

EPISODE 079

CRUMBL

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Andy Baron, Turner Duckworth

AND

Breehn Sasaki, Turner Duckworth

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 78 of The Follow-up. Before we get into it, a quick apology for the delay in getting this last episode out. Sometimes aligning schedules across time zones for multiple people can be tricky and three of the recordings we had planned in the last 30 days all had to be rescheduled but we are back on track. So...

This week we are following up on Crumbl, a bakery franchise chain offering large, delectable cookies. Co-founded by Sawyer Hemsley and Jason McGowan — neither of which were bakers — Crumbl began in 2017 with a single store in Logan, UT, and with only a single cookie option on the menu — chocolate chip. It was an instant hit and in a short six years, Crumbl has expanded to 900 locations across the U.S. and five in Canada. Each location offers only six flavors at a time on any given day but they have a menu of more than 250 options to choose from to set each week's offerings that can be purchased in store, locally delivered, or shipped nationwide. A big part of the brand's success is its social media presence, with more than 7 million followers on TikTok and more than 4 million on Instagram. It also helps that the cookies are amazing.

The project, designed by Turner Duckworth, was posted on Brand New on January 15, 2024. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast078 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast078, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Andy Baron, Executive Creative Director at Turner Duckworth, and Breehn Sasaki, Design Director at Turner Duckworth.

In this conversation we learn about what it takes, or what it took, or, heck, what it will continue taking to fulfill Crumbl's mission to bring people together over the world's best box of cookies. This involved the equivalent of changing the tires on a moving car as Turner Duckworth and Crumbl's relationship began before the pandemic, took a break during the pandemic, and restarted after the pandemic, coinciding with Crumbl's quick growth as it opened 100 locations in 2020, around 150 in 2021, and another 100 or so in 2022 and 2023 each, so decisions had to be made while franchises were exploding nationwide. We hear about the importance and benefit of the two founders being heavily involved throughout the process and their team's ability and propensity for working fast and efficiently. We delve into the development of all the various new brand assets and we hear exactly why the baker icon went away. Or did it?

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Andy and Breehn.

BRYONY A cookie is, in a way a shared experience of satisfaction and joy. Crumbl has taken this simple item and turned it into a decadent offering of taste and texture, and delivered it through social media and a simple in-store experience in a way that touched its audience just so, and it blew up. Six years later, and 900 stores strong, it recently served as a delectable rebrand by Turner Duckworth. Andy and Breehn, welcome to The Follow-Up.

ANDY BARON Thank you so much for having us.

BREEHN SASAKI Thanks for having us.

BRYONY Let's jump right in and let's take a few minutes. Bree, maybe you can help us with this, to establish the origins of Crumbl and taking note of that very, very quick scale-up [affirmative] and the challenges that they faced through that growth.

BREEHN Considering where Crumbl is today and as you said, the massive following that they've been able to cultivate, I'm always so shocked to remember that they were only founded in 2017, barely seven years ago. They were founded by two crazy cousins—as they like to call themselves—Jason McGowan and Sawyer Hemsley. They opened their first location out of Logan, Utah and since then they really have not taken their foot off the gas at all. They've actually just launched their thousandth location. They are in all 50 states, and when we started working with them early last year, they had just launched internationally in Canada. It's pretty remarkable what they've been able to build in such a short amount of time.

But in terms of the challenges that come with that sort of lightning speed growth, the old brand had some really great bones and some great foundations, in the name, and their signature pink color, and their uniquely shaped four pack box,. But everything was maybe a little bit scrappier and maybe not as considered as they could be. So I think when TD came to the table, I think everyone just felt like it was high time for the brand identity to, in a way, grow up and catch up to where the business was headed, and where the business already was. And it was our job to create a new system that would accommodate their continued rapid growth.

BRYONY Andy, how did Turner Duckworth get involved with the project? What was that process?

