Michael Thundow

Product Designer | **Portfolio**

www.thundow.design

2026

Hello!

I'm Mike, a 29-year old product designer based in the Midlands, UK.

Welcome to the portfolio! I've aimed to collate some of my work into this booklet, but if you ever want more details on a project, feel free to head over to www.thundow.design for more supporting material, as-well as a dozen other projects too!

My career aspirations have always simply been to add to the 'currency of design culture'; to take as varied a set of experiences, and convert them into as varied a work as possible.

Sadly, I've been told that 'design-currency' can't pay off the student-loan, so if you're looking to hire, feel free to drop me a line at hello@thundow.design. I look forward to hearing from you!

hello@thundow.design
www.thundow.design

2019 | B.A. Product Design (Hons)
University of Bournemouth (2:1)

2020 - Current | Mookie Toys
Product Designer

2017 - 2018 | Crosswater Ltd
Product Designer (Placement Year)

crosswater

Mookie

MOREWATER

active tots

OWL & FOX

veaya

NINTENDO SWITCH FS

Mookie/TP Toys - Company Overview
2020 - 2026

I've been working for Mookie Toys (almost exclusively within their sub-brand, TP Toys) for over 5 years.

Being my first gig out of university; the combination of joining in the middle of a pandemic, moving 200 miles from home, and being thrown into the incredibly fast-paced world of toy-design meant my first 6-months was a true trial-by-fire. The result however was a truly transformative experience that gave me experience in almost every aspect of the design process.

Within our team of 4 product-designers, our projects are our individual babies; and this approach, combined with a high project count, has been an incredible opportunity to practice almost every element of the design process, with almost every material, to all manner of customers in all manner of countries.

It helps people I work with are all incredibly talented, friendly, warm souls who make even the most stressful days that bit easier!

The following pages cover a few of the highlights!

Product Design @ Mookie Toys for:

5 years

creating for Internal Mookie Brands & External Partners, including:

Hasbro
Peppa Pig
ASDA
Argos
world of ERIC CARLE
b&m
ALDI
LIDL
COSTCO WHOLESALE
Sainsbury's
The Gruffalo
JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS
BLUEY

active-tots

The Active-Tots range is a set of indoor wooden climbing products, and my first project at TP Toys. They were designed around the concept of independent "Montessori" learning, and based on the works of Hungarian Paediatrician Emmi Pikler. The aim was to allow children to have fun learning coordination skills on a product-set that could "grow" with the child's confidence.

I was Lead-Designer for the initial range, and was charged with every element of the design process from conceptualising, testing, liaising with factories, coordinating with our logistics team, even the design of the instruction-manuals. It was an engaging, comprehensive introduction to the industry!

Following a successful launch in 2021, I've had the chance over the following years to continue work on this range, expanding on the current items whilst helping to update the existing line-up.

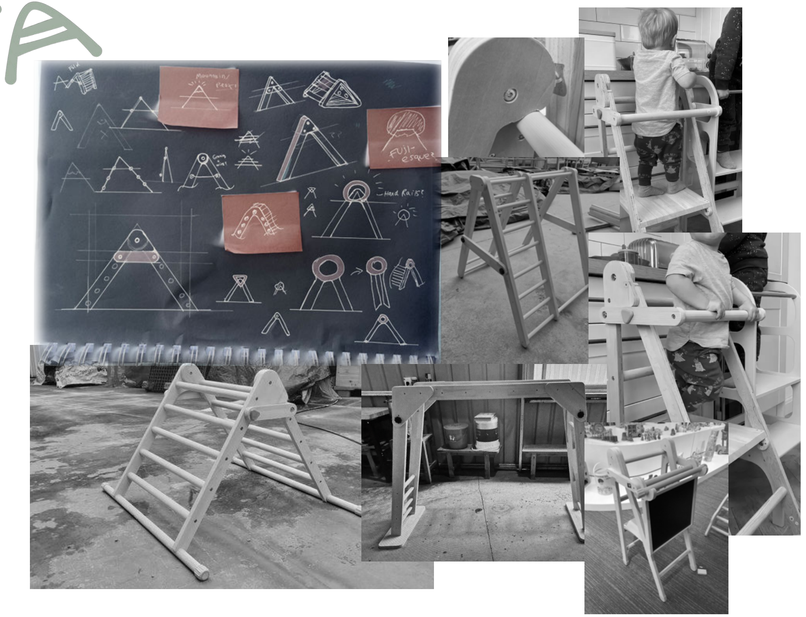
Project Name | Year
Active-Tots by TP Toys | 2021-2025

Client | Role
Mookie Toys | Lead Designer

Responsibilities
Industrial Design, Material Research, Factory Liaising, Business Research, Branding, Prototyping, CAD, Technical Drawings, DFMA, Logistical Viability, EN71, Manual Design, Rendering, Ergonomics, Trademark/Patent Study.

