

# Art Direction for Board Games: Creating Compelling and Effective Visual Designs

Greg Grimsby  
Associate Professor of Game Design, GMU  
Owner, Ogre Crossing Games



• Click

Discard

Active

# Greg Grimsby

11

**Start of Round:** Choose one path A or B

A	B
Professor	Game artist

**Initiative [▲]:**

A	B
2010	1996

**On turn:**

Teach 3d modeling, animation, game design.	environment art, character art, UI, VFX, aka all the stuffs.
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**Monster actions:** Cut funding to projects. Shut down studio.

**End of round:**

- ♦ Take a short rest, cuz, I have 3 jobs and kids.
- ♦ Work on my board game projects: Alien Petshop, Ogres Dinner, The Maze
- ♦ Shuffle Life Happens deck.

Conditions

10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26



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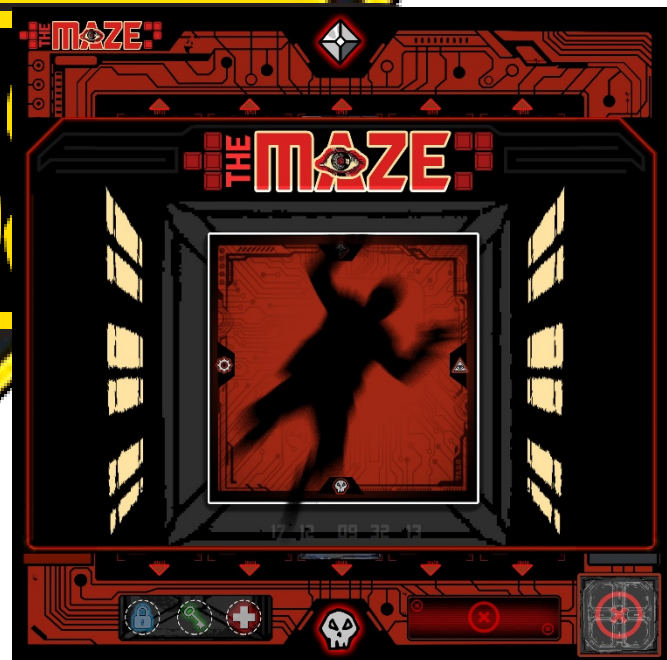
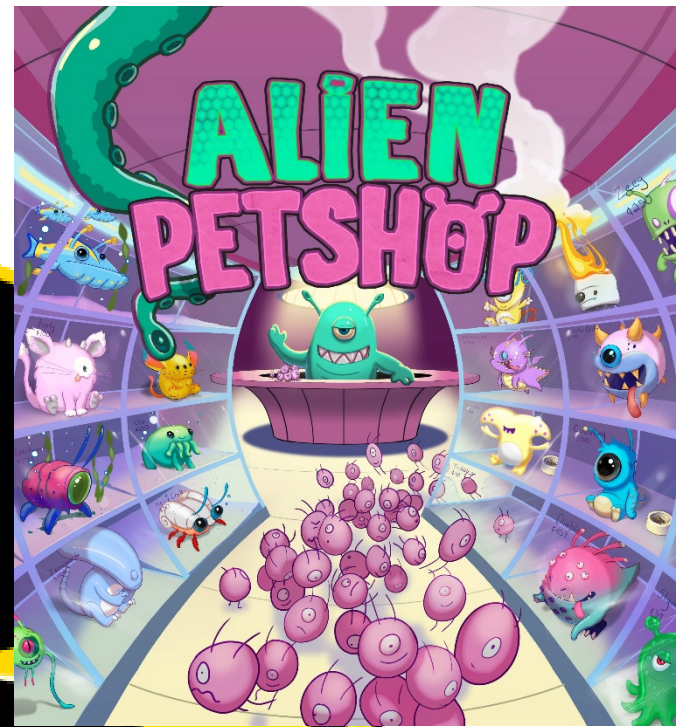




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[www.ogrecrossing.com](http://www.ogrecrossing.com)



# Four Aspects of Visual Design

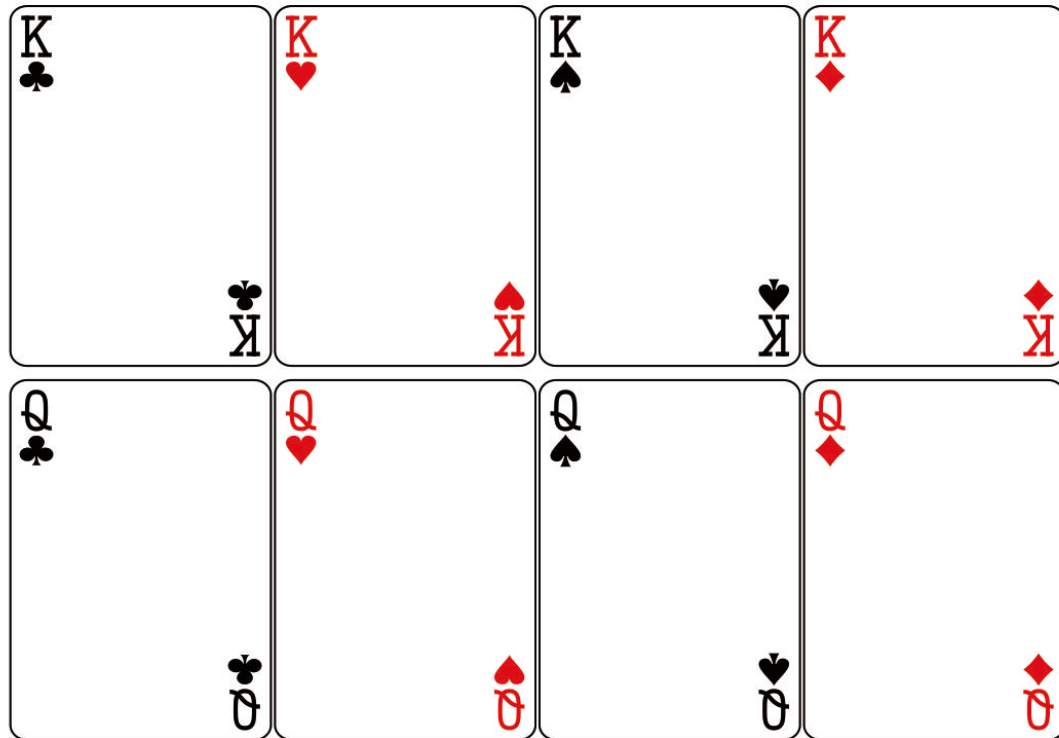
1. Function vs Aesthetics
2. Visual Hierarchy
3. Affordances
4. Compelling Visuals



