Genesis of the Lions of Tsavo T-shirt & Skateboard



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Extraordinary things are found every day in the natural world exhibits in museums, zoos and aquariums. In journeying through these places a person may find discovery in a multitude of ways. Each creature, from the smallest poison-arrow frog to the most impressive denizen of the Jurassic, has a story to tell and a discovery to share with humans.

The right to pass through the portal into one of these forgotten and often overlooked halls of learning is a part of the most scared human experience: The journey towards discovery. It is a part of human nature to seek and find, regardless of whether one has the hunter or gatherer personality type. Each person should always be ready to experience that sense of wonder and look into the places that have the most to teach, seeking out that exhilaration and discovering what there is to find in the natural world.

Project Line Keywords

DISCOVERY: Act or instance of discovering. UNUSUAL: Not usual, common or ordinary. EXTRAORDINARY: Beyond what is usual, ordinary, regular or established. IMPRESSIVE: Arousing admiration, awe, respect, moving or admirable.

Statement of Purpose

Enhance the Field Museum gift shop product line to contain products with a modern design aesthetic that celebrate an unusual and extremely unique exhibit: The Lions of Tsavo.

This line began with a t-shirt and skateboard set designed to appear to the tween and teen age ranges through the use of color and bold imagery. This imagery will also be true to the spirit of the exhibit and not glorify the danger of African Lions as a species, but rather to encourage people to learn more about this unusual and historic incident through appeal.



Tsavo Exhibit Inspiration



Photograph by Kelly K. Peterson © 2008

In the above photograph, taken by myself directly from the Lions of Tsavo exhibit at the museum, was the primary inspiration. The intense eyes, staring out from the face of an extraordinary male lion, caught hold of my mind and resulted in one of the most intriguing of the thumbnails from the idea generation phase of the design process. At the time of research I took additional photos, shown below.





Design Thinking

Inspiration for this piece began with the photograph on the preceding page, taken in October of 2008. It was taken at the Field Museum in Chicago Illinois as research for this project was being conducted.

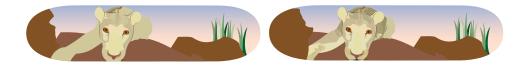
Design itself began with a concept sketch that was a rare effort for me: It is atypical for my thumbnail sketches to end up translated this directly into a finished project. In general I end up doing more revision between thumbnails and the initial version of the design.



Design Progression

The execution of the design was preformed using Adobe® Illustrator.

The first iteration was simply blocks of color that were created by hand and colored based on the photograph on page two of this booklet. The addition of each new color resulted in further development of the overall image.







Each revision brought more detail and more completeness to the overall project, but the phase at which I initially left the project involved full completion of the lion, though the background was still weak.

Following the completion of the tee-shirt, which features only the Lion and excludes the background, this project was resumed for detailing of the background.

This process of detailing involved texturizing the stone, adding more grass and introducing some foliage elements to give the image a more dynamic and realistic sense, and to give the lion a setting that matched him in detail. The flatness of the original background simply did not suit the overall design.







Design Wrap-up

The completion of the design was a moment of great joy for me. The skateboard captured the spirit of the exhibit. In adition the spirit of the species being depicted without glorifying the danger this specific individual represented in a fashion that would harm education and the like for those involved in lion conservation.

The final details that were resolved include the final addition of the folliage around the lion, and the final bit of detail work to the shape of the eyes. The lion itself, which would go on to be featured on the shirt, required no further attention following the eyes fix.

Following the wrap of the design phase, several production preparations were undertaken (such as adjustment of the mask to suit the required bleed rather than the visual point of cutoff, as it was done during the design phase). These later considerations were all that was needed to prepare the product for production.





Design Production

It was decided that, for the final production version of the prototype, a third party company would be sought out. In the end www.boardpusher.com (a company specializing in custom skateboard decks featuring the art of individual artists) was selected for versatility and quality of product.

In the completed project the bold colors and fascinating subject matter are likely to do well and attract the attention of the target audience. The board has the potential to appeal to older skateboarders, also, given the fact that the art style is not fully cartooned and does have a sense of realism. The transparency and ability of the wood's natural texture also adds depth to the printed product.



Photograph by Blane Graber © 2011

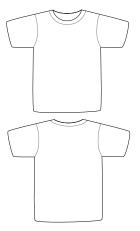
It is my personal feeling that the project was a success and fulfilled the goals set forth. The project looks excellent in the final form, and the finished product is of good quality. The bold focal point of the design attracts the attention of both the designer and of the general consumer.



Design Thinking

The t-shirt was worked into the project following the completion of the first phase of work on the skateboard. Though a late addition, edits to the purpose statement were made and I flexed to permit this new piece to enter into the project.

Due to the central piece of art intended for the skateboard being completed, and that piece of art being well suited to inclusion on the shirt, very little thumbnailing was done, instead this project progressed straight to the digital rough phase.



The first step was to create a t-shirt die for both the front and the back that could be used to conceptualize the design. Following completion of the blank die for each side design for the shirt itself began by importing the lion artwork from the skateboard and incoproating the logo of the field museum.

It was found through play that the placement of the lion and the logo together needed careful consideration to avoid letting them fight for dominance or interfere with one another.

The starting arrangement did prove to be the one that was used proceeding forward in the project, but the logo itself did end up being moved around a bit as the design proceeded forward. In honoring the integrity and history of the Field Museum's emblem we encountered problems of readability and the like, with the lion's chin obscuring too much to leave the logo clear.





It was a balancing act to get them close enough to interact with one another without letting them get so close they ended up embattled with each other.

Revisions guided me to find what I'd thought might be a good balance, but after sharing the design with various colleagues one major concern emerged that needed to be handled.

The I and F in the Museum logo looked strange driven so close to the head of the lion. In accordance it seemed wise to revise the shirt one last time before considering it completed.



PROJECT

Design Wrap-up

Once the shirt details were wrapped and the relationship between the logo and the lion were resolved the overall design was improved.

At this point the design is still not ready for production, and one of the biggest concerns for moving it forward for production will be selecting a producer and revising the design one last time to suit the requirements of that company. With such a strong concept in place, however, the work to finalize the design for production will be a simple matter of small tweaks and revisions to suit any specific requirements by that producer.





Outcome Statement

All aspects of this project have struck me as a success.

The skateboard resulted in a bold, intriguing design likely to young people and older skaters alike to desire the design. The shirt complies with modern shirt design expectations and puts a more modern spin on the Tsavo Exhibit than any shirt currently in the Field Museum product line.

Story of the Tsavo Lions

In March 1898 the British started building a railway bridge over the Tsavo (SAH-vo) River in East Africa. Over the next nine months, two large male lions reportedly killed and ate 135 railway workers and native Africans. Crews tried to scare off the lions and built campfires and thorn fences for protection, but to no avail. Hundreds of workers fled Tsavo, halting construction on the bridge.

Before work could resume, chief engineer Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson (1865-1947) had to eliminate the lions and their threat. After many near misses, he finally shot the first lion on December 9, 1898, and three weeks later brought down the second. The first lion killed was measured at nine feet, eight inches (3 m) from nose to tip of tail. It took eight men to carry the carcass back to camp. The construction crew returned and completed the bridge in February 1899.

Disclaimer

It should be noted that the involvement of the Field Museum and any related entities mentioned in this booklet are strictly fictional. The Field Museum is not responsible for any part of these projects, though they are presented as having been done as a work for them.





The Field Museum