief that they set forth was, would you like to take part in a one week, maybe one and a half week creative pitch?

And the only prompt was to imagine a one-day event at the Ranch. What would we do? We actually visited the Ranch. Llisa took us on a tour. So we got to understand really quickly, a bit of a baseline as to what this magical place was about. This ranch in the middle of a meadow full of Eames secrets and drawers. But we had a week and a half basically to come back with a proposition. What it might be like to work with Manual. So we ideated a one-day event. We thought about the timetable, the name, the identity for this event, picnic activities, dinner in a field, we had examples of what it would look like. We went crazy and threw ourselves into it with a huge amount of enthusiasm. So that's how it began. We won the pitch. Eames team felt that we really understood the subject matter, and the sort of spirit of the organization. So, that's how it began.

BRYONY All right, you got the job. What was the foundation of the parameters, or the guidance that you received that sent you packing back into the office with that same enthusiasm to work on it now, for real?

TOM Right off the back of engaging in that fun little pitch, we had a proper kickoff. So what we did, and again, we wanted to sort of design our

design process in the same way that we thought Ray and Charles might have. So, the kickoff was in a park, with a picnic, with the Eames Institute core team, and we had fruit and had nice things together, and drinks. And we sat around and had a conversation. It was very informal. We had large poster sheets, we had sticky notes, and we really just had a conversation over a couple of hours in the sun. Capturing individual perspectives about Eames, and stories about Eames and their approach. And we sort of began to design the brief together. Really, those were the early stages. It wasn't so much, here's the brief manual, go away into your studio and design it. We actually had a few collaborative work sessions to write the brief together.

BRYONY And what was the key element that you took from those first conversations?

TOM Well, there were a number of things we did. One was that after having all of these immersive conversations about the qualities of Eames, and what they stood for, and what felt Eames, and what felt off-Eames, and this sort of yes/no, and we did all these activities. We kind of summarized our learnings in what we called creative territories. These were verbal ideas, some visual stimulus that set forth some potential places that we thought might be really interesting to explore design. And we had different themes around these. One of them was about the Eames were about iteration and refinement. So what does that mean for an identity? We had this idea of a viewfinder, looking at things, how we look at the world. Another idea was about everything connects. So we gained a sort of shared understanding of some creative territories before we started designing.

And then we set forth four main design objectives that we said, as we look at design in the coming weeks, we need to ask ourselves continually four questions. One, is it simple? Has it reached a level of simplicity through refinement and clarity of thought? Is it delightful? Does it reflect the kind of playfulness that was inherent in Eames approach? Is it accessible? Is it gonna resonate with non-designers? Is it gonna resonate around the world? And will it last, right? Which is always a hard one. We want this to be timeless. This couldn't be

anything that felt trendy or anything, it had to be able to change over time. So those were the four things that we together said, those are the criteria for assessing the work, moving forward.

BRYONY Those are great criteria. I can see them in the branding. Now, you said it earlier in a way, just looking at the email address, there was a sense of excitement of, I cannot walk away from this. What would you say is the hardest part of designing something that would represent the Eames and the—what it means to designers?

SAM Prior to my being at the Eames Institute, I was at Herman Miller for eight years. I've been around this material for a long time. I've seen a time after time. It's almost impossible to pick up the mantle of what the Eames did. When people do try to kind of just recreate it, it often feels really facile and falls flat in its face, just because it doesn't stand up to the kind of scrutiny and thoughtfulness that the Eames originally put into things. And it's out of step with the times because you're actually referencing maybe more stylistic decisions, than you are problem solving decisions. What you end up wanting to do is to think about the ways in which, again coming back to these lessons, the ways in which they approached problems and what that approach might have been, rather than what the output of that approach was. I think even just observing this from further down the pike view that I've had, that was my instant read of the work that Manual did. It was an extrapolation of spirit, not a regurgitation of style.

TOM I mean, look, it's quite a daunting task. I think as soon as we won the project, we was like, oh, <laughter> the audience, our designers predominantly there's already the Eames Foundation, there's the Eames office, these things already exist. We are adding a new entity, a sort of idea into the world that in some way, shape, or form has to represent Eames. It shouldn't feel like they designed it certainly. But it was daunting, at first. I think things that we talked about internally from the get-go, we just said, we can't design anything that feels derivative of the form in their work. We can't design a logo that looks like it's furniture-based or it's using shapes they would've used. That

was something we were just really mindful of. Let's try not to make it look like something they might have designed. But as Sam said, let's try and embrace the spirit, and how they approached and saw things and looked at the world, and use that spirit to try and embody it into a future-facing identity. That was the goal.