The original 2021 Active-Tots launch range consisted of 3 "core" items which were modular and could be bought separately, and 3 other standalone items that would complement the range. With space and budgets being so constrained for new UK parents, especially on items that a child might grow out of within months, we aimed to combat this in two key ways:

Firstly, the "core" range's modularity meant that parents could effectively decide how much budget and space they could afford, and they could adjust that over time as the child grew. The second objective was to make sure disassembly or folding the items after use were integral to keeping space free when the toys aren't in use.



Development heavily revolved around testing. Often prototypes were made in-house or through our suppliers themselves. This allowed us to get hands-on with evaluation in a way you couldn't find with a model or sketch.

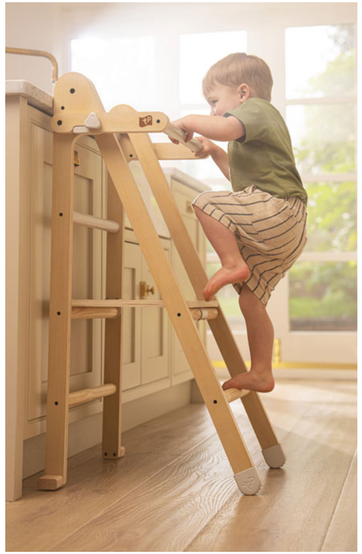
Often this also allowed us to test with the target users themselves, who would often enlighten us to all the "unique" ways a child might unintentionally use a product..

This also meant we could ensure there was consistency across the range, right down to individual radii across each curve!

Meeting and surpassing the EN71, the stringent international test standard used for most activity toys was critical, and presented unique challenges throughout development of all ActiveTots products. Development for activity-based indoor items was relatively new territory for both the company and, at the time, the industry as a whole.

The Indoor Swing was a good example of this: stability tests for outdoor products are very strict and often require the product to be staked into the ground or into concrete. In our case, parents couldn't stake it through the living-room floor (not without a lot of frustration, anyway). The swing needed to be portable, stable, and importantly, light. All of this meant extra solutions were needed to support stability.

In our case we were able to provide a solution by requiring the swing to slide into unobtrusive wall-brackets, providing stability whilst still being easy to remove and store.



active tots

The success of the original range inevitably meant that new products were due, so alongside an incredible re-brand (courtesy of a very talented graphics-team), a few new products were developed.

For my part, this meant designing a Folding Helper Tower to allow kids to help out at the table, alongside a complementing Easel & Chalkboard Accessory. True to the modular philosophy of our original collection, this easel works on any “core” product, as-well as the Helper Tower.

We were able to bring forward many key ideas from the original range, whilst modernising much of the core aesthetic and creating a consistent identity across the range.

The median UK household floorspace measures up as below-average when compared to their European counterparts, and for new parents in first-homes, the rooms are even pokier and space is at an all-time premium.

It was for this reason that the idea of “folding” or reducing the footprint of these products was absolutely vital. Most of the products can be tucked away under a table, sofa or bed and unfolded at a moments notice.

Little friends on big adventures.

The Owl & Fox series marked my third year at TP Toys.

This series of products featured under TP Toys aims to compliment the successful Active-Tots range, by providing nursery and role-play items that could "bookend" play within that age range; with everything from Shape-Sorters and Building Blocks at the very young end, to larger Wooden Kitchens and Workbenches as children got older.

As Product Lead on this range, I had the pleasure of working alongside our Senior Graphics Designer to marry the physical and graphical elements of these products, creating a consistent messaging across all of the new items, and delivering the project to completion.

Project Name | Year
Owl & Fox by TP Toys | 2023-2024

Client | Role
Mookie Toys | Project Manager

Responsibilities
Industrial Design, CAD, Project Management, Technical Drawings, Manual Designs, EN71, Factory Liaising, Rendering, Business Research, Branding, DFMA, Logistical Viability.

