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Well-Rounded Design

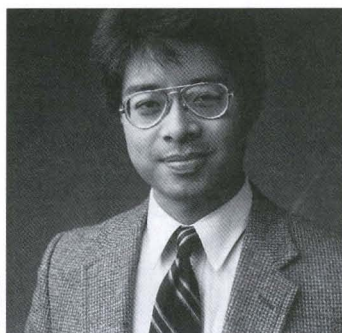
By Earl Gee

The success of Imaginarium—a chain of 72 U.S. toy stores—hangs on what it isn't as much as what it is: there are no TV commercials, radio spots, insipid jingles, or stuffed mascots. In fact there's no national advertising at all. In contrast to stores that pack aisles and aisles of toys into a large warehouse, Imaginarium's small, colorful shops feel more like boutiques, with interactive play areas and an abundance of helpful employees. Most significantly, the stores do not carry fashion dolls or militaristic action figures—just imaginative, educational toys, hand-picked for the children of well-educated, discriminating parents.

To capitalize on this reputation for separating the wheat from the chaff, Imaginarium decided to put its own brand name on a number of exclusive items—redesigning the toy packages to reflect the company's corporate identity. The first toy to undergo a makeover was this hopping ball from Italy. Imaginarium art director Nicole Shepard renamed the toy Kangaroo Hop and asked me to design a new box with identifying elements (including the logo and an age-group icon) that could work for a variety of Imaginarium packages.

Shepard suggested using Pantone 326, the bright teal green commonly used in Imaginarium's stores and business collateral. I found this too restrictive and instead picked up the more flexible black-and-white checkerboard pattern found on Imaginarium's bags, gift-wrap ribbons, and store floors.

Lively colors are natural choices for a lively product, however, so I drenched each panel of the Kangaroo Hop box with a different, highly saturated color. Stacking the boxes in a pattern of alternating colors extends the checkerboard motif to in-store displays. I left the logo itself rather simple. ▀

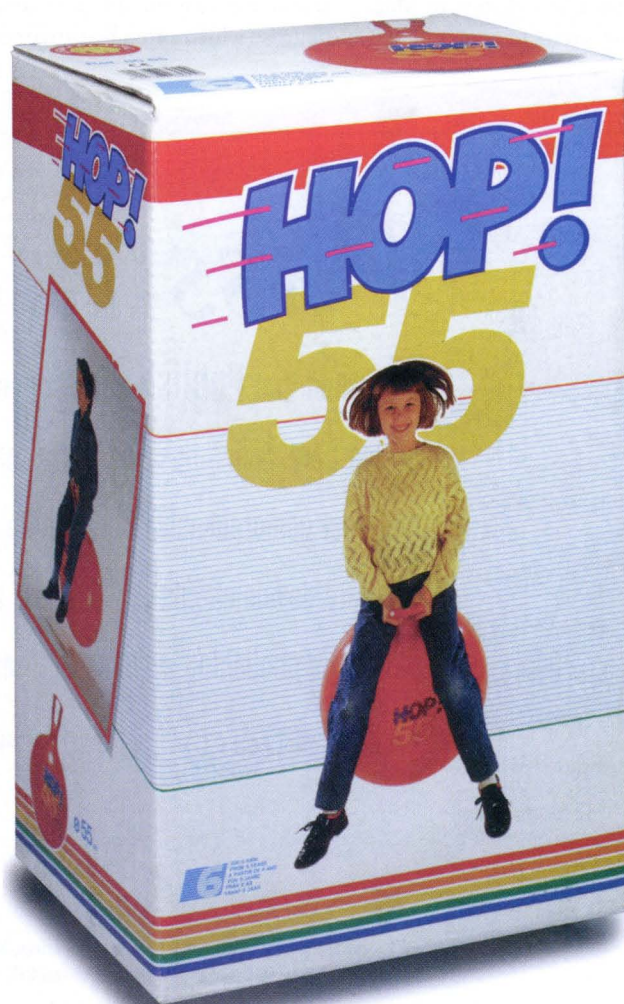


Frank Deras

Earl Gee is principal of Earl Gee Design, a multidisciplinary design consultancy based in San Francisco, California.