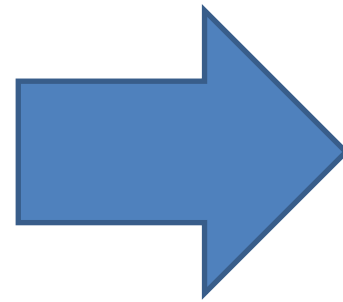
# Function vs Aesthetics



# Function vs Aesthetics, a Continuum



Info only



Info plus visuals

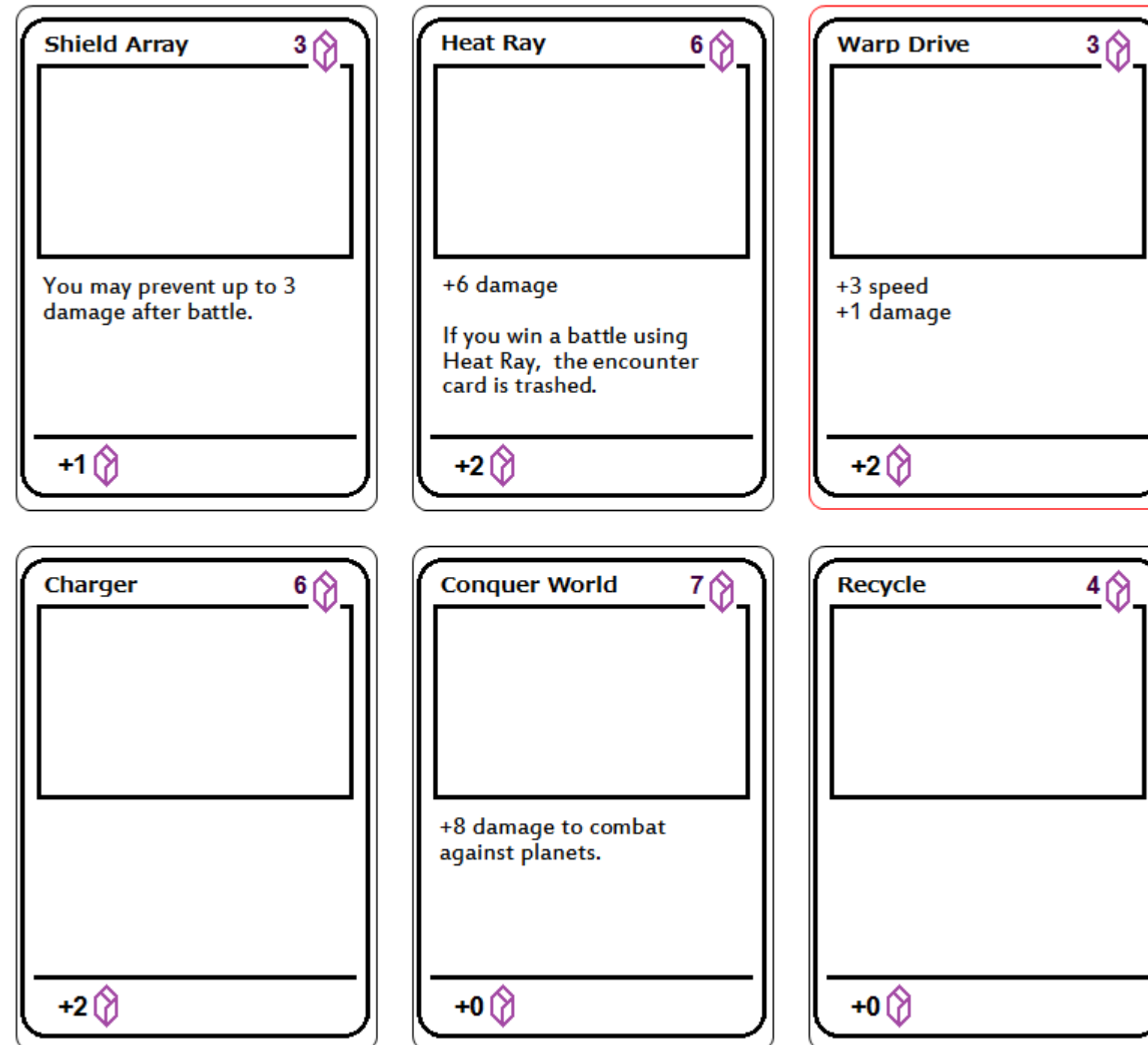


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# Die Ms Word Die!!



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# Function vs Aesthetics



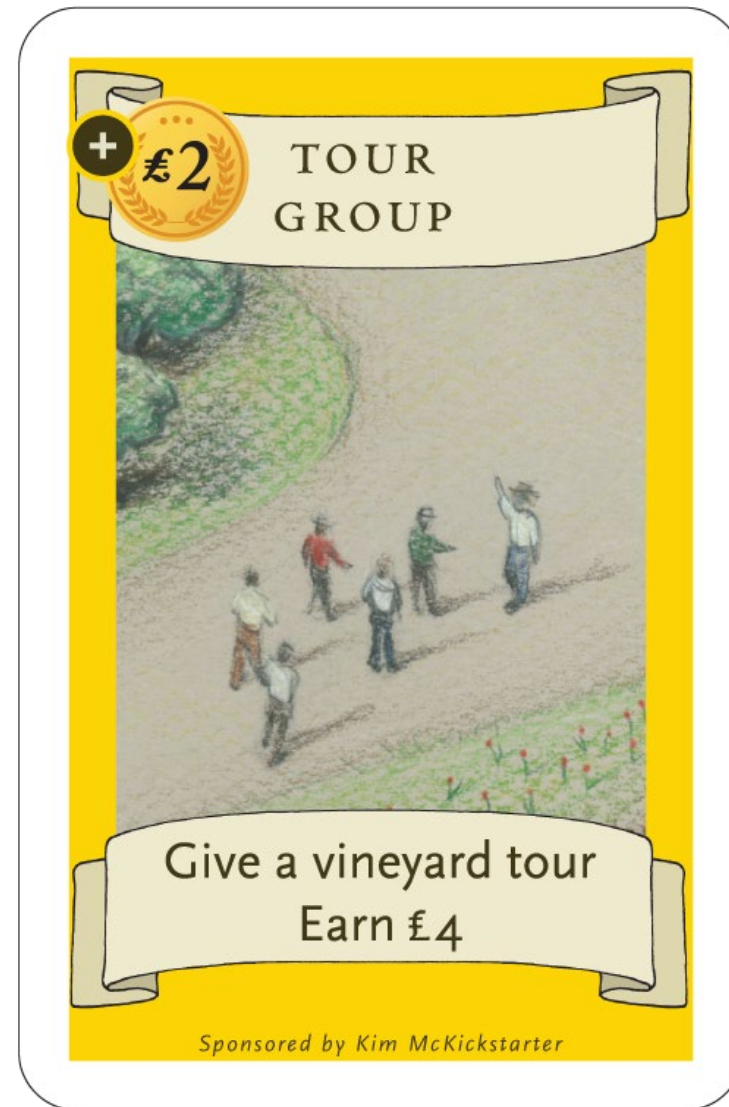
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# Occam's Razor

- Simple, clean design is preferred
- Favor simplicity, legibility





# Intentional Design

- Every mm of visuals on a product is treated to reinforce visual goals.
- This does not mean 'texture everything'



# Great Design

- edge weight varies and deckled (and not straight)
- Aspirational character illustration
- illustrated icons (almost like digital RPG icons)
- whitespace to reduce noise and isolate figure



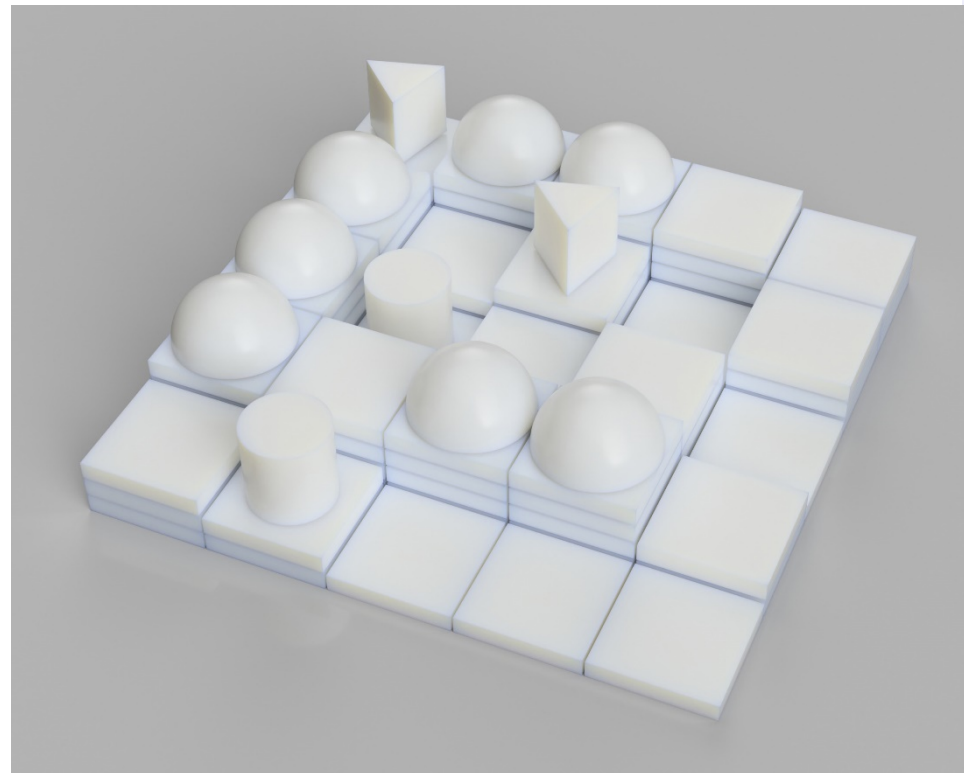
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# Function vs Aesthetics: Abstract games

- Abstract games can look beautiful too
- The Veneer of visuals and theming makes the puzzle compelling.