ANDY The original way that they came in was a pretty traditional way. They came in through our new business team and they had basically two needs in mind. The first was they wanted to look for an agency that

had experience working with brands that work on a franchise model. We had previously done lots of work with Subway, and with brands like Little Caesars, and a variety of other brands that live in that sort of world. The other is that they were looking for a partner that had experienced creating timeless iconic assets because their vision is to create something that's in it for the long haul. One of the things we like to say a lot is that while their menu changes once a week, we believe that the brand identity should be, especially in this case, should be around for years to come. We have a wealth of experience working with brands that have timeless iconic assets and that was really the magic recipe for us coming to the table.

We also just struck up a really good relationship almost immediately. We had really great chemistry in some of our initial chats. Keep in mind that all of this was done during Covid, so this is all remote. We hadn't yet gone to Utah, we hadn't met them in person. We really had to figure out the best way to strike that relationship quickly and remotely, and it was at the early days when we weren't used to these Zoom meetings and these teams meetings. Definitely a little bit awkward at the beginning, but I think we quickly found that we had a shared interest in wanting to create something great. I think that they are a highly ambitious organization, as demonstrated by the fact that there are 900 stores today, I think when we started working with them, there were fewer than 300. They're a very ambitious organization, and are we. So we had a commonality in the mindset of wanting to do great things, and to do great things together.

BRYONY So that brings me to a question about timeline and overall structure of the project. If you started during Covid and they had 300 stores and now they're at a thousand and starting to go international, what was the timeline between they reaching out first, and the brand going live?

ANDY I think what is amazing about this particular assignment, we do not always get to interface on a day-to-day basis with the founders directly. We're often looking at layers and layers of brand managers

and their teams, et cetera. This one, we had unadulterated access to the key decision makers, to the founders themselves. That's great in a lot of ways. Also, obviously when you're dealing with founders, there's a lot of emotion baked in. There's a lot of history baked in. They've clearly been in it since the very beginning. So having those tough conversations on occasion to really start to illuminate what's going to be great for the brand versus what you've been doing for the past several years, was definitely part of the conversation.

And then in terms of timeline, it was one of those things where there was a ton of work that was done at the beginning, lots of exploratory, and then there was just the period of time where things went dormant for a bit. I think we were all just trying to figure out how we operate in this new environment. And that was for, I want to say around six months, don't hold me to that, my math isn't as good as the visual aspects of things. And then if we think about when it picked back up, Bree, correct me if I'm wrong, I think that was probably early 2022. [yeah, yeah] and maybe the time from when we picked it back up to when it launched was around a year.

BRYONY Just getting a sense of... it started, it went dormant, it started again [yeah], puts in perspective the fact that you started during Covid and we're having this conversation in February '24.

ANDY Exactly.

BREEHN [Affirmative]

ANDY It's been out for a number of months at this point, but I think one of the things that we all see when you relaunch a brand is that it takes time.

BRYONY I was going to say, yeah...

ANDY Especially when you're dealing with 900 stores around the world, things turn over at their own pace.

BRYONY And franchises especially have an added layer of complexity, implementing a new rebrand and getting all of the assets and everything at each local spot.

ANDY Of course [affirmative]. One thing I might add as well about this client that's uncommon is that the speed that they operate, they get things done and they get it done quickly. They do not wait. They are very restless in that way, which is great in a lot of ways. So I think that we're going to see more turnover, more quickly than some other brands that have franchise models that maybe operate slightly more slowly. Rumble definitely gets at it and they get at it in a big way.

BRYONY When the project started, were there any non-negotiables or keep parameters that were set in stone that helped decide what the next steps would be?

BREEHN With a lot of projects at TD before we start the design explorer process, we like to... at a very high level, kind of level set the degree of change that we're going to embark on with the design explore. And we like to use this analogy of how you would transform a house. One end of the spectrum you have a renovation where that's more of a new coat of paint and some minor changes, and then one step from there you have a remodel and that's knock some walls down, but the foundation is very much the same. And then at the far end of the spectrum you have your rebuild where you're scrapping everything and starting from scratch. Initially we went into this project thinking that it was going to be more of a pure renovation where don't touch the baker, don't change the word mark too much. It was more of a cleanup of their existing assets. So that was a general parameter that we had in the back of our minds as we set out on the design explore process.