Gee creates identity programs, marketing and sales collateral, and product packaging, for high-technology, publishing, financial, and arts organizations.

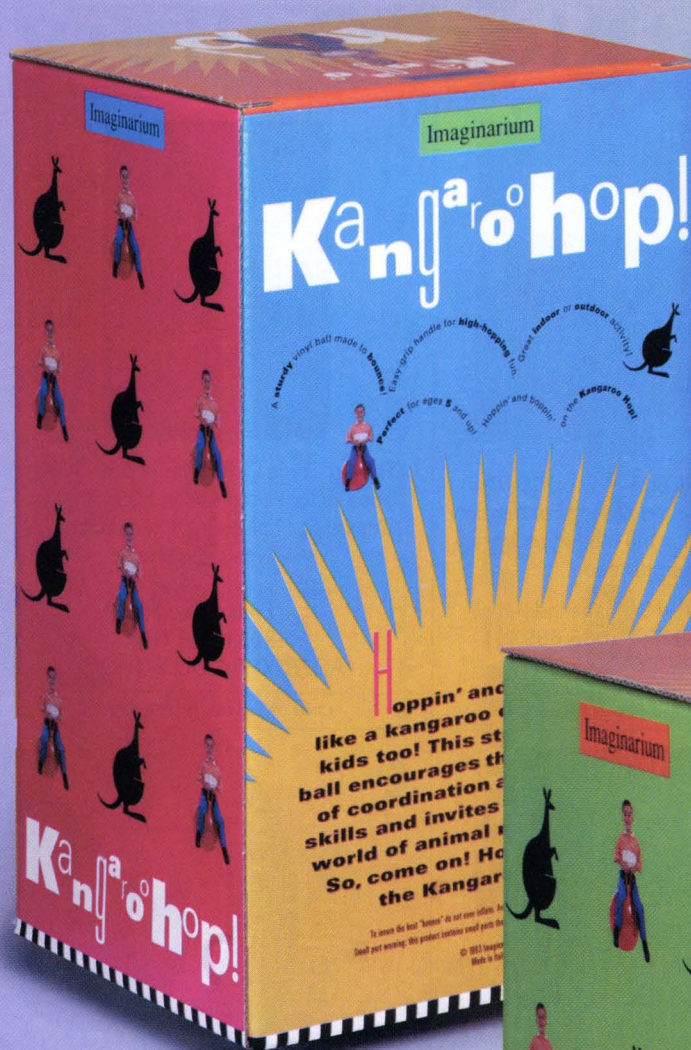
Before



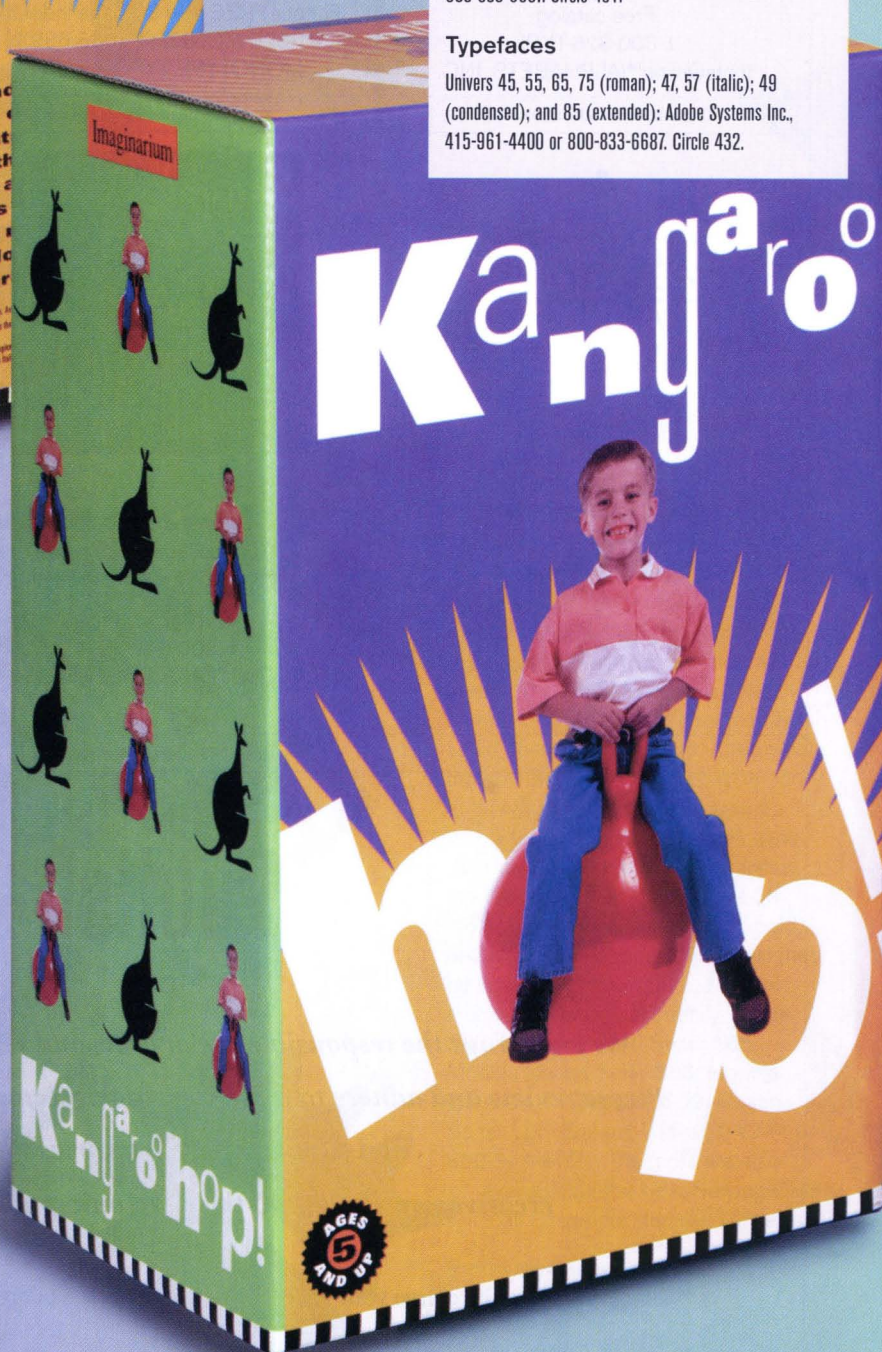
After

A pattern of kangaroos flanks two sides of the box, alternating with the front panel's hopping boy. I drew the stylized, ball-shaped kangaroo by hand with pen and ink, digitized the illustration with Adobe Streamline, and cleaned up the file in Adobe Illustrator.

To suggest the bouncing action of the Kangaroo Hop, I dropped a bright orange starburst into the background. I created the starburst in Illustrator, starting by calculating the number of spikes I wanted and dividing that number by 360 to determine how far apart (in degrees) the spikes should be. I drew a circle, estimated the proper length and width for each spike, and used the Rotate tool with Illustrator's Repeat Transform command to place spikes around the circle. I used the same technique for the softer serrated edge of the age-group icon.



Kangaroo Hop's jittery type treatment mixes various typefaces in the Univers family. On the back panel, I employed Illustrator's Path Type feature to create the "hopping" text.



Toolbox

Hardware

Macintosh IIcx: Apple Computer Inc., 408-996-1010 or 800-776-2333. Circle 427 on reader service card.

Turbo 040 accelerator card: DayStar Digital Inc., 404-967-2077 or 800-962-2077. Circle 428.

IntelliColor Display/20, PrecisionColor Pro 24X display card: Radius Inc., 408-541-6100 or 800-227-2795. Circle 429.

HP ScanJet IIcx color flatbed scanner with transparency adapter: Hewlett-Packard Co., 208-396-2551 or 800-752-0900. Circle 430.

Software

Adobe Illustrator 5.1, Adobe Photoshop 3.0, Adobe Streamline 2.0: Adobe Systems Inc., 415-961-4400 or 800-833-6687. Circle 431.

Typefaces

Univers 45, 55, 65, 75 (roman); 47, 57 (italic); 49 (condensed); and 85 (extended): Adobe Systems Inc., 415-961-4400 or 800-833-6687. Circle 432.