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# Make the Puzzle Pretty



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# Visual Hierarchy



# Visual Hierarchy

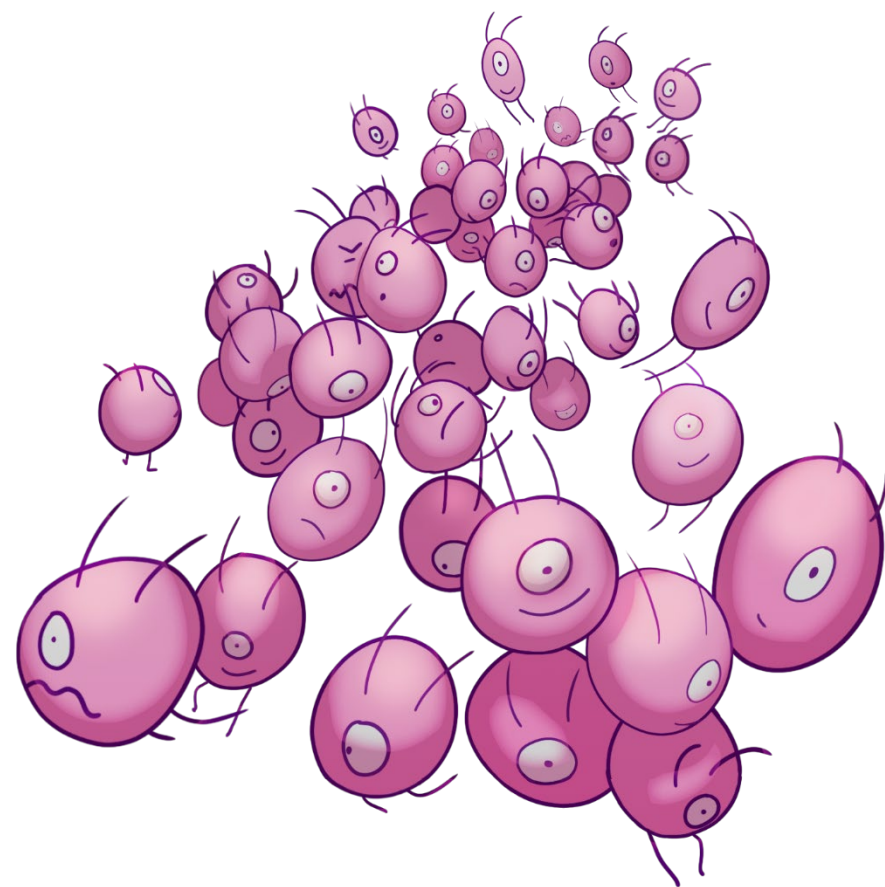
- The ordering of elements from most to least important
- Visual weight and emphasize provide that ordering



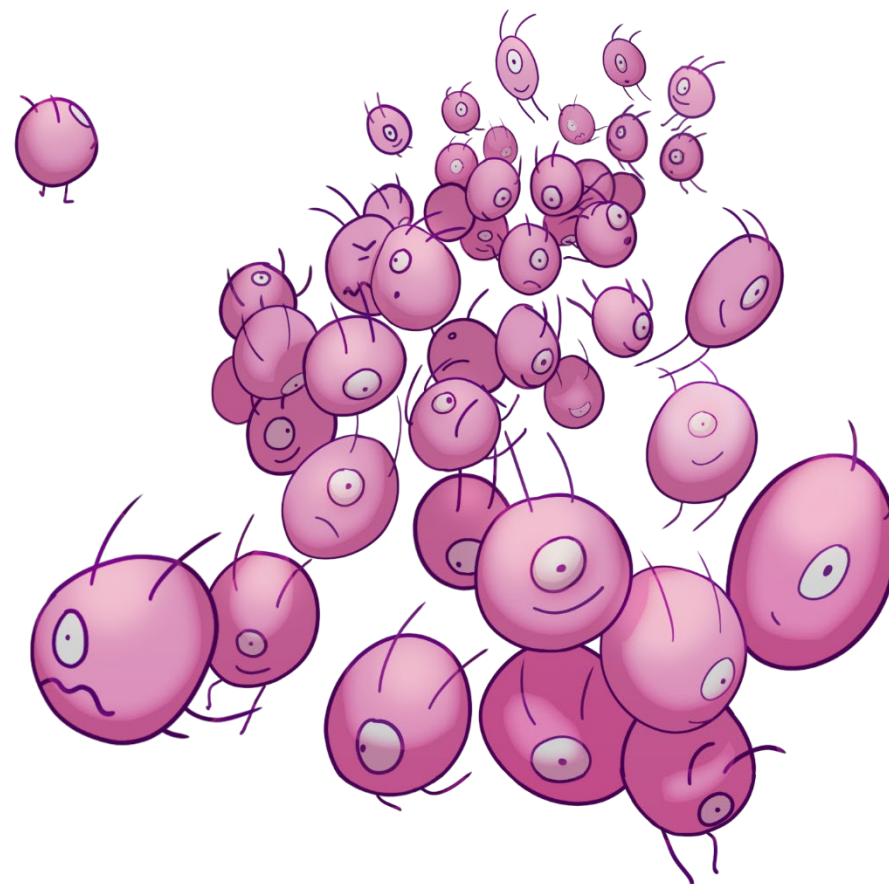
# Visual Hierarchy: Contrast

- almost any visual quality can have contrast
- It's a tool to emphasize design elements