But naturally as you start to get into things, and you start to tinker, and meander, and ask questions like, what if we changed the baker? What if we changed the word mark more drastically? Brought in illustration? Custom type, what if that custom type was then variable? And you start to bring these things to the client, and they in turn get excited

about the work. And then as you continue to show them what good design looks like, those parameters can continue to evolve. So what started out as a pure renovation in the beginning, ultimately ended up as more of a remodel.

BRYONY So, you went through your phase of exploration and you had your first round of creative before it evolved into them realizing all of the other potential items. What was that first round like? How did you structure that presentation and what was the outcome of it?

BREEHN Well, maybe we should back up [sure] a little bit and talk about phase one, which was really the immersion that we did. So when we had the opportunity to start this project again after it went dormant for a little bit, we really wanted to take that opportunity to start off on the right foot and we decided the best way to do that was to do an immersion in person with Jason and Sawyer and their brand team in Provo, Utah. We went there for a couple days and really immersed ourselves in the Crumblverse as we like to say now—we got to tour their flagship store, tour their innovation test kitchen, eat a lot of cookies, and have some really healthy discussions with them around the old brand and what was working, what wasn't working, and what was maybe missing from the brand.

Coming out of that immersion, there was sort of a phase 1.5, if you will. 'Cause while we were at the immersion, we discovered that there was a lot of tension in the way that Crumbl was behaving and talking about themselves. Sometimes their communications felt really slick and edgy, and then other times it felt maybe more cute and friendly. So there was just a lot of inconsistencies at the time and we knew that they needed some sort of clear framework in order to make more consistent creative decisions. And then on TD side, before we got into the design explore process, we also needed some sort of framework, and some sort of clear direction as to where to take the design. We ended up running a workshop with them to create a brand personality to help make that framework and help distinguish the way they

were going to walk, talk, and behave, and communicate with their consumers. And we ended up with four personality traits: imaginative, sensory, dynamic, and wholesome. And these personality traits were designed to flex, and dial up and down for different brand assets. For example, we dial imaginative up for illustration, and we dialed up sensory for things like their product photography. And then [laughter] we got into the design explore phase.

BRYONY So it sounds like when you picked up the project again, you didn't just pick up where you had left off, you took a step back, revisited, and rethought a little bit of the process and started again. Once you had that framework in place, taking it all the way into that first round of creative where you shared your findings, the challenges, the tension, and you started to provide some solutions to these things, what was that presentation like and then what was the outcome from the client side?

BREEHN Equipped with the takeaways from the immersion, and then the new brand personality development... in the beginning, we always like to keep things a little bit looser, allow designers to go off and find inspiration, and reference, and anything they find relevant to the project, and kind of throw everything up on the wall—whether that's a physical wall, or a Figma wall, and kind of see what sticks. And take stuff down, debate, go away again, throw stuff up on the wall, and kind of do that on repeat until eventually we carved it down to two distinct territories that we took to the client. One was much closer-in and built on some of the current assets and really tapped into this idea of harnessing the four pack box shape in new ways in 2D and 3D ways, unlocking that Crumblverse in the world of Crumbl. And then we also explored a second territory that was a bit further out and flexed some assets like secondary color and illustration a little bit more. We presented those two routes to the client and that was a virtual presentation to Jason and Sawyer and their internal brand team. It was well received. I think they gravitated a lot more initially to that first closer-in territory, but they liked some elements of the second

territory as well when we're starting to push color a little bit more in illustration and starting to use more bold and graphic elements in the typography.

ANDY To me what was incredible seeing it from a little bit of a distance is that sometimes when you have a little bit of a break, like you talked about, project goes dormant for a bit, it picks back up. It's always great to have that fresh perspective because you're not starting from scratch. You have enough knowledge and enough time in the oven to really think about things that when you kick it back up, the fresh perspective often results in better work. And I would very much say that the second round, if you want to call it that, it was fantastic to see the new thinking that was being brought to the table and the kinds of things that the team we're up to. I think one of the key things in that explore as well is that before we came in they had this little baker icon. I think it's on the before and after on Brand New.

BRYONY Yes, it was the next item on my list here to talk about what happened to the baker—

ANDY Yeah, we can talk about the baker!

