Pythobius

Luca Camozzato

A design brief defines the core details of the design project. In this instance the brief outlined the scope of the process, to create a unique strategy board game and associated graphic design package. As part of the design process, I was to present a functioning product prototype that was aesthetically pleasing and conceptually appealing in combination with a visually consistent graphics design package for several applications including a description of the gameplay, rules, manuals, and other marketing paraphernalia.

Pythobius was created to be a competitive 2 player strategy game that has the players move across moving platforms to push enemy pieces off the board until the opponent has no pieces remaining. This would provide interesting gameplay and components that would make playing the game enjoyable.

The board game was heavily inspired by existing games such as Chess, Checkers, and Quoridor which are games with gameplay solely based on strategy and skill to defeat an opposing player(s). This research led me to brainstorm aspects of gameplay that are not overly explored in these games.

The Mobius Strip, discovered by August Möbius, was an interesting mathematical object that had the unique property of having a single face that looped twisted around in a ring-like manner. Consideration of this was a turning point in my design and was used in all later stages of the design process. The shape of the Mobius Strip played a significant role in the development of the board game aesthetic, drawing themes of mathematics and abstraction into the form and function of the design.

The initial development of this unique shaped board created an issue for functional movement. It felt too big for high-paced or enjoyable gameplay and would require the player to spend most of their turns traveling across the board. The refinement of the design to include moving platforms to the Mobius Strip board's surface impacted positively on the function of the game and allowed the player to move faster in all directions around the board. This moving platform solution was heavily inspired by single-player games such as Subway Surface and Clustertruck which has players jumping on the roof of transportation to another roof of transportation while the transportation is still on the move.

The unique visual element of pythons was added and became a central aspect of the board game themes. This python moved through the board much like the Scottish folklore of the Loch Ness monster is depicted moving through the water with the square curves of the arched snake back inspired by Aztec imagery.

The name of the game; Pythobius was drawn from the juxtaposition of the game's two most evident and unique symbols of the Mobius Strip and a Python. The development of the name formed the basis of identity design and associated graphics applications. The typography for the logo was derived from my digital illustrations that visually represented the key symbols. Key aspects of the identity were then applied in whole or part, to a range of graphic design applications. I took inspiration from Dutch graphic artist MC Escher's tessellations and metamorphosis concepts.

An infographic instruction manual for the game was inspired by Indie board game designer Reed Mascola whose work seamlessly balances functional instructional graphics with a refined minimalistic aesthetic.

While initially, the brief outlined creating a functional board game with a logo, instruction manual, and shelf-ready box. The idea evolved to include the Mobius Strip and moving platform features. This resulted in much of the time being spent on designing the functionality of the game and physically making the complex mechanisms of the game resulting in the final product consisting of a fully designed game, a non-functional prototype, a typographically interesting logo, and a manual that would be purchased along with the game. While this is not everything I had initially planned there to be, it does prove to be sufficient in effectively communicating my board game design to audiences including potential manufacturers and marketers.

The design process of the board game required a large amount of problem-solving. A variety of difficult obstacles involving the functional aspects of the game and the visual consistency of the graphics were overcome throughout the design process. Amongst the most challenging of these design problems was the shape of the Mobius Strips which constantly stretched and twisted board tiles. This was compounded by the media being used to create the prototype. Working with three-dimensional modeling and 3D printing technology allowed me to bring my two-dimensional concept to life but required me to resolve several technical issues. By using joints and rotation axis in the Mobius Strip board and the python's back arc platforms and minimized movement.

Throughout the development of the practical work, I have extended my understanding of the design process and how much time is required when creating a large-scale project with multiple components and problems to overcome. The 3D printing of the board game prototype created various technical issues which required alterations made to the design. Each of these challenges allowed me to further develop my understanding of the media and learn a lot about the way a 3D printer works and how to overcome the issues encountered if they were to occur again.

Board games should be playable and visually engaging and this has impacted the final presentation of the game. The bright colour pallet repetitively used creates unity and ties the product design and graphic design elements together. The development of Pythobius, successfully meets the brief and I am confident would appeal to the target audience.