



Creative Review: VÃ¡scolo

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In December 2006, four friends and a surname gave rise to Buenos Aires, Argentina-based design studio VÃ¡scolo.

Martin Schurmann, Pablo Picyk, Leonor Barreiro and Lorena Ruiz collectively left their television and agency jobs to join their passion for design, animation, illustration and motion graphics. Together, they decided to pursue a dream that materialized under the name of VÃ¡scolo, inspired by the last name of the grandfather of one of the partners.

Starting Engines

VÃ¡scolo was inaugurated by a project with Fox Italia's Nat Geo Music, where the agency designed the graphics packages for the channel's three most important segments. It was the company's first project featuring live action with extensive motion graphics. From a technical standpoint, the work was

considered high quality for 2008 and 2009.

"It was an interesting turning point because we went from being a group of friends who gathered for work, to a group of professionals who had a business," says Creative Director and Founder Schurmann, the only partner that remains today.

Having studied percussion, Schurmann remembers turning to music for inspiration during that time.

"When I worked on animation, I created many of the pieces thinking in terms of the audio. I looked for a way to reference rhythm, beat and dynamic."

After overcoming some structural challenges- V&Ajscolo lost it's main client when Fox Italia shut down Nat Geo Music due to falling ratings- the company reinvented itself.

One of V&Ajscolo's early highlights was an ident it did in 2011 for Fox Retro, in which the client wanted to mix characters from different series, such as Wonder Woman, Star Trek and I Dream of Jeannie, in a style inspired by American graphic art from the '50s and '60s.

V&Ajscolo combined all of the elements, and presented the scenes as a single sequence shot with virtually no cuts. The ident used a uniform color palette as well as vectoral and flat aesthetics.

"This project started shaping the studio's identity, with its style of characters, illustrations, color and strong design work," says Pablo Requejo, accounts and new business executive at V&Ajscolo.

One-Two Punch: Narratives and Techniques

Another pivotal point was the impressive narrative package produced for *ÀÀÀÀÀ*, a children's segment for free-to-air French channel *À*.

The studio proposed developing each *À* as a separate world in which each letter was presented in a different font with its own elements, which were also incorporated in the circumflex accent. For example, in the "food *À*," the accent was made of cookies, while in the "adventure *À*" it consisted of palm tree leaves.

French *À* loved the sketches presented in the pitch (below), requesting only some minor theme and style tweaks to achieve a more playful and messy look, without being too busy.

"The plan was that the first *À* would be the start of a journey through each universe, the final *À* would end the journey, and the rest of the pieces transition through each planet. We carefully thought through this idea of the journey from inside and out," Schurmann says.

VÃjscolo's strength also lies in the way it mixes design techniques, such as illustration, 3D, live action, stop motion and frame-by-frame animation.

For example, V&A;scolo created the ID for Melbourne's Pause Fest 2014, with the theme "being connected." The piece was a conceptual journey focusing on the history of connection since prehistoric times, starting with smoke signals and working its way through carrier pigeons, Morse code, mobile technology, and human contact.

Portfolio Projection

V&A;scolo also has developed branding for Argentine clients, such as a project for Universidad Nacional Tres de Febrero's channel UN3 that used a speedy montage sequence to create an authentic and innovative signal targeting Argentina's young audiences.

In recent years the studio has grown with a versatile and flexible portfolio enacted across different regions.

For instance, V&A;scolo created a package for E! Entertainment Latinoam&A;rica's E! Special that was tailored to advertisers but ended up becoming an important show for the channel.

"We wanted to take it to the next level, heating it up so it was more appealing to clients and more elegant on-screen, without being luxurious," says Daniella Pino, creative services director at E! Entertainment.

The brief contemplated bringing back metal elements V&A;scolo had proposed in the past for another show at E!

"We wanted to become trendsetters," Pino says. "We developed a package where a sleek metallic gold rose color had created a great presence. We were very satisfied."

"We created an animated pursuit sequence in which white and black elements [typical of the channel's branding] chase a special rose element," says

Schurmann.

Fox International Channels Turkey is another significant client from the past few years that has worked with V&A;scolo on several projects, such as the one below. The spot is based on a brief to create a chess game that turned into a basketball match to promote Logo software.

"It was our first 3D-character assignment and a real test [for us], which marked a milestone from our previous projects," says Schurmann.

"This was quite challenging," says A;mer Meral, head of on-air and short-form production at Fox International Channels Turkey. "The characters needed to have a certain look and we needed a snapshot of a real game through which we could experience some basketball action. Transforming chess pieces into actual players definitely required some creative thinking. A rook transforming to a point guard is not something we see every day and V&A;scolo came to our aid."

The same client also requested a graphics package and promotional spot for Viva Pescatore!, a segment of their channel 24Kitchen. The segment raises awareness about sustainable fishing and care of oceans.

"They decided to use the major elements of cooking, such as fire, water and oil, to establish the visual language of the place. High-speed macro shots with a subtle touch of graphics created an appealing visual," Meral says.

Finally, one of V&sculo's latest creations is a promo for the annual campaign of DirecTV Latin America's 2017-2018 basketball season. The studio set out to capture the emotion and drama of the game's every move through depth of field and changes in speed.

Likewise, V&sculo has expanded its creativity to other business units, providing services to advertising agencies and brands directly.

"We focus on three business areas: TV broadcast, character animation and live action," Requejo says.

V&sculo also developed a spot for Opera Mini, Opera Software's main app. Starring Chelsea's Nigerian soccer player Victor Moses, several versions of the piece were filmed to cover the company's most significant markets: Nigeria, South Africa, India and Indonesia.

"Our challenge was to create a truly global spot with talent and creativity tailored to specific countries, all in record time," says Arnfinn Hushovd, the then-creative director at Opera Software. "We knew what we needed to communicate in the video, for instance, data compression and other aspects that are really hard to communicate in a fast and fun way."

Argentine Balance

Reviewing the studio's 11 years in business, Schurmann and Requejo find both challenges and opportunities to create in Argentina.

"The country itself poses a challenge; creating quality pieces with the local economic situation is a balancing act," says Schurmann. "Although, considering all the pros and cons, we have an incredible performance capacity, with most professionals being self-taught."

"For a studio located here, it is twice as hard to become known and reach larger markets," says Requejo, "but once this barrier is broken and the channel sees that the studio has economic prices, as well as creative work that competes with first-class studios in countries such as the United States, a relationship is forged and Argentinian creativity is appreciated."

They both smile, relax and joke: "Argentina is a special country but it keeps you busy and thoughtful. You can never lower your guard, not even for a second."

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