BRYONY And where did he get lost?

ANDY He didn't get lost, he just took a vacation [affirmative]. That was a critical piece of the initial study, that round one that we're talking about in that he was invented at the beginning., he had been around for a while. And it was just a symbol that had been part of the brand over time. One of the things that we found during our studies is that both the execution of it, and the sort of strategic reason for existing didn't necessarily align with where the brand wanted to go. And I say that for two reasons. One is that the execution felt a lot more like an icon than a brand symbol. It didn't have the craft, and the gravitas, and the sort of detail, and the communication required of a symbol like that. I think also it suffered a little bit from communicating what it was. From

a distance you see a chef hat, and then everything else about it kind of got lost a little bit in translation.

And then the other piece about it is that it didn't really reduce great in small scale. And as we know that Crumbl doesn't exist if they don't exist online, it's very much an online brand and having a symbol that didn't reduce well was not something that was great. So we did a big explore, we looked at lots of different ways to draw it, we looked at lots of different ways it could be executed, we gave it personality, we looked at different angles. There were a few that I actually personally thought were very cool where it was in perspective, but ultimately what we decided is that the name had so much more equity, and so much more power than the symbol had. It almost felt like it was something that was tacked on that didn't necessarily add to the story. I think we know that Crumbl makes cookies.

Even to that point, they had built up enough equity in the name over the period of time from launch to when we were working on the project that the idea of even having "cookies" attach the name felt like a barnacle on the ship, a hindrance in a lot of ways. So we made the hard recommendation and the client aligned, obviously, eventually, [laughter] came around to it that to really focus on the name, and to really focus on crafting the best possible version of a word mark for Crumbl that keeps the DNA of what was there before, but adds craft, and adds detail, and adds tastiness... These really beautiful details that the team brought out in it to create something that really does stand for the brand where you don't need a symbol, you don't need a shorthand. And then I guess the last piece of that is just the fact that the Crumbl name in and of itself is not McDonald's, not a really long name. So it does have the ability to reduce and still be legible at small size. So that was that RIP to our chef friend [affirmative]. We miss him a little bit.

ANDY Yes, exactly. He's on vacation, not RIP. We'll see when you get back.

BREEHN One thing that the client did like about the baker was that it added a level of humanity to the brand. We recognized that, in order to save that, we instead turned that one baker symbol from the symbol, into an unlimited army of Crumbl bakers that now live in the illustration.

BRYONY I want to hear more about the illustration. It stands out in its humor, makes you look at it twice most of the time. How did it develop and who was behind it?

BREEHN Another takeaway from the immersion was that they were really craving a larger sandbox to play in— the brand team was, and just more tools in their toolkit to express the brand. And they had some illustration in their system, but it was really more iconography masquerading as illustration. We kind of took inspiration from that mono weight linear illustration, but then worked with Buck to create a new style that maintained that black linear quality but injected a lot more depth and detail into the style of the illustration and then also in the stories, and what we were depicting with the illustration. We just wanted to add again from our personality, a lot more imagination, and a little bit of whimsy and storytelling to make some of those emotional connections with the consumer. So the illustration is a really great way to sort of get inside the Crumblverse, which is a slightly absurd, fun, and delicious place where cookies are larger than life, and there's giant cookie bean bags, and giant cookie hats, and dogs that look like chocolate chip cookies, and it's really fun and as delightful as the cookies that they serve to sell.

ANDY I think what you just said, Bree is a really important point. This brand is wildly fun. The menu changes all the time. Their products, the cookies themselves are really inventive. There's lots of different kinds of toppings—with a capital "F", Fun is sort of the name of the game with Crumbl, and I think that having illustration, that to Bree's point, reinforces that idea and helps communicate that. The big shift there was previously, illustration slash iconography was really just used as

decoration. Now illustration is used for communication and that's a big thing for us, that we think about with any brand that we work on, is that we don't want any part of any brand system to be there just along for the ride, to be there to decorate, to be there just because we really think that every part of a visual identity should have a purpose, and in this case, illustration does all those things. One, it brings the spirit of the baker, it retains that sort of humanity and the spirit of the baker, but also it does really help communicate this true emotional benefit that you get from the product and from experiencing the brand.