The current Owl & Fox range consists of 19 Products, these can be categorised into Nursery, or role-play items: the former group was designed to suit ages prior to using Active-Tots, and the role-play items favoured those just growing out of the Active-Tots range.
This gave a complete time line of products from birth all the way into mainline outdoor TP products.

When creating the brand-identity for the range, we were keenly aware of just how saturated this market is, and how the current market tended to favour more muted tones, palettes, and iconography in their ranges.

We felt that by adding both a more vibrant colour separation and characters that symbolised the type of play the children would be engaged with, we were able to create something both distinctive, and more in keeping with our own mainline TP range; whilst still being able to fit within an interior setting.

The brighter coral-reds were often used to signify touch-points and draw the eye, whereas the teal was commonly used in conjunction with the wooden-frame elements, in order to provide a common product theme whilst leaving room to experiment given the varied nature of the products.

Owing to the usual industry seasonal-pressures, the project had a sharp-turnaround and the graphics-team were instrumental in pulling together the incredible brand guidelines and concepts that ended up in the final products.

Between the iconography, the colours, brand strategy, photography, packaging and much much more, the team were able to deliver something that truly stands out on the market; in so doing providing the perfect entry-point for potential TP customers, whilst leaving enough space to allow the child to naturally progress into ActiveTots and eventually mainline TP products seamlessly.

There's plenty more to come from this brand, but I am pleased with how it has debuted.

King of the Mixers.

During the lockdown of 2020 I had the opportunity to work on a number of branding projects for start-ups as a freelance brand-designer.

One such startup was Komixer, a zero-calorie kombucha-mixer brand aiming to fill the market space as a more casual kombucha drink compared to the often clinical nature of other kombucha brands.

I was brought on to create the brand; which included everything from the logo, to the can design, box design, colours, brand-identity and other elements.

Project Name | Year
Komixer : Zero-Calorie Kombucha Mixer | 2020-2021

Client | Role
Freelance | Brand Consultant & Designer

Responsibilities
Concept Development, Graphic Design, Rendering, Technical Drawings, Client Management, Supplier Liaising.

The product launched in two flavours: Hibiscus and Ginger-Lime.

I wanted to make sure each flavour had a distinct theme, without appearing to be different products. The use of a foil layer to highlight certain parts of the can really helped in this regard, allowing me to use basic shapes to represent differences in flavour without solely resorting to colour.

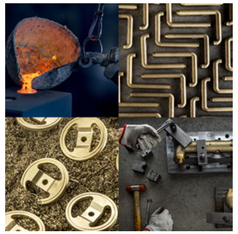
The bright band of colour at the top made the flavour obvious to those unfamiliar with the product, whilst also being able to stand out from various eye-views when placed on different store shelves.
As this was attempting to penetrate a market, I wanted first impressions to be **BOLD**.

I initially suggested a dozen or so themes based on the first brief sent to me. Monochrome with bright colours based on the flavour was key, and a modern, casual theme was asked for.

Various names were also suggested, eventually the client themselves put forward a name and slogan, which I ran with and attempted to build a brand around.

The launch was challenging owing to the product releasing during the worst points of the global pandemic, and issues with manufacturer-delays, eventually folding towards the end of 2021.

But the product and brand design was very well-received, and elements of the design were taken forward into future endeavours.



crosswater®

During my university degree at Bournemouth University, I was fortunate enough to spend a year in-industry at Crosswater Ltd, a luxury brassware and bathware company.

During my year there, I had the chance to work alongside my brand manager Marten Baker to develop entirely new ranges for the company, alongside plugging any holes in existing ranges.

As an introduction to industry-life, I made many mistakes, learned a lot; and came out of it humbled yet ready to tackle my final-year of university with a more pragmatic outlook towards design theory. I owe an awful lot to Marten for his support in helping me grow over that year, and his expertise gave me insights into processes I didn't even know existed!

Project Name | Year
Bournemouth University Placement Year | 2017-2018

Client | Role
Crosswater Ltd | Product Designer

Responsibilities
Concept Development, CAD, Renderings, Technical Drawings, Factory Liaising, Prototyping.