BRYONY Now I wanna focus mostly on the final direction that you chose, but I'm always wanting to know if you went and presented visual concepts for these four territories, or did you go in with the one? How did that first round of design go?

TOM Oh, there's quite a story here. It was not straightforward. So let me explain how this went. The first creative presentation, where we presented a range of logos and potential identity systems, we hosted here in the studio. Manual in San Francisco and the team came down, it was a digital presentation on a screen, but we always have things pinned up with boards that are flipped, that we kinda flip over, 'cause it's much nicer to evaluate and have a conversation after viewing on screen. We had five different design directions that we presented, kind of a lot for us, but it felt appropriate. There were so many ways into this that we kept finding new things that we could think about. So we presented five directions. You know, the reactions were very positive in the meeting. We could even sense there was a bit of a gravitational pull to one of the design directions.

And shortly after that presentation, we, you know, received whether it was an email or a call, I can't remember, but the Eames team were like, we love direction one. Roll on board. Let's, you know, embark upon the usual refinement phase. Great. Going smoothly, as you would imagine. We were like two weeks into iterating on this. We'd looked at variations of this logo that we designed, different colors, typography, all the kind of stuff we presented around to <laugh>... We got an email that said, okay, hold on. We need to have a conversation. We're not convinced actually we're in the right area where we need to be, and we need to have a meeting. Which as a design studio, as a Creative Director, you know, that God have we failed? What have

we done? But immediately we were like, let's have a conversation about this. What are we thinking? Maybe there's another design direction that we wanted to focus on. We actually met at Airbnb with Joe Gebbia and other members of the Eames Institute. And we had a conversation and heard them out. The feedback that they had started with, I believe it was Joe that said, look, we're called the Eames Institute. And the word Institute carries connotations potentially of feeling like slow moving, academic, institutional, backward-looking organization. So we need to push against that name, and the identity where we'd kind of landed to date, it was pretty great, it was a lovely logo, but it was square in form, it had triangular forms, it wasn't dynamic, it didn't move. It felt like a really great logo, but that was kind of, it, it was a thing.

BRYONY An institute.

TOM Yeah. An institute that looked, you know, maybe felt like a nice artistic identity or something you might see for an art gallery or something like that. I still stand by it to some extent, but the prompt was look, we are really sort of future-facing, and we really want to think about what are the learnings from Ray and Charles, how that can be really used in the future. So we definitely want this to feel, "not stuffy institution". There was a prompt that was, well, what if we forget we're called the Eames Institute, imagine we're called something else. Imagine we're called the Eames Institute for Problems and Solutions, or the Eames Institute for Imagination and Practical Matters, or the Eames Institute for Inspiration and Action. By adding ideas onto the end of the name, there was this, what would that unlock? It was almost like the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I think someone even mentioned like, <laugh>, you know, let's give it a go see what that might unlock.

We brainstormed, really quickly, in a Google doc, probably just between us for a day, a whole bunch of what these additions could be. And

together with the Eames Institute, we landed on Eames Institute for Inspiration and Action, and the Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity. And they said, take that what you will. They were very gracious. We obviously had some budget, and some time agreed to go at it again. And we did. It was a really interesting prompt. You would imagine after going through 4, 5, 6 weeks of designing an identity, having an idea chosen, that it would be really hard to go back to the drawing board and find a new idea when you literally felt like you just exhausted all options. But this prompt of Infinite Curiosity completely unlocked a different way of thinking about it for our team. We immediately went, okay, that's a whole new territory. So we really threw ourselves into it with a lot of energy and enthusiasm, and when we came back with I think, four new design directions, and two of them were based on the idea of Inspiration and Action, and the other two were based on Infinite Curiosity. And the one you see today barely changed at all from that first presentation. We'd kind of latched onto this idea that the whole team was like, that's it.

BRYONY When you know, you know.

TOM Yeah. I guess.

BRYONY Sam, at what point in the process did you join?

SAM Well, I think it kind of landed there. The brand guidelines, as you know them today existed when I arrived April 2021, they were baked. And there was actually even still some conversation... we hadn't launched obviously around, you know, should we go with the full name as our name, 'cause the lockup at that point was Eames Institute. Where we kind of have landed is a little hither and thither where in writing, sometimes we are Eames Institute of Infinite Curiosity, but the lockup of the logo, it always got a little too wonky when you started adding more to it. I came in and had done some positioning exercises in terms of where this thing sits in the world. So I had a fairly good understanding of where we wanted to take that. The work that had been done around the visual identity of the brand immediately

resonated with me. It just has always felt a bit like duh, this is perfect.

