ELLIE SCHAUER | ART 446 | FALL 2023

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PROJECT 1: PROCESSBOOK

A thorough documentation of the planning, research, and design of a gender neutral packaging redesign.

PREFACE

The first phase of this project was conducting research related to the type of toy we chose as well as general research about gender neutrality.

I did primary and secondary research to ensure that I was gathering information from multiple types of resources.

The following report contains my findings and key takeaways from my research.

I conducted my initial research about topics I believed to be relevant to my project. I then researched throughout my process to gain knowlege more specific to my design as it developed further.

TOY PACKAGING & WHY IT MATTERS.

An exploration of color, gender neutral packaging, parental influence on consumption, and toys.

FAQ

What is gender neutrality?

Gender neutral means that something does not refer to one particular gender. It also means not referencing any stereotypes about a particular gender.

How does this relate to marketing and or design?

When designing or marketing within the context of gender neutrality some things such as messaging, color, and photography come into play.

What are gendered toys?

Gendered toys are toys that specifically market towards one gender. This is sometimes through images, color, wording, and playing into stereotypes.

Why is gender neutrality important for toy packaging?

Gender neutrality is especially important for toy packaging because of the audience. Children subconsciously process all sorts of information. The toys and marketing placed in front of them start to affect them at such a young age. This is why it is important for companies allow children the freedom to play and explore different toys with out the construct that "this toy is for boys" or "this toy is for girls" in the back of their heads. It can also reinforce the idea that gendered toys associated with certain mean that job is for a boy or girl.

IN THIS REPORT...

TOPIC 1 Color Pyschology

- What are the different types of play?
- What types of play does playing with tools utilize?
- What skills are developed as a result of playing with tools?
- What are the benefits of playing with tools?

TOPIC 2 Playing with tools

- What colors attract children?
- What do colors signify to parents?
- How does color influence gender neutral perception?

TOPIC 3 Parental influence

- How can parents intentionally or unintentionally influence their children?
- How does packaging and marketing shift over time?
- What is an example of a brand that has improved upon previously gendered packaging?
- In what ways did the brand make these improvements?

Fig 1: Kids playing with toys

PRIMARY RESEARCH

When visiting the Target toy section I noticed first of all that the toys are very much separated by the stereotypical gendered toy associations. All of the pink dolls, craft (Fig. 3), and "girly" toys were on one side, and then the blue tools, toy guns(Fig. 2), dinosaurs (Fig. 4) were on the other.

Toys such as toy guns were almost exclusively gendered male (Fig 2). The packages featured only images of boys on them.

Almost all of the crafting toys were marketed towards girls. The 'CraZart' brand utilized images of only girls on the majority of their packages, also utilizing a lot of pink and purple (Fig 3).

Fig 2: 'Xshot' toy gun packaging
Fig 3: 'CraZart My ' craft packaging
Fig 4: Dinosaur packaging

COLOR PSYCHOLOGY

Feelings and associations

Color is one of the first things a consumer sees when they look at a products, so it is very important that it is intentional and meaningful.

Typically bright colors attract young children, this is because their eyes are still developing and brighter shades can be seen better than more pastel/dull colors. These intense colors are also more visually stimulating.

Colors can also evoke feelings. Warm colors such as Red, Orange, and Yellow typically make people feel energetic and enthusiastic. Cool colors such as Blue, Green, and Purple can give off feelings of calm and relaxation. There are also neutral colors like Black, White, and Brown. These colors can accent themes of simplicity and elegance. In relation to feelings associated with colors, children from a young age also begin to associate colors with objects. For example, Red=Fire truck, Blue=Sky, and Green=leaves.

There is an ongoing debate on the colors pink and blue. Shelves of toy stores are dominated by the colors pink (Fig. 5) and blue. Much of the time it is noticeable what sections of the store are "for" a certain gender solely based on color.

Using gender neutral colors to brand products allows children the freedom to decide if they want a toy based off of their interest in it alone. Kids can be taught that pink is for girls and blue is for boys at a very young age and toy companies can choose to either reinforce that idea or go against the norm and create packaging that utilizes more gender neutral color choices.