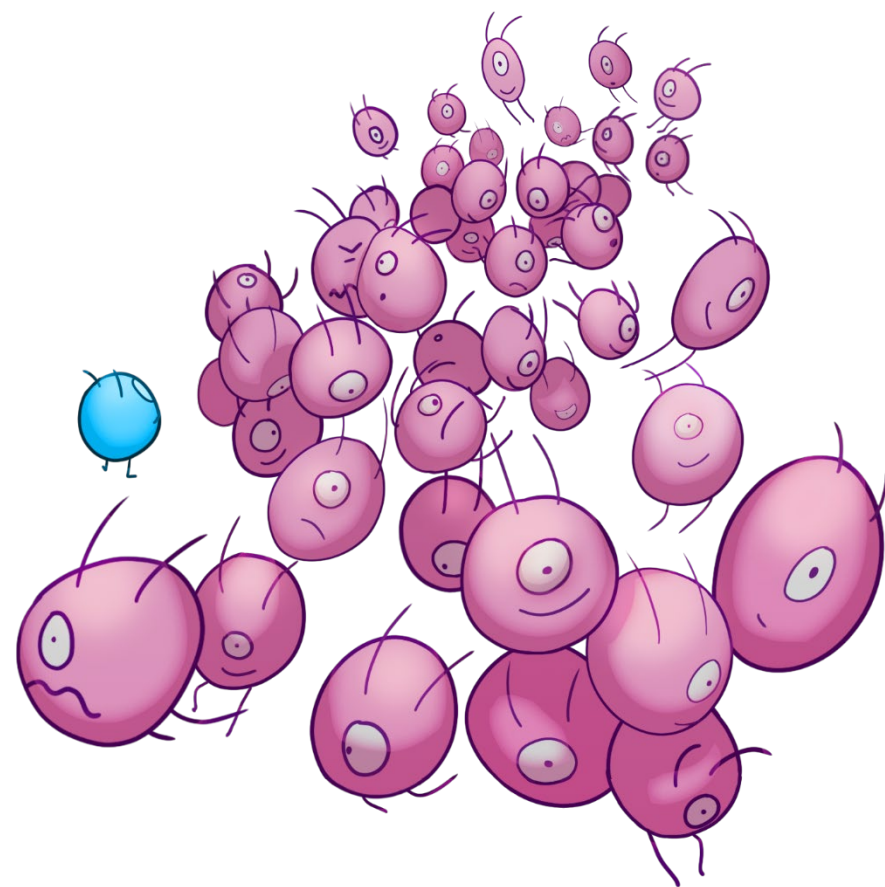




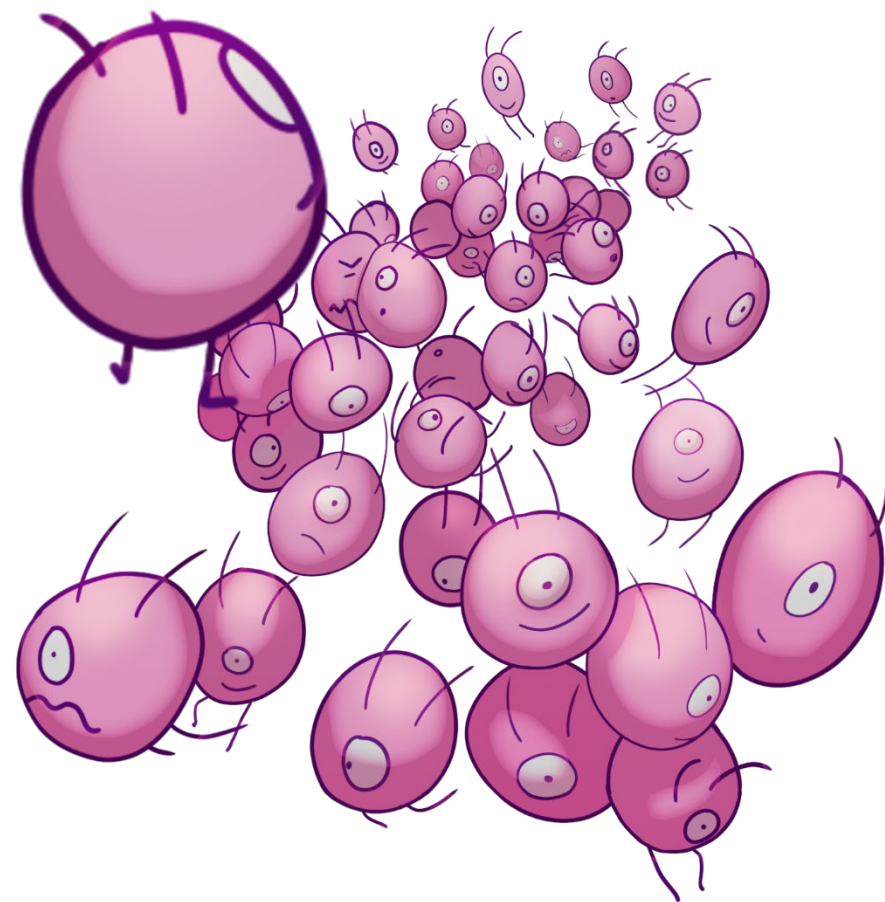




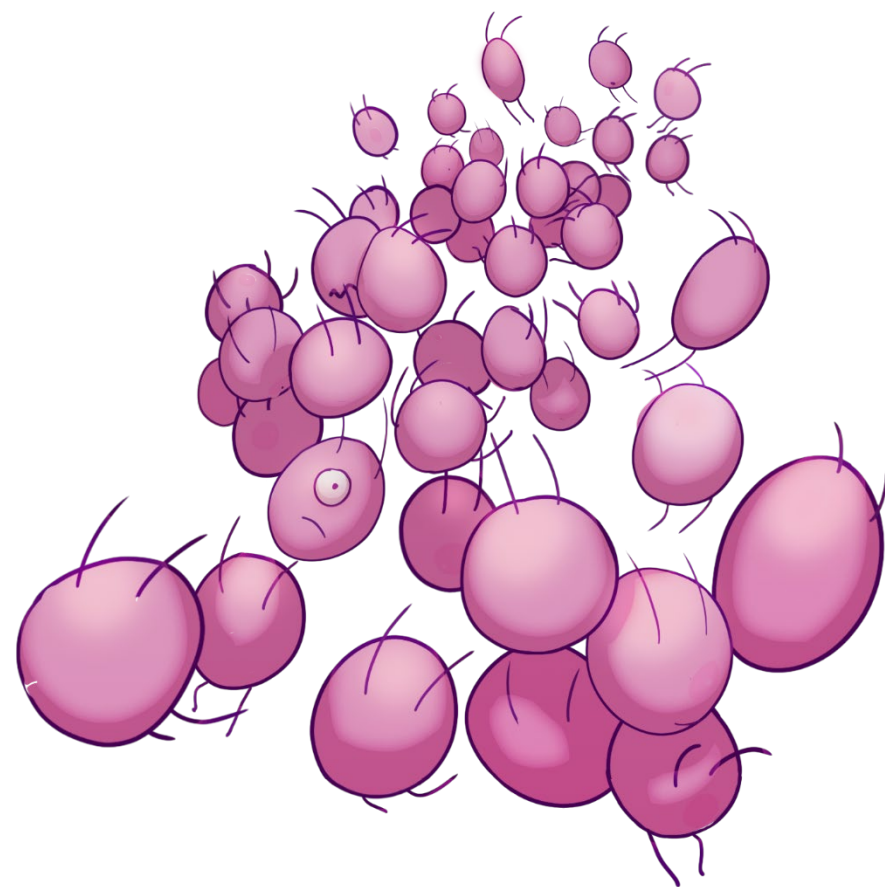




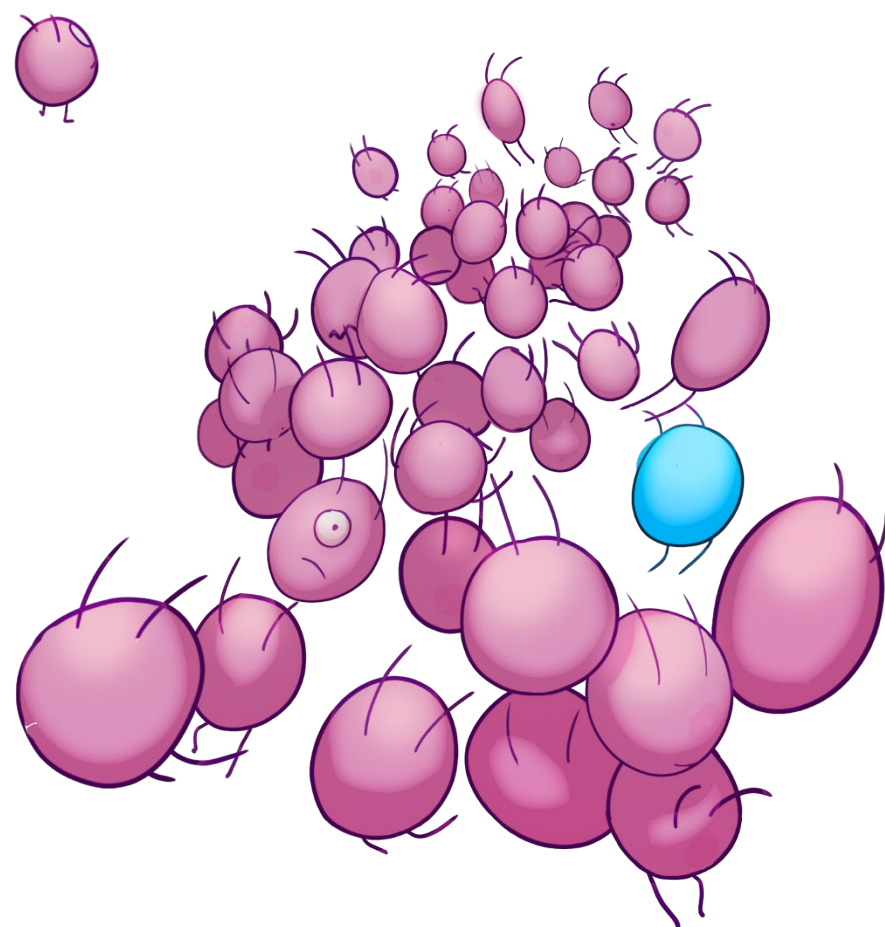














# Information Hierarchy

- Cost
- Name
- Ability text
- Discard/Keep





# Contrast

## Squint test



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# Contrast and simplification