My role at Crosswater was pretty varied. Often I was free to conceptualise new product ideas for my brand manager to present and potentially pursue. Other times it would be creating new technical drawings or adjusting existing ones. Occasionally I'd pitch in to help on an instruction-manual, sometimes I'd be testing prototypes and samples. Every day tended to bring a new challenge, and accelerated my sphere of understanding about the product industry far more than any university course could have!

nintendo switch ‘folding-screen’: retro legacy, modern inspiration, future tech.

During the 2020 pandemic I unexpectedly had a lot more time on my hands, so I thought it would be a good time to conceptualise some new ideas I’d had kicking around my sketchbooks over the last few years.

To that end, the Nintendo Switch FS is a passion-project that embraces everything love about the way Nintendo designs hardware.

This was a ‘prospective design’, meaning this was a project that could use emerging technologies (in this case, flexible OLED displays), and treat them as if they were more commercially viable for a consumer product in the future (around the year 2025, for this product).

Project Name | Year
Nintendo Folding Screen | 2020

Client | Role
Personal | Designer

The ‘folding-screen’ technology is baked into the function of the SwitchFS. By nature, the original Switch’s main feature was it’s ability to transform into different play-experiences, and the new technology was designed to further this concept by enhancing/expanding both the ability to play with friends, and the scope that portable-play offers.

PORTABLE MODE

- 260mm Length (w/ joycons)
- 120mm Height
- 24mm Depth
- ~1.2lbs (w/ joycons)

A continuous top-edge for better immersion, or for non-intrusive touchscreen menu elements that keep out of the way.

The mode most closely resembling the original 2017 Switch, the 'portable' mode on the SwitchFS uses the top face of the product essentially as a customisable touch-screen menu, allowing much of the HUD elements to be removed from the screen, allowing for a more immersive experience.

The product is however significantly thicker and heavier as a compromise, in order to fit the new mechanisms to allow the unfolding of the screen.

SPLIT SCREEN MODE

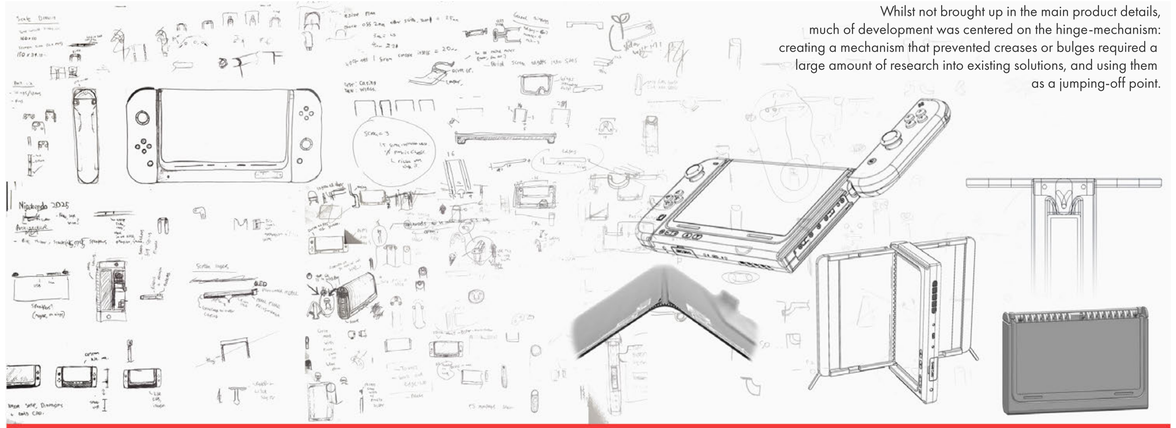
Pressing the 'split-screen' button on the SwitchFS partially opens up the screen and allows for two kickstands to be pulled out from the screen's underside. This allows for a split-screen experience on a single console, giving a more manageable experience for both parties, where normally they'd be sharing one, incredibly small screen.

TABLETOP MODE

Native 4:3 aspect ratio for NES, SNES, N64, and GameCube titles.

Orientation allows for charging whilst playing.

The 'tabletop mode' opens up the SwitchFS fully, allowing it to be placed onto it's side, effectively acting as one full-screen experience. Due to the nature of the screen dimensions, this would be a 4:3 aspect ratio typical of older monitors, which works well for a native 4:3 experience with Nintendo's older titles, something the company have a strong tendency to bring to new platforms.