Fig 5: Barbie aisle

64%

of males think that colors have to be for a specific gender

mustardresearch.com

PLAYING WITH TOOLS

Types of play & benefits

Play tool kits are great toys for children as they have a lot of benefits that go along with them. When it comes to how children play, there are many different ways and types. Although play can be broken down into a lot of subcategories, Michigan State University lists 6 different 'types' of play.

Physical, Language, Exploratory, Constructive, Fantasy, and Social Play. These types of play are not mutually exclusive, and can occur simultaneously.

When kids play with tool kits, they often fall into many of these categories of play. The most common being: Physical, Constructive, Fantasy, and Social Play.

When engaging in play with tool kits, children are able to learn and grow a variety of skills. Tools require the use of fine motor skills, visual motor skills, speech and language, cognitive, social-emotional, and independence.

All of these skills help aid a child's development starting from an early age. Some of these tool sets are recommended for children as young as 1 year old (depending on the intricacy and safety of the toy).

Fig 7 is an example of a tool kit packaging. It did not include any descriptions of the benefits of playing with tools on the packaging, which may be a draw for parents. It did how ever note that this kit would encourage construction and role playing in the description online.

Fig 6: Child playing with tools

Fig 7: Example tool packaging

Fig 8: Various toys scattered about

PARENTAL INFLUENCE

How it can effect children as it pertains to gender constructs

Parents (or other primary care takers) play vital roles in the development of their children. Parents are able to intentionally or unintentionally influence their children's preferences or bias towards certain things.

Since parental figures are the primary purchasers of toys, it is relevant to note how toys they are picking out might reinforce gender norms, therefore limiting the child's possibilities for self expression.

"Adults act as their gatekeepers and multiple studies illustrate the strong role parents play in providing toys for their children and encouraging play with certain toys over others (Boe and Woods; Kollmayer et al.; Weisgram and Bruun) thus reinforcing gender identity and gender behaviour from an early age."

In order to breakdown the constructs of gender that are present in the toy industry it is important that this change happens on a large scale. If the majority of brands were to shift to gender neutral packaging/branding, it would start to rewire how adults view toys as gendered.

For example, 'Little Tikes' has done an excellent job of representing multiple genders on toys that have been heavily gendered in the past (Fig 9). In the past, parents may have viewed Fig 1 as favorable as that coincided with the views of the time because the girls are seen play cooking while the boy in the ad is seen sitting eating the food. This

Fig 8: 1987 Little Tikes ad promoting toy kitchens

Fig 10: 2023 Little Tikes toy kitchen packaging

type of gendered advertising imposes on children from a young age. They have since changed the packaging to reflect more gender neutrality and allow for more freedom. In the newer versions both the boy and the girl can be seen play cooking (Fig 10). By doing this, it allows parents to see the toy for what it is without thinking "this is for boys" or "this is for girls". By doing this a parent would be more likely to purchase the toy because they can imagine their child playing with it.

It also teaches children that it is ok for girls and boys to like to cook and "play kitchen", allowing them to learn and expand upon their interests without a construct of gender being placed on them.

There is no way to completely remove the presence of parental influence when buying toys, but by removing gender stereo types from the packaging/branding, not only will parents be more apt to buy traditionally gendered toys, but it also will allow future generations to see a diversity in toy packaging that has been sorely lacking in the past.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When designing gender neutral packaging there are many factors that should be taken into account. Firstly, choosing colors should be based off of the toy itself, doing your best

to leave gender out of it. It is ok to use pink or blue, but do so with purpose.

Playing with tools has many benefits for kids. They develop motor skills, speech/language skills, and independence. This is a possible selling point and it might be nice to include these on the packaging somewhere.

Parents have a massive influence on their children, and the toys that they play with. If the designs and messaging are more neutral it will be more difficult for parents to expose their kids to assumptions or stereotypes.