BRYONY All of this Crumblverse is contrasted with extremely simple photography. What was the thinking behind that and how did you approach it?

BREEHN The new photography... if you're familiar with Crumbl cookies, they're already pretty elaborate and meticulously crafted. Some of them have lot of bells, and whistles, and frostings, and cookies on top of cookies... So we knew we didn't need to add much more to their photography system. It was more about how do we capture these cookies in the tastiest way possible. They were already doing a good job at capturing their cookies on social and on TikTok and these video reels that they put out every week, but it was more about finding a way for them to really highlight the taste appeal in these cookies with better lighting, and higher contrast, and graphic shadows, really bring to life those tasty details. So we created a stylistic approach for them that they could go off and run with because they have new cookies every week, so they are putting photography out every week; and they needed a guideline in order to capture photography that again, felt super tasty and delicious, but also felt consistent and felt like it was coming from the same brand every time.

ANDY To your point earlier about the contrast between the fun elements that we just talked about and the crispness and the cleanliness of the photography, I think this brand is inherently full of contrast. When you go into the store, it's a very clean experience. There's lots of white, very crisp, it's very clean, it's very organized, and that's also intentional

for what Bree was saying about the fact that we let the cookies do the talking. The cookies are where the fun comes in, and if you put fun on top of fun and whimsy on top of whimsy, it's too much. So that contrast really helps allow us to dial up the fun in certain cases without overwhelming the audience. The other thing that I'm just really proud of is that we established a way to shoot product in a way that the craft is highly elevated. It's beautiful photography, but in a way that's durable and repeatable. So if you look at their social today, yeah, we did a photo shoot and we shot, I don't know, Bree, how many cookies did we shoot total? Maybe like 10, let's just say?

BREEHN Something like that, yeah.

ANDY Every single day there's new imagery on their social and the level of photography from before we started it, and where they are now is really consistent. It's great photography and they're able to do it on their own in part because we created really clear guidelines on how to do it, but also because they share the belief that the product photography is a really key driver in converting consumer. We've done a lot of food photography in our time. We've written a lot of guidelines on how to do it, but brands don't always execute against it. Well, Crumbl does 10 out of 10! Crumbl team if they're listening.

BRYONY It seems like when Crumbl commits to something, they just go full throttle all the way to the end and. There's no wavering, there's no changing their minds or anything. It's like this is what we're doing, straight steam ahead.

BREEHN Oh, yeah.

BRYONY Now there's also another contrast that I see. You kept the pink, the logo itself, even though you took the chef away and the cookies, the evolution of the word mark is minimal in a way. You cleaned it up, you made it more beautiful, more scrumptious, but at the same time you made big changes in how you're communicating through the illustrations, and the photography, and the overall tone of voice. From

the very beginning, Crumbl was all about social media, so how did you marry all of these different parts, and their understanding and knowledge of social media and how it was working for them, to create a new chapter for them and how they were going to communicate with their audience?

ANDY Exactly what you said is true and it drove a lot of the decision making during the process. So what I mean by that is they had millions of followers on their social channels, not just hundreds of thousands, but millions of people love Crumbl. Millions of people are fans of this brand. So the idea of doing something radically new or starting from scratch, one, we didn't feel like it was broken enough to need that. And number two, you don't want to rock the boat so much when you're doing so well and you have so much success. You're opening up new stores every week. You've already purchased lots of signage around the country, so there's lots of functional reasons why we didn't want to completely start from scratch. The other is we saw a lot of value in what they had started. So the previous word mark did feel a little bit techie.

It was a little cold. It didn't necessarily feel like it belonged on a cookie box. To your point, all we did is we made it more scrumptious, but we retained the sort of structural DNA, what was already in there before. I think the overall answer to your question, at least from my perspective, is that we wanted to retain their existing fan base. We wanted to appeal to new audiences, but all we really wanted to do is go into every nook and cranny and look at all the ingredients that make up this brand and make them better and tastier and more set up for primetime to be a world-class global brand. That's really what our aim was.