Whilst not brought up in the main product details, much of development was centered on the hinge-mechanism: creating a mechanism that prevented creases or bulges required a large amount of research into existing solutions, and using them as a jumping-off point.

higher fidelity, lower-cost virtual-reality; the best of both VR-worlds.

VeaYA is a prospective portable 'hybrid-VR' concept that aims to visualise how future low-end VR systems might leverage the fidelity of standalone VR systems such as the Oculus Quest, and merge it with the affordability and upgradability of mobile-VR systems like the Google Daydream View.

The end-goal would be one aspiring to achieve a level of quality in a low-end VR system comparable to products hundreds of dollars more expensive than itself.

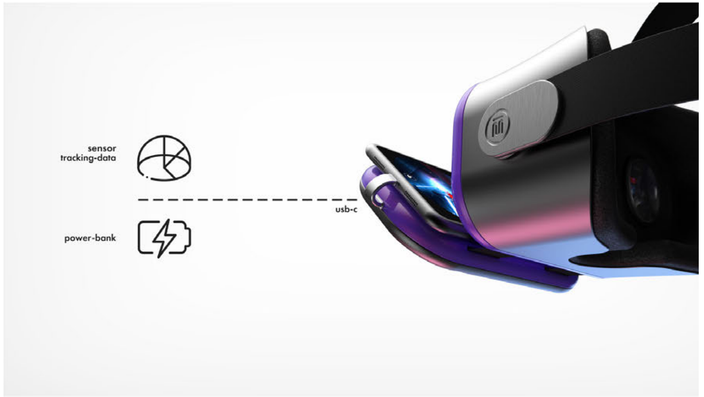
Project Name | Year
VeaYa VR Hybrid| 2020

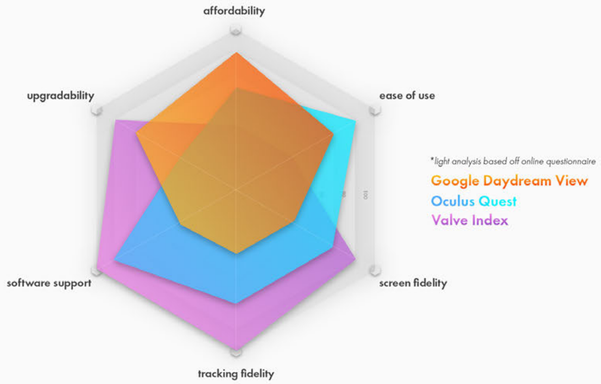
Client | Role
Personal | Designer

Whilst the VR market continues to grow, the mobile-VR market is stunted by inflexibility: it's price-advantages over higher-end VR made void by it's many caveats, limitations, and setup-barriers that the user needs to overcome. VeaYA aims to incorporate a small amount of extra cost in order to impart a large amount of extra user-benefit.

In this design-concept, whilst a modern smartphone would provide the bulk of the portable-VR experience through it's mobile-processor and screen, VeaYA supplements this with 6-DOF 'inside-out' telemetry-data for itself and the controllers, as-well as a fast-charge power bank to prevent users having to decide between portable-VR, and being able to use their phone.

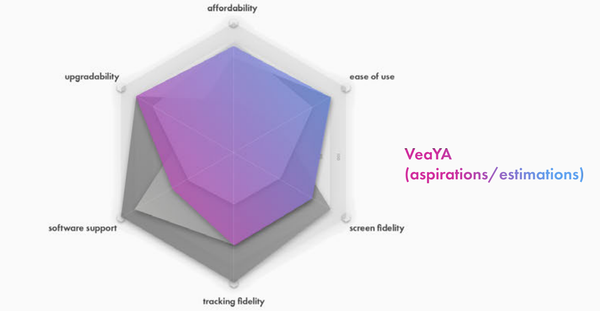
The mobile performance and screen-resolution/refresh-rate will naturally upgrade with each user's phone cycle, further providing long-term price benefits. Similar to the Oculus Link, when connected to a PC, the phone simply becomes a display, allowing for direct streaming of high-performance VR.