Making packaging more gender neutral will allow parents and children to focus on the toy rather than the gender the toy is 'intended for'.

Fig 11: Child looking at toy display

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SOURCES

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Kid-Sized Tools: Why We Love Them, Baby Sparks, https://babysparks.com/2020/04/16/kid-sized-tools-why-we-love-them/

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MOODBOARD

Found inspiration through pre selected printed resources only. This included: Design books, vintage childrens books, baseball cards, etc. This method was used to develop our inspiration sourcing techniques broader than what we typically use (Pinterest, Behance, Dribble, etc)

TYPOGRAPHY

Olivita Regular

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk
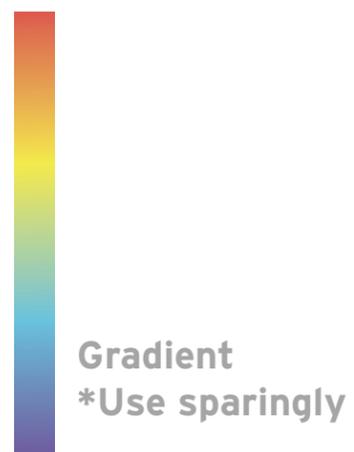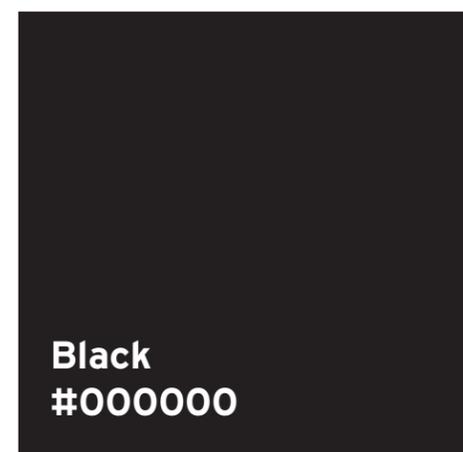Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Bryant