BRYONY It was meant to be.

SAM <laugh>. Yeah, no, that's kind of where I came into it, if that makes sense.

BRYONY You came in when the brand was in a way done, but at the same time, not public. So—

SAM Nor had we done any kind of real expression of what it would look like in public, right?

BRYONY Yeah.

SAM At the point I came in, we were beginning to brief a web agency, and thinking that largely our first iterations of this brand would exist digitally. That was kind of the point in time.

BRYONY So I would like to go over the various aspects of the branding, from the creator side, but also the implementer side. We have a very unique opportunity here to get to distinct takes on the one item. So if we could start with the logo. Who, or how did it become animated? What was the thinking? And how do you see that being implemented today, and into the future?

TOM Yeah, we'd been exploring different logos, as I said in that second round and one of the concepts that designer on our team drew, it was this circular form. It was a letter "E", but the counter space of the "E" was moving around, and therefore it immediately acted as if it were a pupil of an eye and it could look up, and left and right, and down, this is all about curiosity. And when I think back to those times we'd visited the Ranch, and opening drawers, and being distracted and looking over there. Like, I mean, that is literally what it's like when you're in the world of the Eames Collection, is that you are constantly just learning, looking close, zooming out, looking at other things, the anthropomorphic nature of this "E" being this little kind of character that was always assessing things, and seeking out the new. We didn't even know if it needed to be animated. It looks animated even when

it's static. That's how that came about, really. It was all about looking, and discovering, and remaining curious.

SAM In terms of the implementation. I think that one thing that's been really wonderful is to see that these guidelines really serve as this great kind of springboard for other designers and for us to work from. And certainly Instrument, the web agency—digital designers that we worked with at Instrument used that kit of parts to bring to life the website, as you experience it today. I work a lot with another Art Director and Creative Director based in New York, Emily Anderson. And she's kind of responsible for a lot of the collateral that we've been doing, and a lot of the art direction on our online magazine. And again, it's just kind of taking it in new direction, but very much based on the sort of foundation that Tom and his team put together.

BRYONY That is the beauty of creating a brand and then handing it over with a really solid kit of parts. And those guidelines are amazing. It is so surreal in a way to see printed guidelines. Was that a directive or something that you wanted to do?

TOM Confession <laugh>, it's an edition of one right now. We couldn't stand to see the guidelines live in a PDF. There's a fantastic PDF, which is incredibly in-depth, but we were like, no, this needs to be physical. So, uh, Sam, we need to give you a copy. You need to do the whole thing and pull the trigger and do a hundred of those.

SAM Yeah, I think that that's actually... it's indicative of what this sort of spirit of this place is. And I think, you know, when people come here and they experience this material, and there's so much tactility in handling a prototype part that was done for a chair, or in opening a drawer full of scale model people that were used for photographing architectural models. It's just like all of this stuff that exists digitally now that you don't necessarily think about the time, and effort, or the decisions that go into making those things, or, you know, just having that more tactile experience, it's perfectly fitting that Manual had to print out and make a set of guidelines. And yes, we should totally do that.

BRYONY A set of guidelines, you said, all right. Speaking of tactility, the launch kit, how did that come about? That is little treasure. I just wanna put my hands in there.

SAM We wanted to announce this in a way to people that would get them excited about what we were about, in essence to bring them to the Ranch. Even if they couldn't be at the Ranch, we turned to Manual as the team to help envision what that might be and bring it to life. And then for each of the elements within that kit to speak to a different aspect of what the Institute is about. There was a lot of work done to connect each object that's in there to an element of what we're doing in different parts of our organization.

TOM It was a nice culmination to a project where we've worked over a period of two and a half years. There were stops and starts—obviously COVID happened in the middle. So, we'd been working on the project, and then not working on the project, and Sam said it, Eames Institute were working away with Instrument on the whole digital expression, which obviously took a long time to bring that to fruition. So when Sam and team came back and said, look, we're getting close to launch. We've got friends, we've got family, there's press, there's influencers as you might call them. How can we bring the Ranch to them? So the idea of this little box of secrets, this little box of joy, how can we think about the experience of receiving something that you don't know whom it's from, and what is the kind of drama as you go through this? What do you see first then? What do you see? What do you discover? What do you lift? Slide out? Find? Play with? Engage with? It became a really interesting design project in itself to try, as Sam said, think really thoughtfully about what should go in this little box of gifts. And how does it speak to the sort of principles of the Institute.