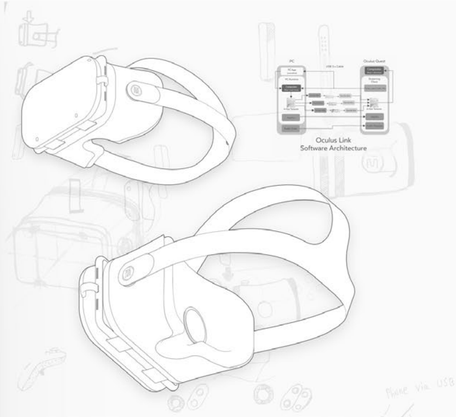


*light analysis based off online questionnaire

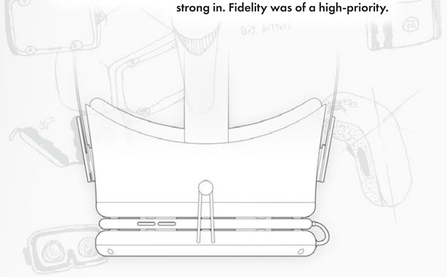
Google Daydream View
Oculus Quest
Valve Index

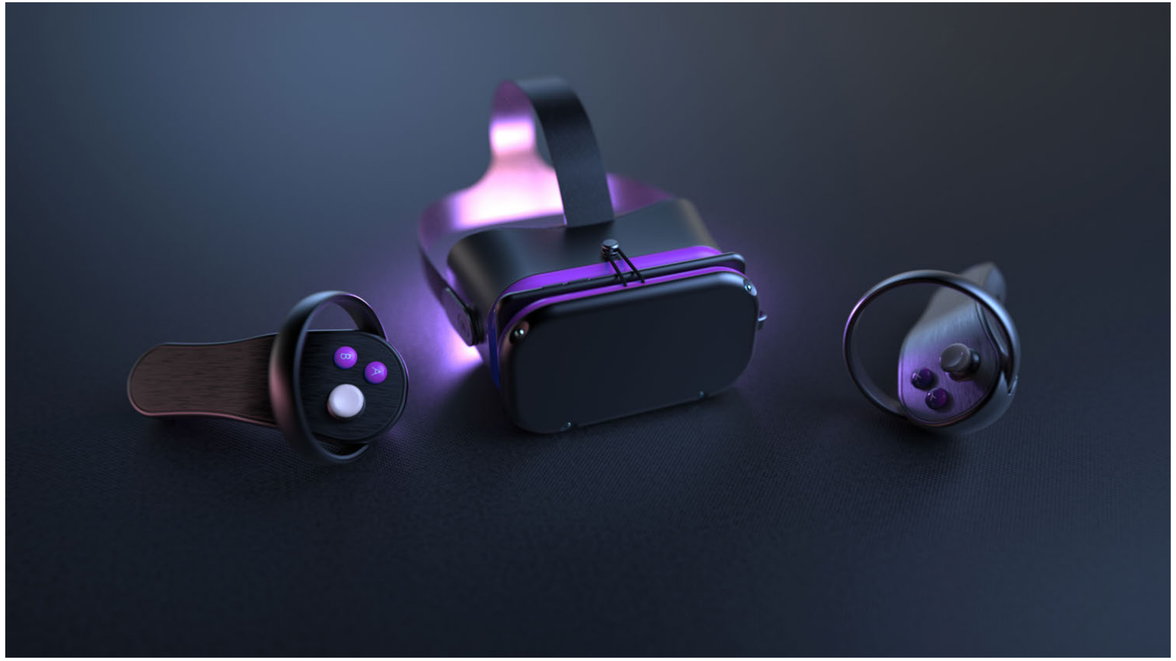


VeaYA
(aspirations/estimations)

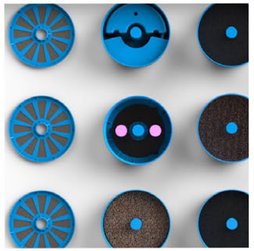


The aim with VeaYA was to retaining many of mobile-VR's existing benefits, whilst expanding into areas that mobile VR wasn't as strong in. Fidelity was of a high-priority.





Aesthetically, those familiar with the Oculus Rift & Google Daydream View designs will see many similarities.
The aim was to create a product that acted as a bridge between the two; I included a few more 'Arcade-by-way-of-SNES' elements, in order to give a more professional-playful appeal.



Emergency filtration. Anywhere. Always.