Regular
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Medium
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Bold
Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm
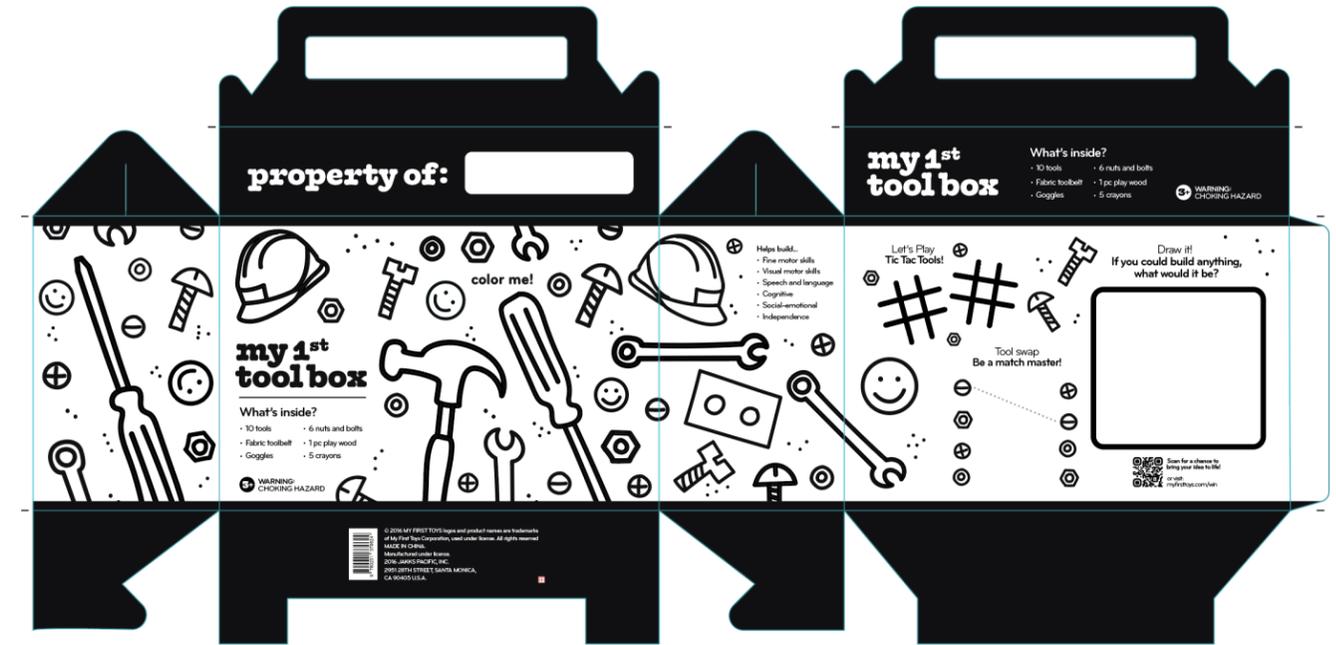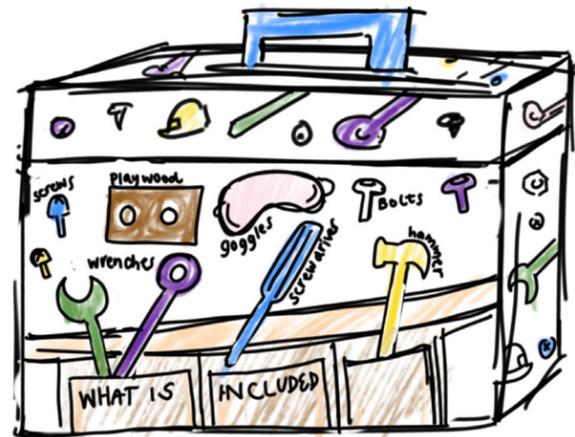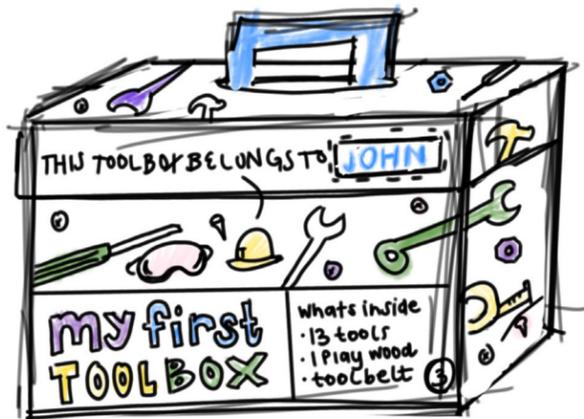Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

COLOR

Black
#000000

White
#FFFFFF

Gradient
***Use sparingly**

GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

CONCEPT

My concept for this packaging design was to first and foremost create a box that could store the toy. I then wanted to add an element of interaction. I decided to design the box to colorable. This meant that my package needed to be black and white. This served as an interesting design challenge to tackle.

PACKAGING SKETCHES
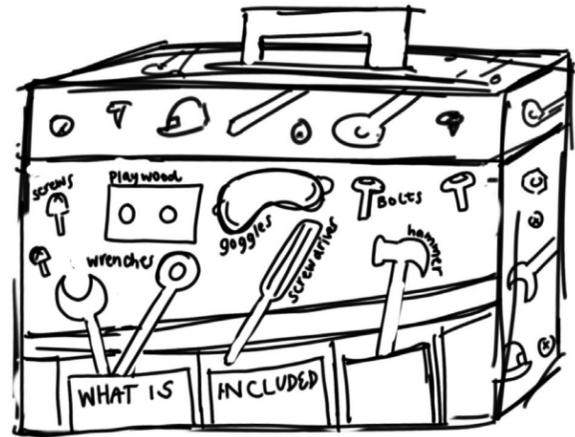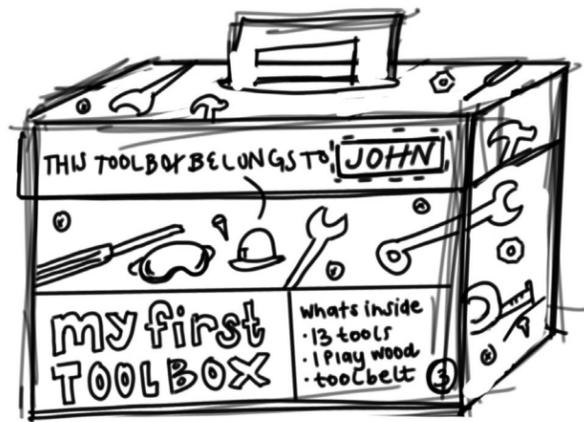
DIELINES