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# Affordances



# Affordances

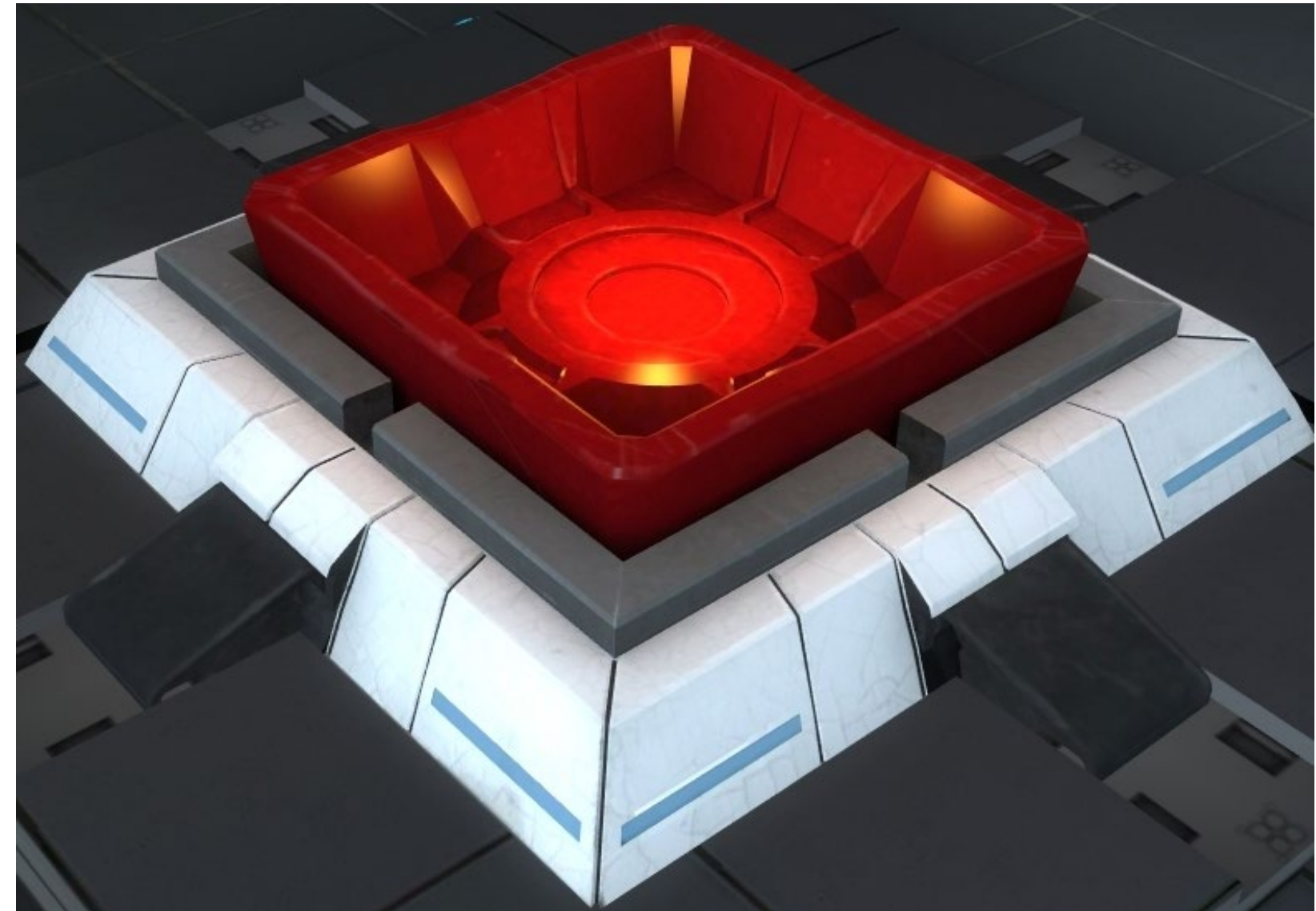


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# Affordance in Digital Games





# Affordances





# Affordances



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Before





After





# Graphic Design reduces Cognitive Load

- Affordances
- Visual Hierarchy
- Occam's Razor



# Compelling Visuals



# Compelling visuals = The Look and the Content

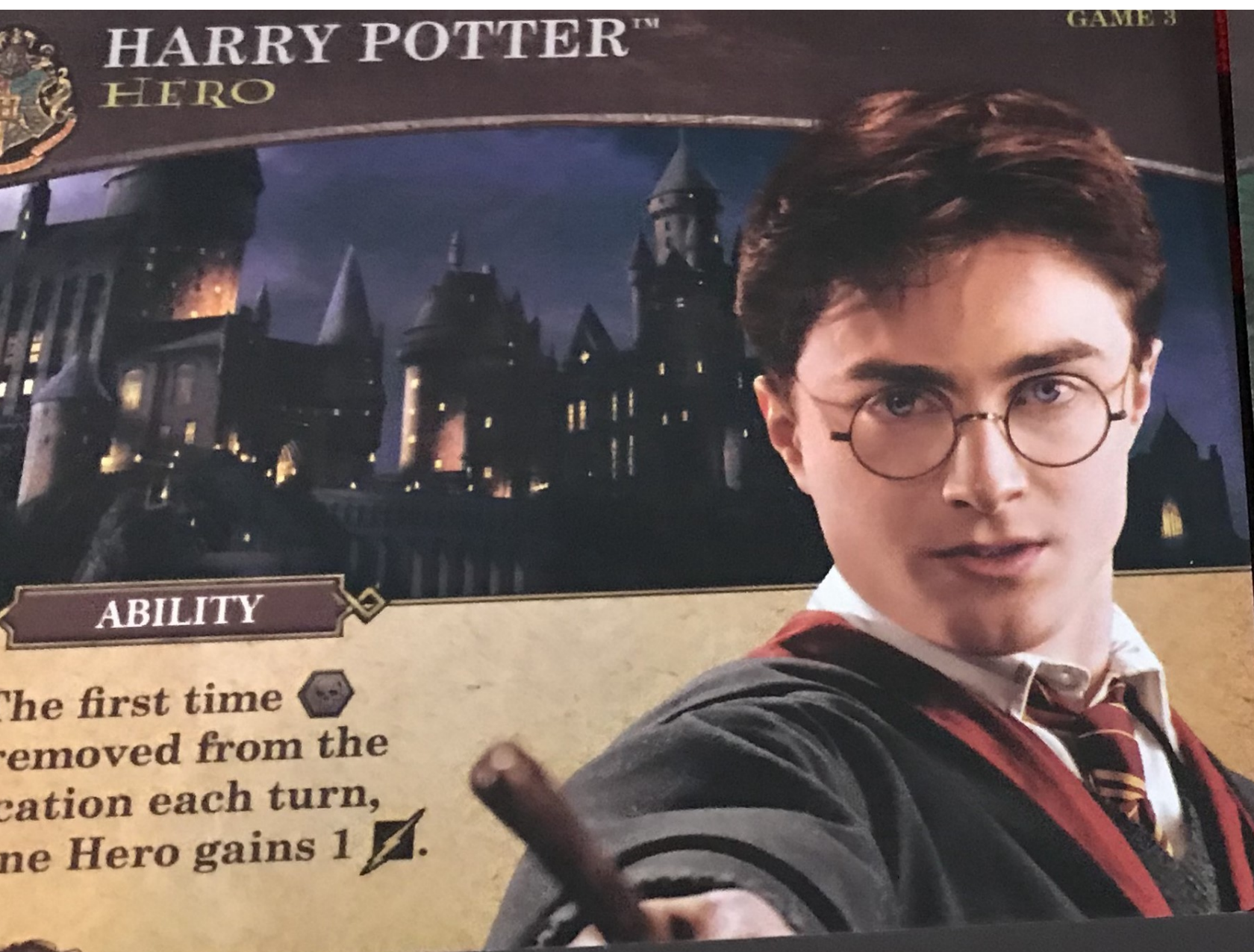
- aka the art style
- Art direction ensures a visual ruleset is established and followed through



# What is an art style?

- the selective application of art and graphic design elements to achieve a cohesive, purposeful look.
- Art elements: color, line, texture, form, shape;
- Abstraction is a key visual quality