Royal Academy of Engineering
Business Competition | Winner

Morgan Innovation
Innovation Competition | Finalist

Global Grand Challenges 2017
Business Competition | 2nd

Project Name | Year
MOREWATER | 2018

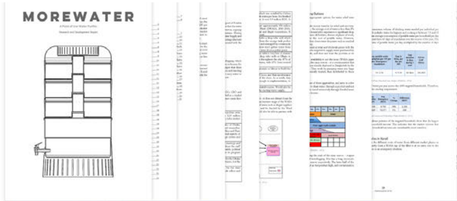
Client | Role
Bournemouth University | Product Designer

Responsibilities
Concept Development, CAD, Rendering, Material Research, Presentation, Marketing, Business Research,

MOREWATER was a 6-person group project that set out to create a mid/long-term, modular, family-capacity water-filter.

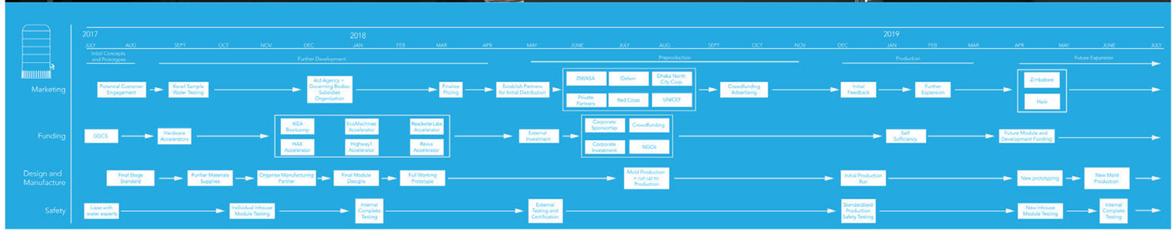
This filter is built in modular tiers, and can be customised, assembled and dispatched rapidly for any emergency environment, pollutants, or special cases, as-well as be adapted with new emerging technology; all for incredibly low-cost.

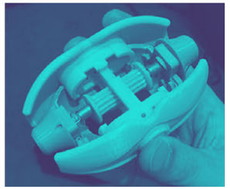
As every water-crisis has different circumstances surrounding them and different filtration needs, the filters could be tailor-made with basic 'no-tools' top-down assembly and shipped quickly to those who need it.



Using common crisis zones such as Korail, we researched a number of different potential disasters to inform the types of filters that would be needed. Often a combination is required, and a "one-size-fits-all" approach would be wasteful and expensive. The modularity of the design meant they could be stored, assembled and shipped at a moments notice.

Dozens of pages of research, interviews with NPO's, entrepreneurs, polymer-engineers, and many others; many pitches, presentations, and events; alongside a travel to Washington DC later, we had successfully competed in the Global Grand Challenges Business Competition 2017, against the top entries from the UK, the US, and China, earning ourselves a 2nd place position overall and securing a tidy $15,000 investment.





Play together.
Regardless of ability.

Tomobeans are collectible, tradable, low-cost competitive social dice-toys for 6-8 year olds, that are designed to allow even those with limited fine-motor control to operate them (including acquired or congenital limb loss up to, and including, the elbow), allowing a typically under-served demographic to engage in social play with other children using tools that they previously had limited access to.

This is achieved without giving the impression that the toy is even designed for this market, preventing the alienation of able-bodied children from participating, and encouraging cross-ability social interaction.

Project Name | Year
TOMOBEANS | 2018-2019

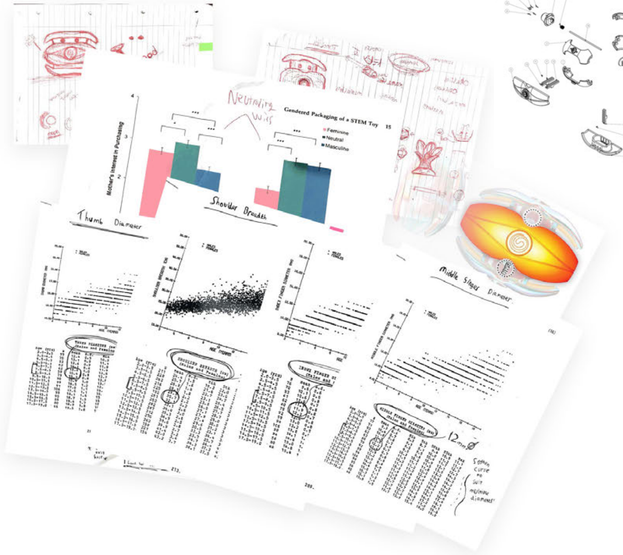
Client | Role
Bournemouth University | Product Designer