BREEHN As Andy said, we didn't need to change too much in the way that they were presenting themselves, at least from a marketing perspective and the speed in which they create content on social and TikTok and the way they engage from an operational standpoint. It was more about just cleaning up their visual assets and adding some new elements

like illustration, and the photography, and the custom type and just adding a lot more personality and those scrumptious details into every, as Andy said, nook and cranny and piece of the identity. The more distinct and powerful impact and consistent impact every time they engage with their consumers on social.

BRYONY So you just gave me the perfect segue into the last big brand asset that I want to talk about, which is the custom typography that you did with Kilotype. Crumbl Sans, and it goes from text to display and it goes through an array. So how did you one decide to go down that route, define those parameters, and get client buy-in?

BREEHN From the beginning of the project Crumbl had expressed interest in a custom or bespoke typeface. They had been using a generic Google font at the time and were craving something more ownable and with a lot more personality. So we of course went off and explored a lot of ways in stylistically in the beginning, whether that was a sans serif, or a serif, or a script, or a combination of the two. But ultimately we gravitated towards the bolder more graphic expressions because there was just something really clean and simple and again, graphic about the current system that we really loved and wanted to maintain. So we ultimately gravitated towards one of Kilotype's existing type faces, Old School Grotesque. It was just really bold, and graphic and simple, but had a lot of energy, and a lot of personality as well. We worked with them to customize that typeface and then just make it a little bit softer, and a little bit more reminiscent of the word mark that we had already started to create with Alec Tear.

And then in terms of it being a variable typeface, Crumbl is such a digitally minded, digitally savvy company—especially for a cookie company. So that variable typeface allows them from a technical standpoint, a lot more efficiencies when it comes to web design and the video content that they make. Even though we designated what you call instances in the variable typeface, we have a display face which we use for headlines in those bigger brand moments, and

then we also had three more utilitarian instances for a text, bold text, regular, and text light for everything else in the system. Having that variable typeface future proofs the brand if later down the road maybe for a special campaign or an internal event, they want something special in the typeface or something different, then they then have that at their disposal.

ANDY The details that we added, I think a lot of brands take off the shelf typefaces and customize them to make them distinctive, or jazzy, or whatever. I think for us, the idea was by rounding those junctions to give them that gooey tastiness. That's sort of the aim of everything, right? It's the reason why we have bolder type in the system. It's the reason why we created those moments. It's the reason that Alec updated the word mark to have those little swells at the end of the terminals. Everything is designed to cue that. The indulgence of the product itself, if you've ever had a Crumbl cookie, they're big, they're thick, they're soft, they're gooey, they're delicious, and we didn't want a system that felt too crispy or thin or on the other end of the spectrum. We wanted something that had a level of indulgence to it, and I think the typography is a really good way to subtly communicate that in concert with everything else. It's the reason why there's a broader color palette. It's the reason why we chose the illustration style that we did is that everything cues the product experience in some way, shape, or form, and the type is a big part of that.

BRYONY I live in a college town, I have 45,000 college students. We do have a local Crumbl, they are insane.

ANDY I had never had it before until we started working on this project, and I'll just give a little anecdote. So at the very, very beginning, definitely prime lockdown time. We had one of the designers on my team who happened to live around the corner from me, he came over to my apartment and we sat in my courtyard outside, two benches apart. It was a cold dreary day and my courtyard, it was like the winter, so it was very gray out there, and then he just walks in with this giant pink

box that was in wild contrast to everything around us, and we shared some cookies. We tried them for the first time, and yeah, you're right, they're unlike anything else. They're chewier, and bigger, and gooier, and sweeter, and more tasty than a lot of what you might get at a store. So that first experience was incredible because it was something that we had never had before, and just sharing that moment. I think one of the things this brand talks about a lot, the reason they exist is bringing people together over the world's best box of cookies. It was a time where we hadn't seen each other in person for months, and months, and months, and months, and months, and we were actually in person sharing cookies, and as cheesy as that might sound, that is actually true. That did happen, and it was just a really incredible way to kick off this project and to really get into the mindset of the brand.