yu zu ta ko  
ゆずたこ  
柚子章鱼  
Citrus Flavor Octopus



ma gu ro nai tou  
まぐろ納豆  
納豆刺身  
Tuna with Fermented Soybeans



ya ma ka ke  
まぐろ山かけ  
山椒金槍魚  
Tuna with Grounded Yam



ne gi to ro  
ネギトロ  
蔥拌金槍魚  
Minced Tuna with Chives



to bik ko  
トビッコ  
飛魚卵  
Flying Fish Roe



i ku ra  
いくら一貫  
鮭魚卵  
Salmon Roe



ka ni sa ra da  
カニサラダ  
螃蟹沙拉  
Crab Salad



ya ri i ka  
やりいか  
長槍烏賊  
Spear Squid



ma tau bu  
マツブ貝  
海螺  
Whelk



shi mo sa ba  
メサバ  
醋腌青花魚  
Vinegar Marinated Mackerel



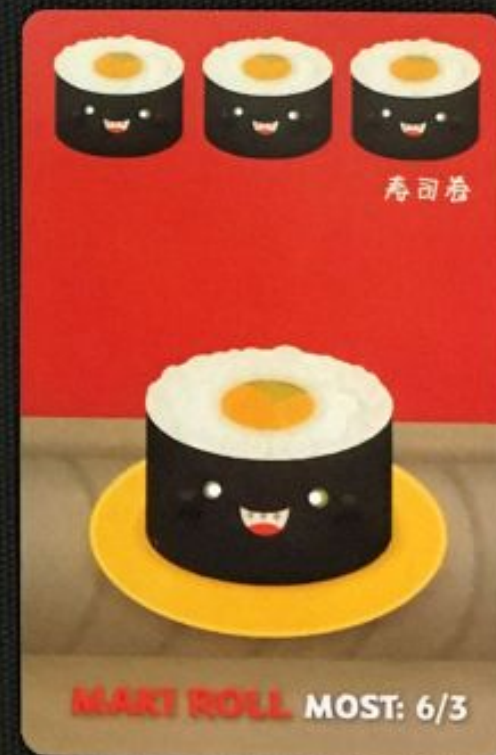
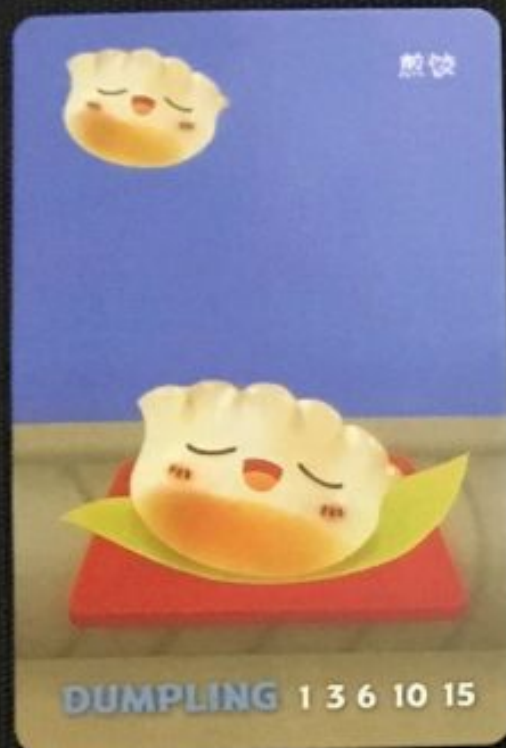
e bi  
えび  
蝦  
Shrimp



sa men  
サーモン  
鮭魚  
Salmon









# Aesthetic Needs?

- Attract your target audience
- Immerse players in Mood and Theme



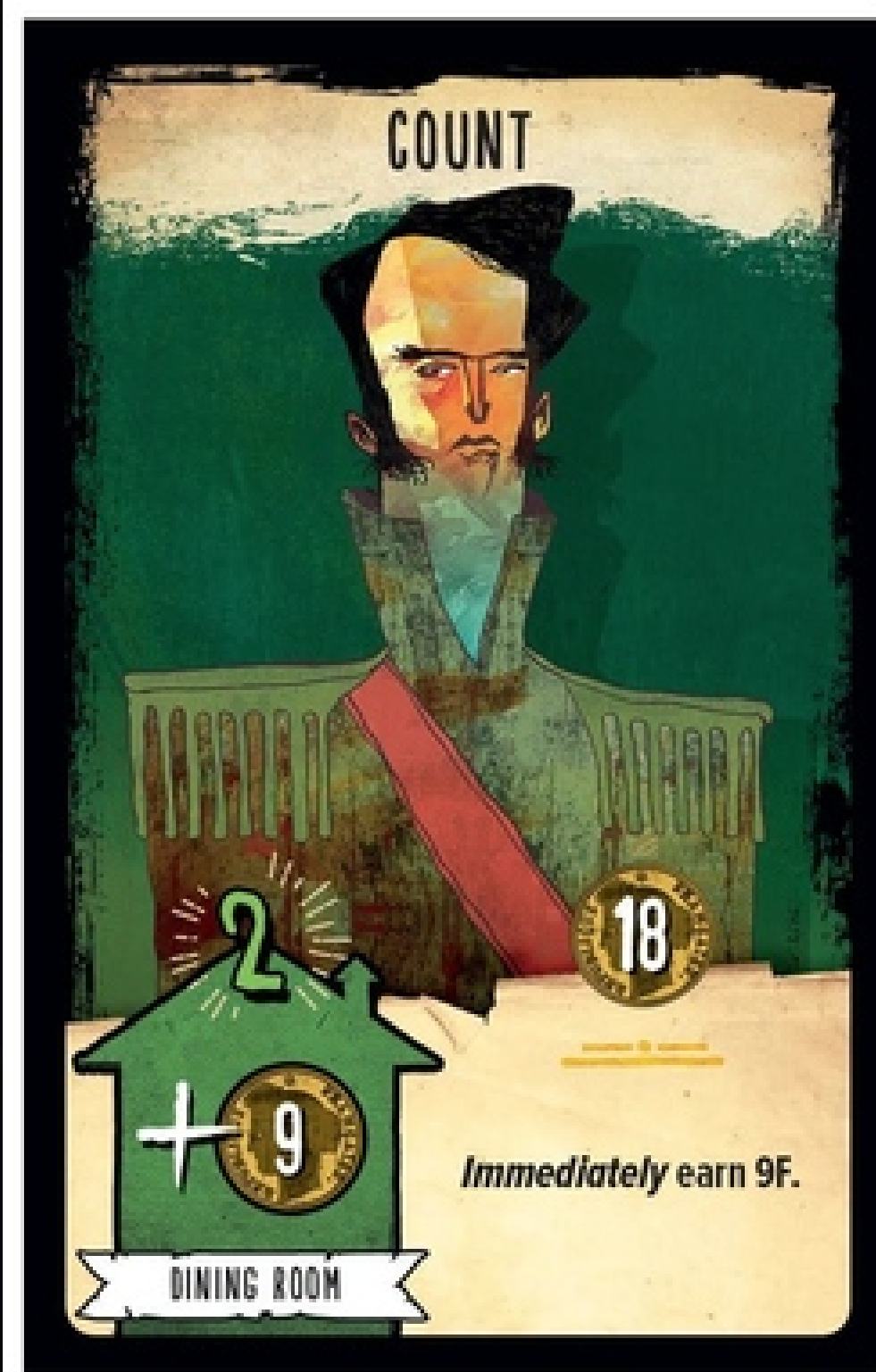
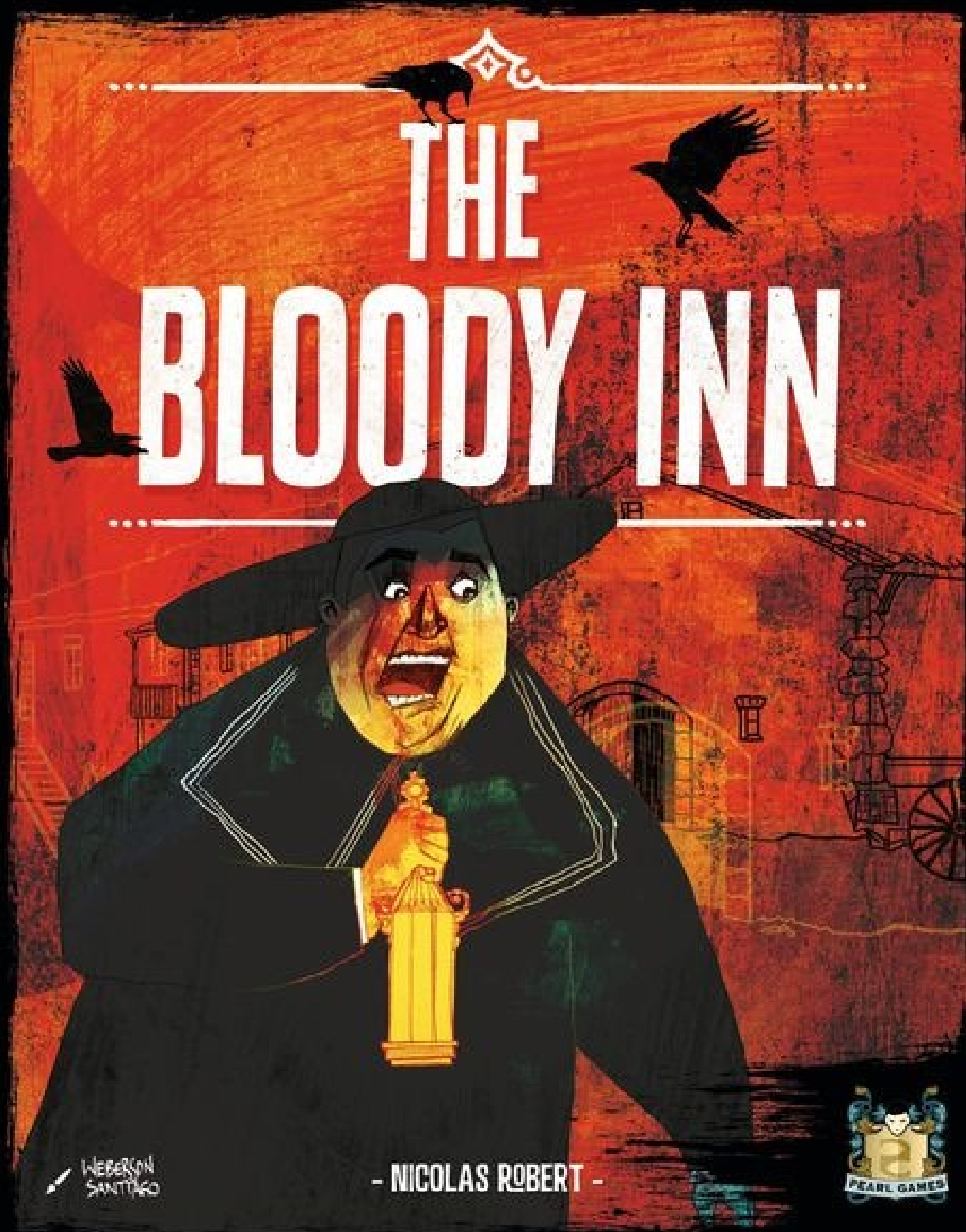