Final dielines and print ready designs.

Above: Main packaging box design
Left: Hang tag to be secured around handle of the main packaging box where crayons would be attached.

FINAL PACKAGING

Printed the design to scale, constructed the box , and
shot photos of the package.

ACTIVITY BOOKLET

Booklet that contains tool-themed activities for kids to complete in tandem with plaing with the tool set they purchased.
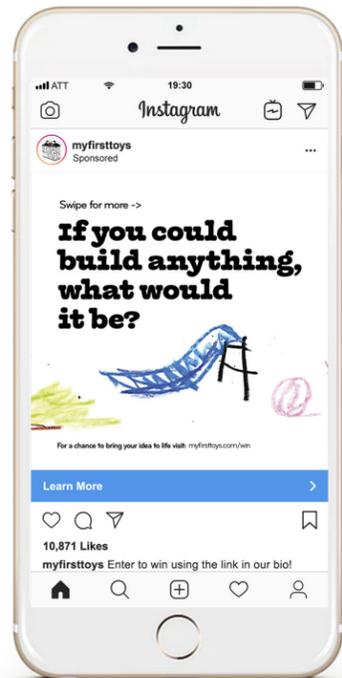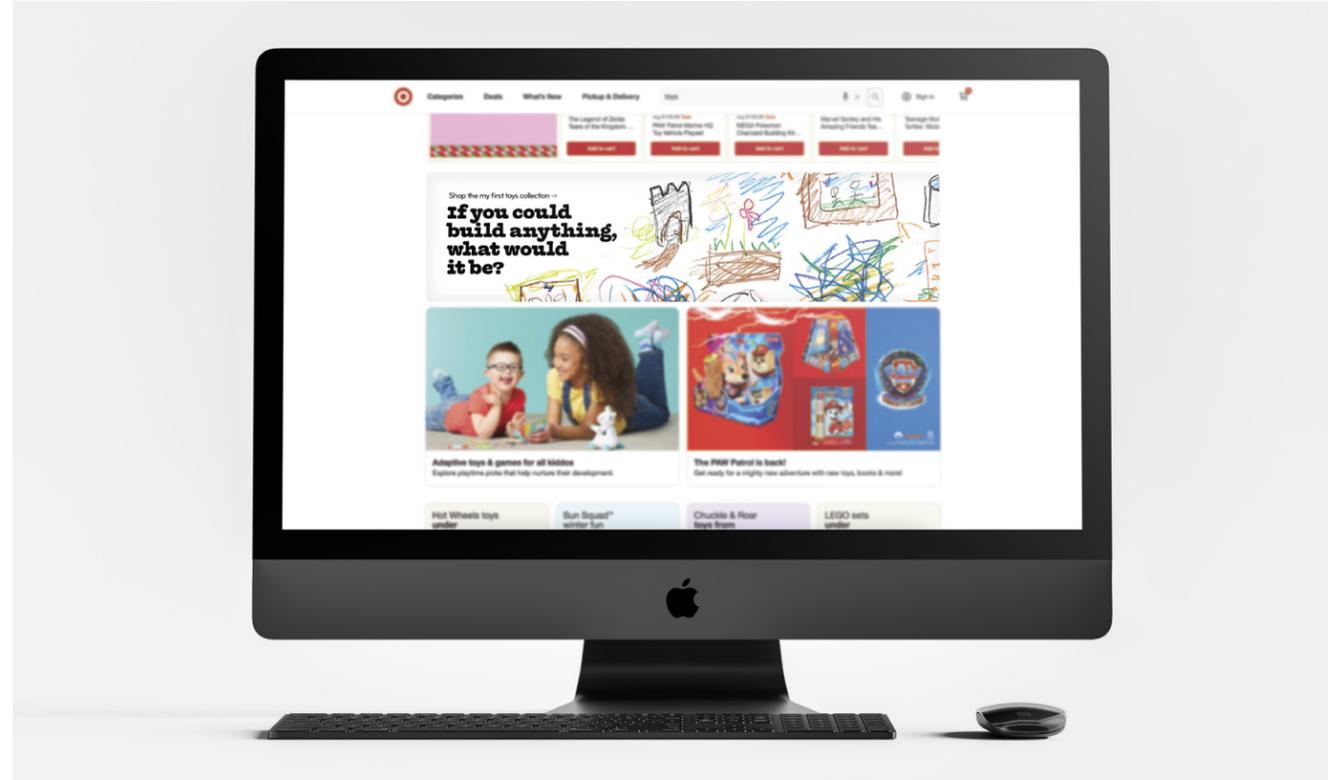
AD CAMPAIGN (PRINT)