BRYONY That's a great story and one for the books without a doubt. Now, can you share some of the feedback that you're starting to receive on the rebrand and how it's being applied? Be it from the client, or some customers or retailers, family and friends who have gone back for another cookie. What have you heard?

BREEHN You guys at Brand New and some other people in the industry, it's just been great to see how the work has been received so far from other designers in the industry. That's always rewarding. And then also, again, just seeing the way that Crumbl has run with it, and run with it at speed. They've already revamped their flagship store in Utah. They're already implementing a lot of the photography on social, creating new merch redesign, their website, and their app, and just to see the response on social that they're getting with the new photography and on TikTok with the new word mark. That organic response from their followers has been great to see.

ANDY From an internal perspective at least, we are more than somewhat competitive with our other studios. We have London, SF, and we always want to one up each other and we always want to do the work that makes the other studios jealous. This is definitely one of the

projects over the past couple of years that the other studios have been jealous of, and we love that. And then the other thing that I would say is that I'm in a lot of new business meetings and there have been a few instances recently where we've been on calls with people, meeting people for the very first time and they're like, "you guys did Crumbl, we love that work". It's getting out to marketers as well. It's still early days. Brand New are the arbiters of new design in the world. You really are the place to go. So I think a lot of your audience has seen it, but I think it's still getting out there. This is not going to flip over instantly. It's going to take some time, but hopefully as it gets broader, and broader, and broader, and out more, and more, and more, people will just grow to love what we've done together.

BRYONY Is there anything in this entire process or particular project, anything that you learned or acquired that you would like to implement for future projects or clients?

ANDY One of the key learnings on this project, I think it was a Covid learning in particular, but also specifically with these guys, is that historically us and a lot of agencies have worked in a very methodical process driven way where the design team goes off in their caves for two weeks and they emerge with the answer and then you have a meeting about it; client rejects it all and you go back into your cave. In this case, we learned how to be really iterative and to be scrappy and to look at things quickly, and to look at things and have a conversation with the clients about it, and to really talk openly and honestly about what was working and what maybe wasn't working as well, and to just be really iterative in the process and have them part of the journey as well. You can imagine, as I said earlier, founders have such an emotional connection to their brands that having them be included and part of that process was just really valuable for us all reaching the same goals that we had.

That mindset and the mentality of being quicker, scrappier, less precious was really beneficial in the long run, and it's something that

we have started experimenting on with other clients beyond Crumbl. It's a modern behavior, I think for any agency to really think about the way that your process might evolve and how you can orient your thinking, especially because I know a lot of teams at our agency and others have really particular ways that I like to go about things, and I think that being flexible and open to change, and open to new ways of thinking, and new ways of approaching challenges is only going to make the work better.

BREEHN Going off of how the design process is starting to change, this was definitely the most collaborative project that I've worked on. We collaborated with some really great creatives on almost every piece of the identity. We collaborated with Alec Tear on the word mark, Kilotype on the custom typeface, Ted [Cavanaugh] and Eugene Ho on photography, and Buck on illustration and animation. I think that's just going to be much more commonplace. Alec is out of Amsterdam, and Kilotype is out of Germany, and Buck is kind of all over—they have designers all over the world. That's just one of the silver linings that has come out of the pandemic and ways of working now where you can work with pretty much anyone. Taking that into other projects I think is going to be much more common, and that's always one of my most favorite parts of any project. Being able to work with these experts who are so passionate and knowledgeable of their niche craft in the industry, and just getting to step into their minds and just being able to learn everything I can from them.

ANDY What it does also is, it takes the ego out of it. I think every designer fancies themselves a typographer, most designers think that they can illustrate. But really when you work with the experts, you see what the difference is, and I think it's up to us to be able to curate and direct, and have the ideas and have the insights and the things that sort of lead to those partnerships, and be able to form those partnerships and the trust and the relationships that are required to actually get the best work through. But I definitely agree with Bree on that is that the best work we've done definitely involves lots of people. There's

no such thing as a solo design practice. It takes a village. It's reflective of the Crumblverse. We all come together and we make great things happen. So yeah, I think that was a huge part of it as well.