# Audience

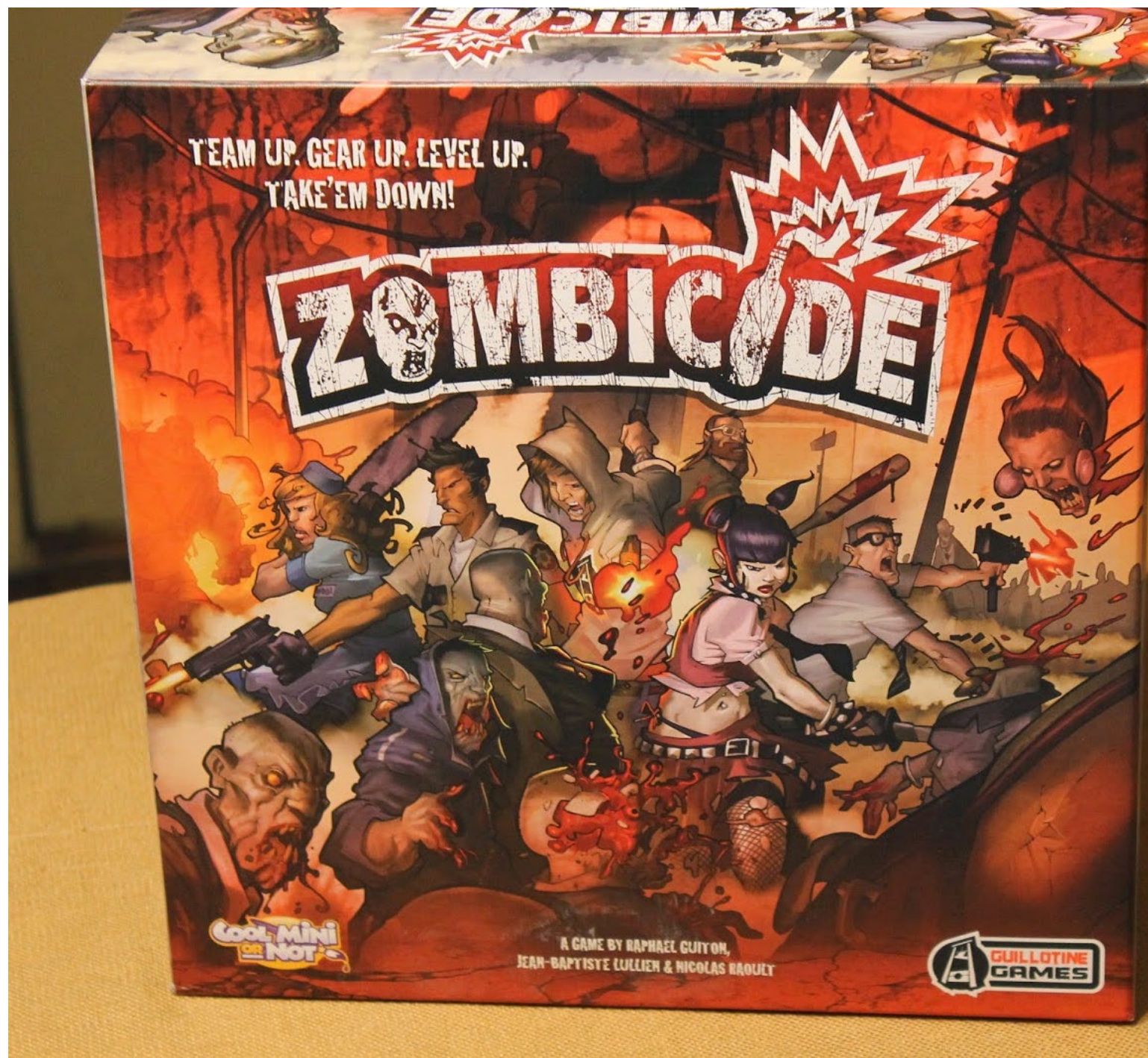
- Age?
- Weight of the game?
- What other media or games do they enjoy?









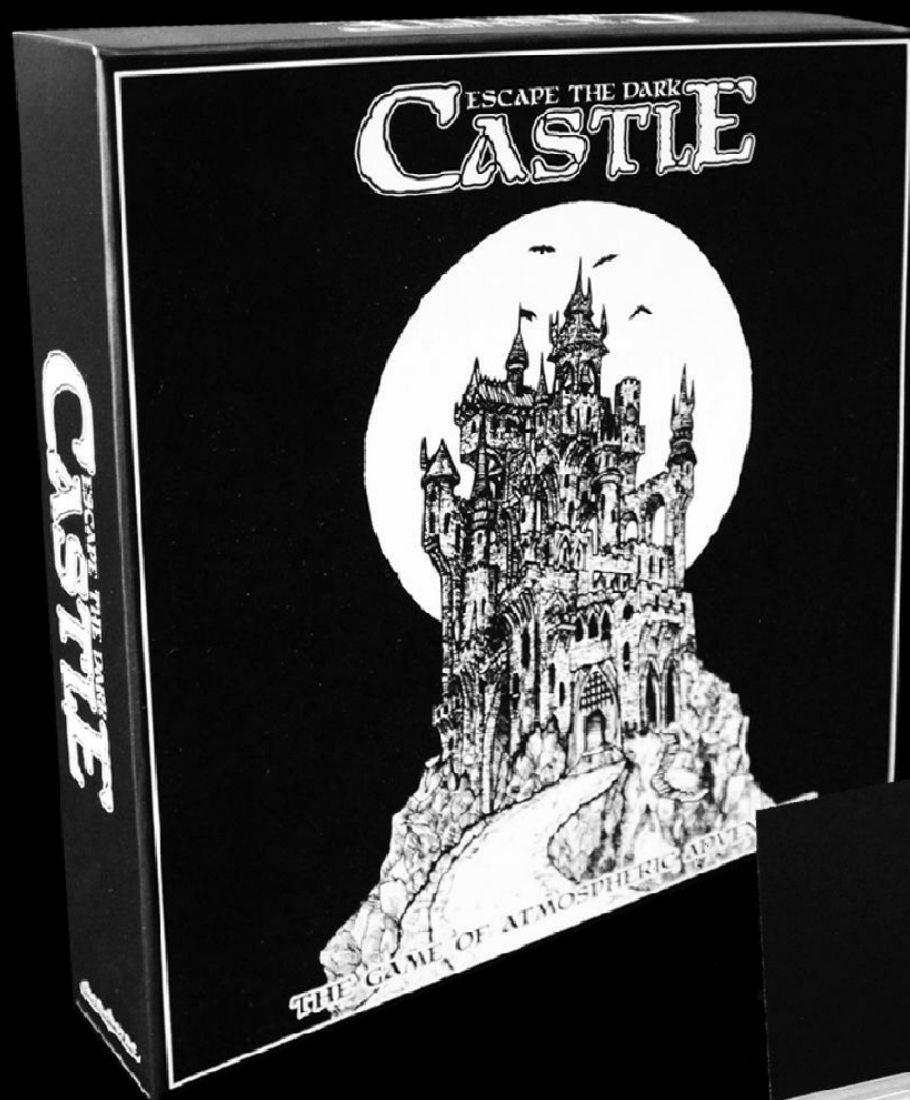




# Audience

- Other Media?





