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MIT 511
Graphic Design Instructional Game DVD Case

Conceptual Design

For this design, I really wanted to create something fun and exciting that allowed me to practice layering, using words and pictures and wanted to explore using multiple images in a design. This was really my first attempt at layering graphics and actually using more advanced features of Fireworks. I decided that the best way to work with all of these elements in one project would be to create something that incorporated animated characters, text and textured background. This led me to comic books. This is something that comic book designers do a lot in their cover designs.

“Spider Math” is a fictitious game that I would imagine, if created, would be aimed at 8-12 year-olds (boys, or girls who are interested in comic books). The game would include a storyline where players would have a number of mathematical challenges to complete in order to defeat a variety of Spidey’s favorite foes.

I intended for the cover design to look similar to a comic book, but offer the viewer an idea of what to expect from the game. For these reasons, I included objects such as the numbers on the spider web and the Green Goblin (a villain). For the environmental features, I wanted to include a cityscape and night sky as the background. The inclusion of the web added texture and grounded Spiderman to something (so he didn’t look like he was floating in the night sky (everyone knows Spiderman doesn’t fly!)).

Design Process

For all of the elements of this design, I used Google’s image search. This gave me a comprehensive list of choices matching my search terms.

Gathering Images

I started by finding a perfect image of Spiderman (something that was clear and looked like he was deep in crime fighting – an action shot). I then searched for a suitable enemy (I searched for the Sandman, Venom and found that the Green Goblin would suit my planned environment best). I played with inserting multiple villains, but found that the design became too crowded, considering the setting. I managed to find a night sky background that worked very well, offering the suggestion of stars without much else. The web is actually a digitally designed web that I found. The buildings started out blue, but I inverted the colors to give a “shadow,” nighttime effect. The logo is pretty self-explanatory, although I added the word “Presents” to separate this cover from a comic book cover.

The numbers in the web were actually an afterthought. I had finished my design and reviewed it. I noticed that the only thing that suggested math was the title. I thought that having numbers stuck in the web would work well and not take up any more white (black, rather) space, making the design seem crowded. The numbers I found were actually very fitting, although I found them on some mobile blog site describing something I really didn’t understand. The fact that the numbers seem to be burning into a pit really helped with my design. It almost makes it look as if the web is on fire, having been bombed by the Goblin. Sometimes things just work out nicely!

Organizing the Images

I decided that my graphic would be created in three rows – bottom, middle and top. I started by creating a “background” layer and placing my night sky in the back on the top and the spider web along the bottom. The next layer was the buildings, although they would eventually sit closer to the foreground. I had to place the buildings at the absolute bottom in order to get the right amount of spacing and contrast for the web. This was my next layer – “buildings.” Our hero came next and I gave him his own layer, called “Spidey.” My reasoning was that, if I needed to move Spiderman (or play with his graphic in any way), he could be easily found (and we all know how elusive Spidey can be). I, of course, placed him right in the middle of the graphic.

The textual elements came next and posed a bit of a problem for me. I really wanted this to look like the cover of a Spiderman comic book; so, I needed some really exciting fonts. Unfortunately, I haven’t had a lot of success with Fireworks’ fonts; so, I went to old faithful – PowerPoint – and used WordArt for my title. I placed it in the top third in at a diagonal to add interest. I also placed the Marvel logo and the word “Presents in the top section of the screen. I placed my own information in an inconspicuous spot at the bottom right of the screen. I used three different fonts in this graphic, which I was unsure about, but feel that the final product didn’t look at all disconnected as I worried it would be. My justification for this is that each font serves a different purpose and all are connected by being somewhat fanciful fonts.

The final image that needed placing was the notorious Green Goblin. I found a picture of him riding his glider; so, I knew he would be placed at the top of the page – somewhere. He also received his own layer; so that I could add depth when I began to order the layers.

Creating Perspective

Since I created so many layers, it was not terribly hard to add perspective to this graphic. I knew the “background” layer needed to be on the bottom, with everything else layered on top of it. As I began to layer, however, I found some problems in a few of my elements – non transparent spots!! I had to re-render almost every image to eliminate stray opacity so that there weren’t spots in the sky or holes in the web that weren’t created by the Green Goblin’s bombs. After fixing everything, I returned to the task of making it all work. Since the background included the web and sky, the numbers (that were to be attached to the web) needed to come next; so the buildings could sit in the foreground. I guess I really focused on the environment before ever placing my characters.

Even though Spiderman is technically below the text, I placed the textual elements next. The title was so big and I wanted to be able to add some depth by layering on top and below it. After placing my text, it was time to place our hero and his arch nemesis. I made Spiderman a bit larger than the Goblin so a chase was apparent – the Green Goblin in back, Spidey in front. By placing Spiderman in the center of the page and setting a close perspective, it is apparent that he is the main focus of the game. Having the characters and text overlap a bit creates the illusion that this is a 3-dimensional world.

Design Elements

For this project, I really focused on the following design elements:

- Contrast – using graphics that worked together, not against each other and in the text by ensuring visibility;
- Clarity – ensuring that a potential buyer could recognize the general objective of the game without playing it;

- Color – designing an exciting game using exciting colors for the characters and text, subtle design for the environmental features;
- Repetition – utilizing fanciful fonts throughout without using a consistent font to add style to the design
- Layout design – designing the graphic vertically in 3 identifiable rows to coincide with the vertical design of DVD cases
- Motivation – designing for a specific audience who may find interest in comic books or superheroes
- Realism – attempting to create an authentic-looking comic book design
- References – referenced the owner of the rights to Spiderman – Marvel Comics
- Technical Usability – making it very easy for someone to immediately know what the game is before picking it up
- Visuals – attempting to make the title and graphic go together by addition of numbers to the web

Fireworks Tools Used

- Import Images – found and imported images into design
- Magic Wand – eliminated unnecessary elements of imported images
- Text Tool – used for “Presents” and Copyright info
- Pointer Tool – to move and change the size of objects
- Format Canvas – to change the size and color of the design background
- Scale Tool – changing the size of an object without changing the dimensions
- Filter – used an inverted filter to change the color of the buildings from blue to brown
- Layers – created layers for every type of object in my design and position some in back of others to create better contrast and perspective
- Crop – resized and cut portions of images