BRYONY Final question. What part of the outcome in that which lies ahead is the most exciting for each of you? What comes next?

BREEHN My answer is probably the most common and the most obvious, but always one of the most exciting parts about any project is seeing it out in the wild and it come to life. And we've said it multiple times already, how good Crumbl is at doing that, and it's just really fun to watch that unfold and have them have fun with the new system. And more specifically, I see some of these boxes on the subway on the streets of New York, and as Andy said, these pink boxes are such a wild contrast to the black and gray coats of New Yorkers. So I'm just really excited when the new packaging comes out to see someone carrying the new pink box with our new wordmark on it.

ANDY A lot of what I said earlier is that we really believe that the work that we do has the power and the ability to last for the long haul, and we would love to see the work that we've done in whatever iteration because of course things evolve over time. When the guys get to 9,000 stores from 900, sure that's going to happen in the next six months—no pressure Jason and Sawyer. But I think that for us, having work out in the world that's going to last and going to be durable enough as this brand grows and as they get into new markets, as they reach new audiences, to have this work resonate with millions of people over several years, I think is really the name of the game. That's what gets us most excited. Outside of the thrill of seeing it for the first time, I've definitely seen my fair share of people eating Crumbl on the subway.

So there are definitely brand loyalists that are all around the city and in other cities around the country in every college campus. I know there's a Crumbl in every small town. I'm always surprised when I'm traveling and I see a Crumbl. I'm like, oh yeah, it's everywhere, but

it's just great to see. And to answer your question, yeah, that's what we're most excited about is just having the work be part of culture and having it be part of people's lives and having people love the brand as much as they love the cookies. I think that gives us the warm and fuzzies...

BRYONY And that's great. In the tech world especially, you always have a startup, they kind of put together some branding and about two years later they kind of grow up and they go into Company 2.0 and that's when they go through an actual branding process. In a way, this is Crumbs moment and took six years, which would be considered long, but giving their exponential growth, it matches that. Now they're completely grown up and they know exactly who they are, what they want, where they're going, and this is just their evolution so that all of the franchises also have the same communication and the same tone of voice and how they present themselves, and you found a wonderful way to bring that imaginative, sensory, dynamic, and wholesome structure that you generated at the very beginning in all of these assets that who knows, maybe in two, three years... that pink box becomes as recognizable as that little blue box.

ANDY Yeah, there you go. Tall order. [Yeah. Yeah.] I mean, to your point, we know that this isn't the only cookie brand on college campuses. We have competitors. This is not the only one. It's one of the few. Ideally, what we were able to create and what they do on a daily basis and how they operate is what's going to set them apart from the pack. I think that the way they come to market is very different than a brand like Insomnia, than a brand like Levain, even is a very specific way of bringing cookies to market, but without losing sight of the fact that they're making cookies here. This is not a tech startup that's making chips for AI. This is cookies. So it's got to have a level of accessibility, and a level of fun, and a level of deliciousness while still bringing something to the table that's different than their competitors, and they definitely do.

BRYONY Thank you so much for joining me today on The Follow-Up. I really appreciate all the inside information and giving us both the creative perspective and the tidbits from the client side.

ANDY Thank you so much for having us.

BREEHN Yeah, thank you for having us.

ARMIN It had been about a year's worth of episodes since we had last heard about the challenges imposed by Covid-19, which we don't miss by the way, but it did bring up an interesting point about the unexpected benefit of a project going dormant and how it can serve to rekindle the energy on a project but with the benefit of not starting from zero. It was also fun to hear Breehn share Turner Duckworth's metaphor of a home renovation to test the desired level of change from a client as it's something most people will be able to relate to. (Thank you HGTV). From Andy it was good to get a nudge into rethinking the traditional designer/client relationship and how we should consider being more collaborative and less siloed. In the end, it was a literal treat to hear about all the details of how designer AND client came together to forge this new Crumblverse and if you are not getting in your car or bicycle or scooter right now and heading to Crumbl to buy yourself a box of Crumbl cookies, congratulations, you have more self-discipline than me. I'm out.

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