SAM Just in terms of that experience, I think too... and Tom, and Patricia, and team, have been here many times, you have things like 18-foot-tall sliding barn doors on this sort of barn building here. And I can think of now, or implanted in my mind is the sound that they make when you roll them open. Right?

BRYONY Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

SAM But that kind of barn door opening is something that you remember from this experience. Another is going through these drawers. When 901 closed, they had to get everything out of that building. And so literally the drawers were just wrapped up in plastic, and put on a container, and shipped up to the Bay Area. And those same drawers are what are here and the contents within them, they've been put into new housing, but they were the drawers in the flat files of 901. I have a colleague Lauren who had a sort of edict when she started working here that every day "I'm gonna open a new drawer". A year in, still tries to do that. And I remind myself of that sometimes and do the same, but no, there's so much kind of just to be discovered in those drawers. So really this kind of opening, and lifting, and putting a little bit of work into that experience, or that kind of discovery was definitely a part of what we wanted to bake into this little box of treasures.

BRYONY That definitely comes across. I haven't interacted with one, but there's enough pictures and enough material there that you can get that sense. Now in terms of the branding, the last two bits, the color palette is easy to trace back in a way. The typography is a little bit more nuanced and I would love to hear your take on selections and how that's working in the implementation of the brand.

TOM The typography choices that we made in the early days of this project were really not to keep going back to talking about the inspiration of opening drawers... I mean, so much of it goes back to this. I mean, Llisa did such a brilliant job. Every time we visited, we did multiple trips with the team to the Ranch. Llisa would curate objects that she knew we would be interested in, or she thought would be interesting. She's very good at that. When she gives a tour, it's not just a generic tour, it's tailored to the individual and she'll build on your interests. If there's something you're interested in, you'll get more of it. The first time we showed up, there was a huge table, 10-feet long, and it was just covered in graphic materials, leaflets, business cards, flyers, Herman Miller ads, letters, doodles. It was just graphic design wonder.

There were things we learned. We were like, I didn't realize the Eames Office did quite so much graphic design... and did they really do this? So we dug through a lot of these materials, and we kept finding these little clues. We were looking at that sort of title sequence cards, all these sort of old acetates for Powers of Ten film, and the font was News Gothic, and it was lovely and slightly condensed. And then we'd see materials with a similar typeface... Charles and Ray's business card had this really interesting, almost monospace kind of serif, so we kept finding these clues and it really did inform the typographic choices. It was important that we didn't wanna have one typeface. We didn't want it to feel like a sort of one corporate typeface. And again, when you see all the materials that the Eames Office used to design, it was pretty eclectic.

It was a little circus town. There would be serifs smashed together with sans, and weird Victorian type. It was eclectic, and that was really joyful about it. We wanted to have a collection of typefaces that would work in dialogue. We used Topol, a contemporary slightly condensed sans serif, but it just felt right. It felt like a contemporary version of News Gothic. So Topol was really important to us. Century Schoolbook, beautifully classic serif, also has a monospace version, which looks incredible and feels like the little archivy type writer type that you see on the drawers. And the logotype itself was simply Graphik. That's the kind of workhorse sans serif that's used throughout all of the communications. So those three typefaces really work, almost interchangeably. You can set a pull quote in Topol, you can set one in Century Schoolbook, and it's not so rigid. You know? They work together harmoniously, but there's a little bit of a dialogue going on between the typefaces. So that's where all that kind of came from. Just inspired by materials.

SAM It comes back to that really strong kit of parts, thinking about what it is that we're doing, whether it's a kind of printed leaflet, or it's a website, or it's a label for an exhibit panel, or something like that nature. That feeling like there are options or ways of doing it. They really gave us

the kind of parts to be able to bring that to life. And I think too, with a strong set of rules, or those guidelines do's and do-not-do's, but not so rigid that you can't still iterate or be playful with it. The great thing is that from all of those options, there's always variations to look at, and I'm very much design adjacent having worked in magazines, and having worked in brand and marketing. Deeply invested in design and probably knowledgeable from having to sit around with art directors, kerning articles and captions and all that stuff for years. There's just so much opportunity to be able to play with it all, to make it work in the context that you're working in. Does feel like a very natural system, that doesn't feel too systematic.