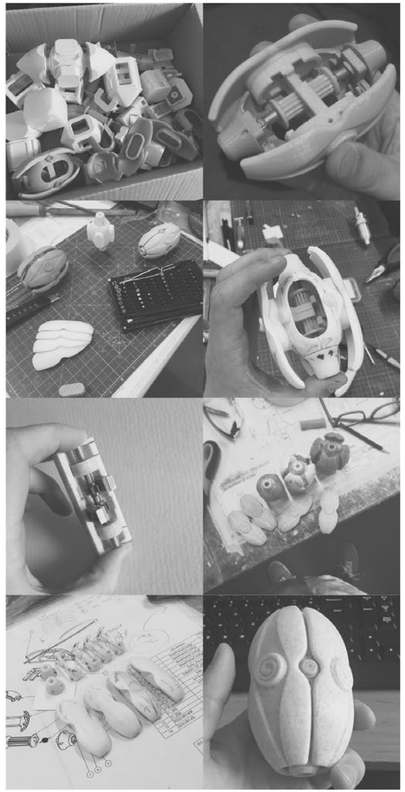
Responsibilities
Market Research, Concept Development, CAD, Technical Drawings, Prototyping, Marketing, IP and Copyright Research, Presentation, Rendering.

Tomobeans the Game, is a fairly simple dice game utilising collectible figurines called 'Tomo'; loosely inspired by other collectible childrens toys such as Pokemon or Bakugan, each die contains different dice-face values and 'abilities' used in the game-play itself.

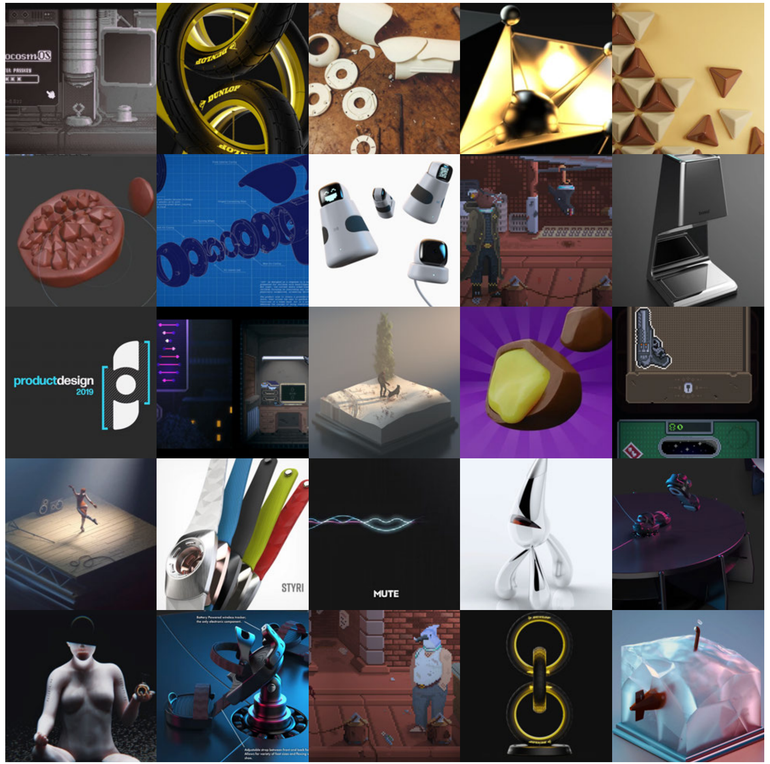
As an inclusive project designed for users who were both young, and disabled; this project relied heavily on user-research for everything from anthropometrics, to popular children character design tropes, to the over-abundance of gendered-colour theory in mainstream toy manufacture.

This gave way to some specific features on the Tomobeans, including elements such as the small divets on the faces to be better picked up with one hand, or being generally larger than hand-held toys to be better picked up by elbow-stumps.





BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE !



(too much, frankly. But if you're interested in seeing all the projects I've been tinkering on the last few years; feel free to head to www.thundow.design to check them out!)