Ad campaign surrounding the question of "if you could build anything what would it be". Using childrens' drawn responses as the supporting graphics.

Trying to encourage people to buy the box so that they can enter the sweepstakes competition to possibly have their drawing become a reality!
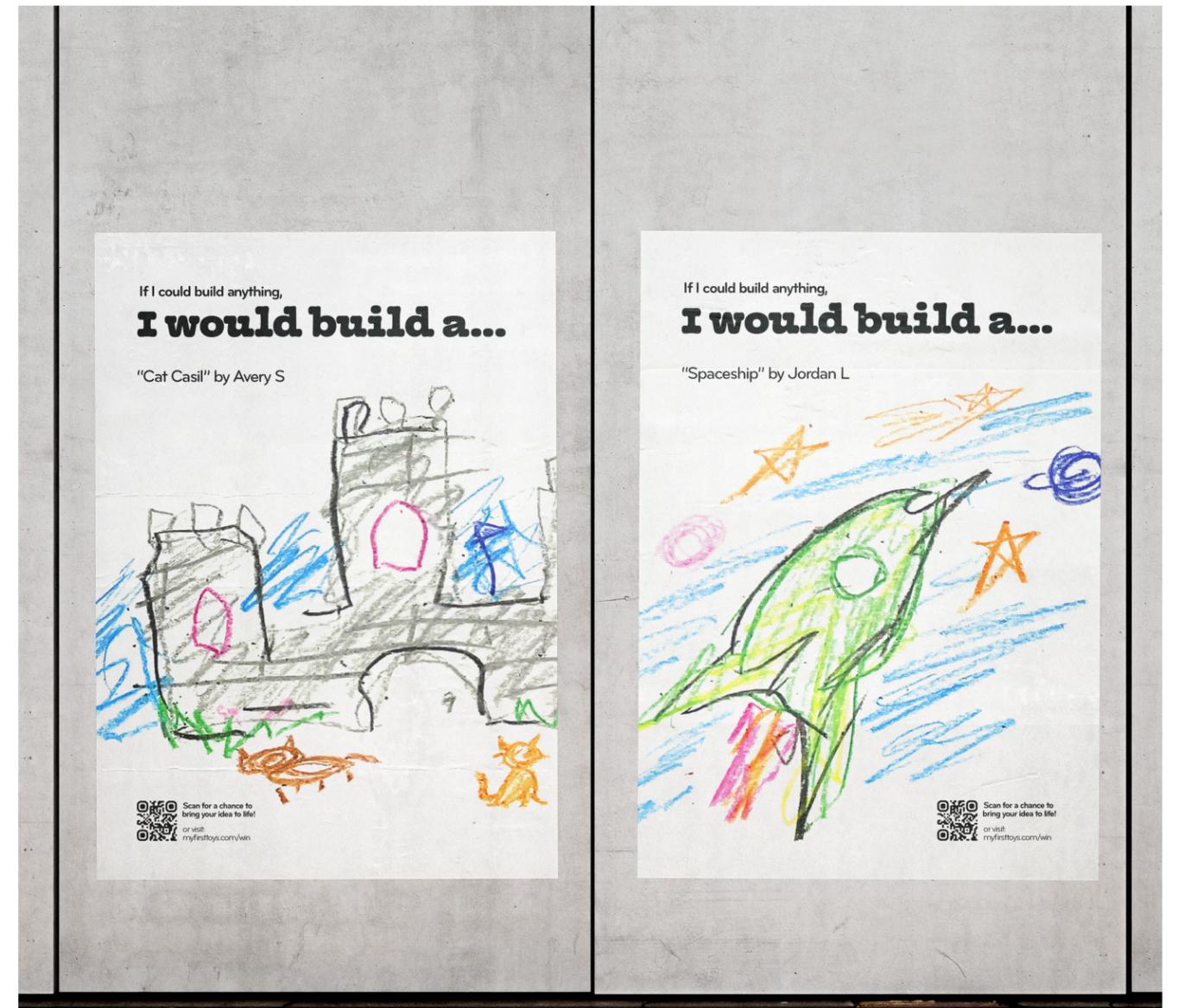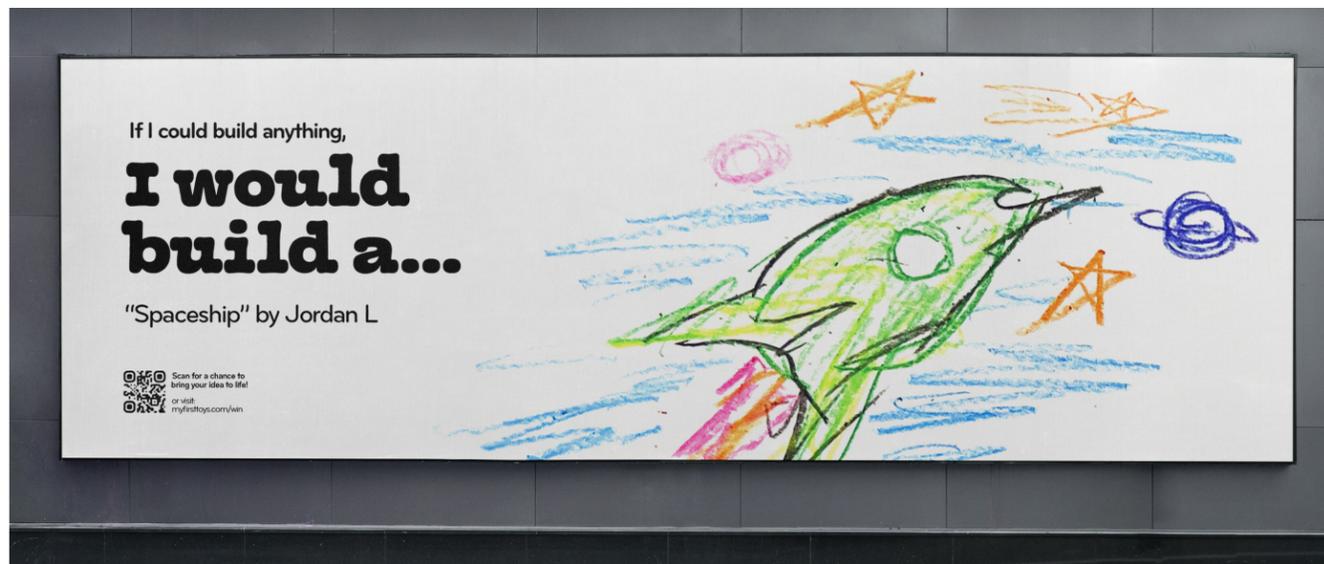
AD CAMPAIGN (WEB)

THANK YOU!

Thanks for taking the time to review my process for this toy packaging redesign.

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