BRYONY That makes sense. And what kind of feedback are you receiving? There's the design community at large, but even from employees, from the family itself, the influencers that you mentioned earlier, the press, what are you hearing back?

SAM Thus far, it's been excessively positive. And I think part of it is that there's just so much excitement around this material. I think part of it though, too, is that it's a very forward-facing brand. And I think that you kind of feel that in this brand that's been established, it's not an exercise in nostalgia or simply in preservation. It does feel contemporary and like it's about looking forward. And so I think that that's what people register in this, and that the container for these treasured objects feels contemporary, without being backward-looking. Certainly is the vibe that we've gotten from folks, but generally from the family on down, overwhelmingly positive.

TOM I think the one thing we've heard is it just brought up people a smile. You know? I think maybe it's the time we're in, it's been a tough year, there's a lot going on right now in the world. And when it launched, it wasn't about a self-consciously cool piece of graphic design. I think people just said, oh, this makes me smile. This is unselfconsciously joyful. And I think that's a lovely compliment. That's all we could hope for.

BRYONY Indeed, that is a very good compliment. Tom, what was the most

satisfying aspect of working on this project over the last two and a half years?

TOM Mm... that's a really tough question. I think what was really satisfying was understanding that ourselves as a design team, myself and Patricia and our design team, we kind of found a new way of working that we will roll out on future projects. The way we just started the project, collaborated, the flexibility that we tried to implore, the open-mindedness, the fact that we could pivot halfway through and make it into a success. I think that was the most rewarding aspect, is that I feel like we've gained those lessons of Ray and Charles, used them, put them into action and said, oh, that's actually a really successful, and little bit different to how we used to do things. So that's been pretty valuable. I think a highlight in particular to be not so, uh, intellectual about it would be we spent the night up at the Ranch, Patricia and I with our children. Of course, Llisa's such a wonderful host, she said, you have to spend the night. And we were laying in a room on our backs with Eames films projected on the ceiling, eating popcorn. Uh, I think that was quite a highlight as well.

BRYONY Sam, looking ahead. What part of the outcome is most exciting for you, in what is to come?

SAM There's no bounds of where this all might go in some respects. As I look to the sort of near-term future, we've just done a really fun popup with Herman Miller in New York City, for New York Design Week. We were able to create a street-facing museum, if you will on three of the windows on their flagship, and a little bit of a display inside. And again, that was like working with another partner, Standard Issue Design, who kind of took these guidelines and ran with them in a 3-dimensional format, in a way like the first public facing execution of the brand that was not digital. So that has been a great kind of litmus test as well. There's gonna be a lot more opportunities for that. And we're in the midst of this great renovation here. We're consolidating all of our offsite storage into a new space, and thinking about ways in which we might activate that. Generally thinking bi, and with

infinite curiosity, and infinite optimism about how we take this to the next level. Certainly a little bit more of the same, but expanding and continuing to build on both the foundation of the brand work, and the foundation of some of the things we've done to date digitally in terms of publishing, as well as now through some of these physical expressions and where we might show up with the collection and share this material.

BRYONY You definitely have a brand that is simple, it is delightful, it is accessible. Those directives that came out from the very beginning, but it's in its infancy. And it has a lot of growing up to do. It has the legs. It has the support system to truly become a grounded, but yet curious brand moving forward. And I'm very excited to see how it evolves, and how it grows throughout these beginning years where you're still figuring things out. But then, at some point you're gonna be hitting the ground running, and know exactly where your buildings are, where your storage, what your intentions are with all of this. I can only imagine what the brand will do for you. I'm very excited to see that evolution from its infancy, to toddlerhood, to full adult. I wanna thank you both for being with me today on The Follow-Up, it has been wonderful to hear all of the details, the confessions <laughter>, hopefully one of these days see an extra pair of guidelines out there in the world.

TOM Absolutely.

BRYONY Outside of a drawer.

TOM Thanks for having us, Bryony.

SAM It was a pleasure.

ARMIN While the idea of having gone through 9 design explorations could have soured any other project, it's clear that there was a strong foundation that allowed Manual and the client team to pivot. Our theory is that any project that has a kick-off meeting that involves a picnic in the park

with drinks is a project that can withstand any kind of hardship. It also sounds like it was a fantastic opportunity to learn from and be inspired by some of the best in the business, not just through the endless drawers of Eames materials and ephemera but from the new generation of stewards of the Eames legacy that build and foster projects like the Eames Institute for the benefit of us all now and in the future.

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