# ESCAPE THE DARK CASTLE







# BOSS MONSTER™





# Mood & Theme

- Content
- Colors
- Style and exaggeration

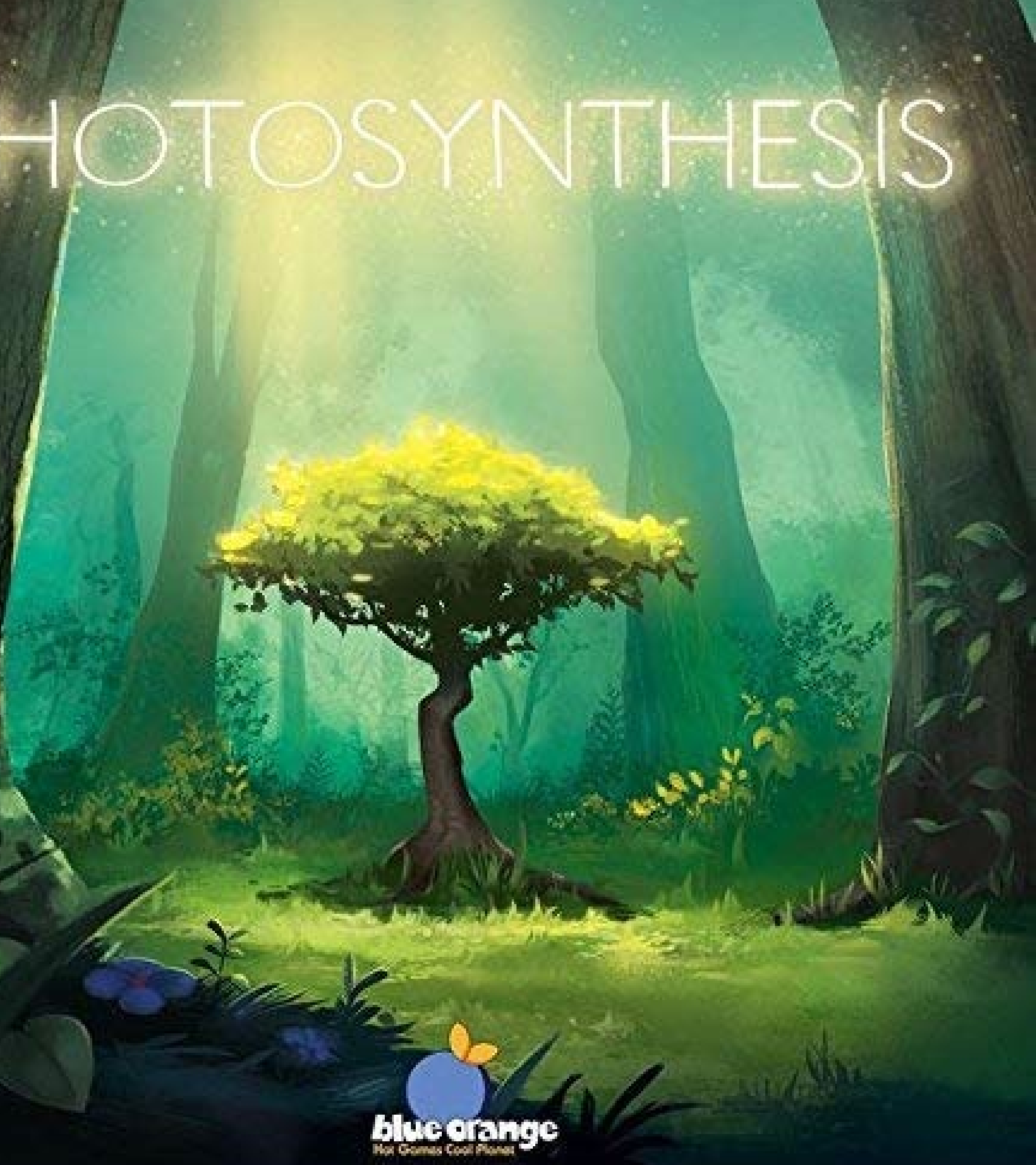


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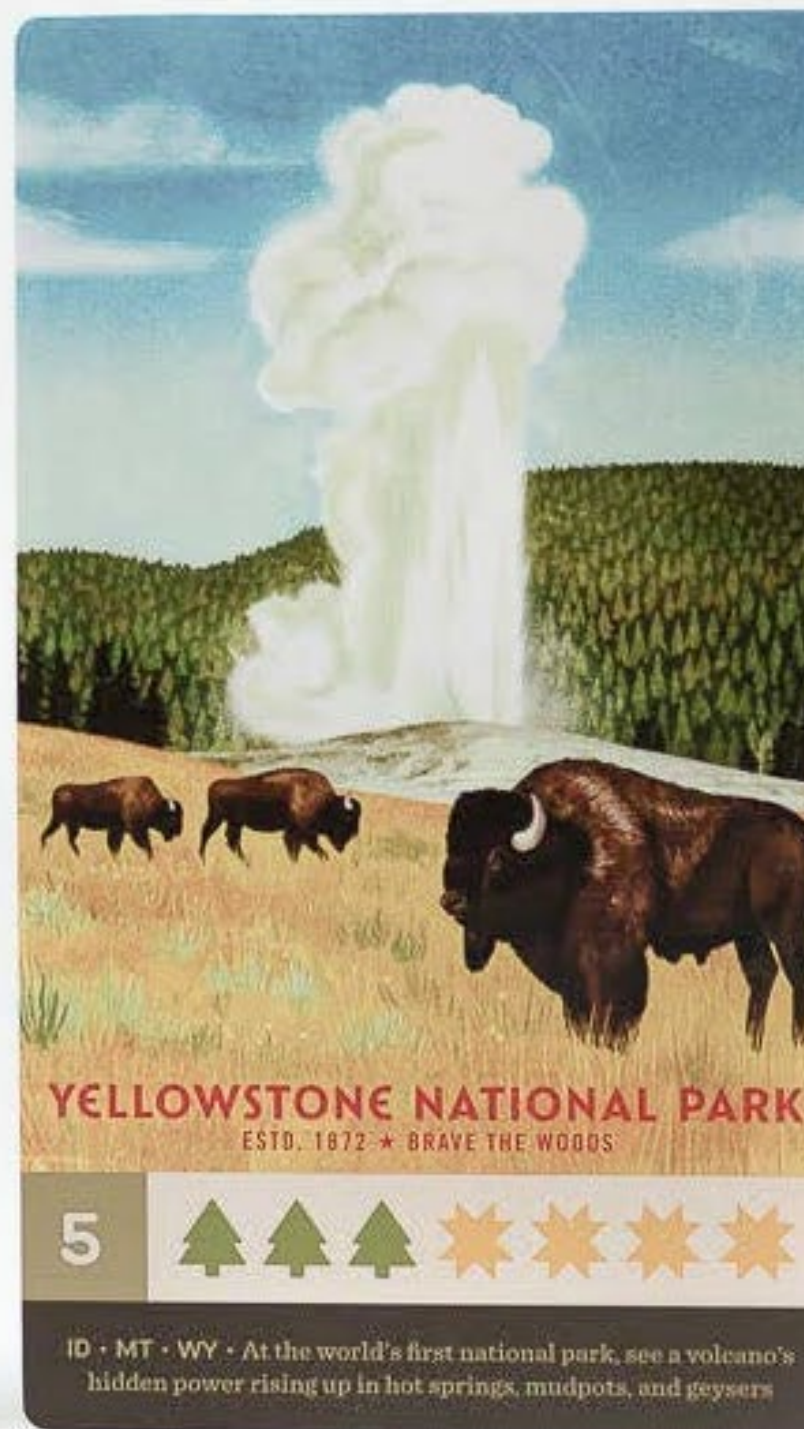
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# PHOTOSYNTHESIS



## PARKS



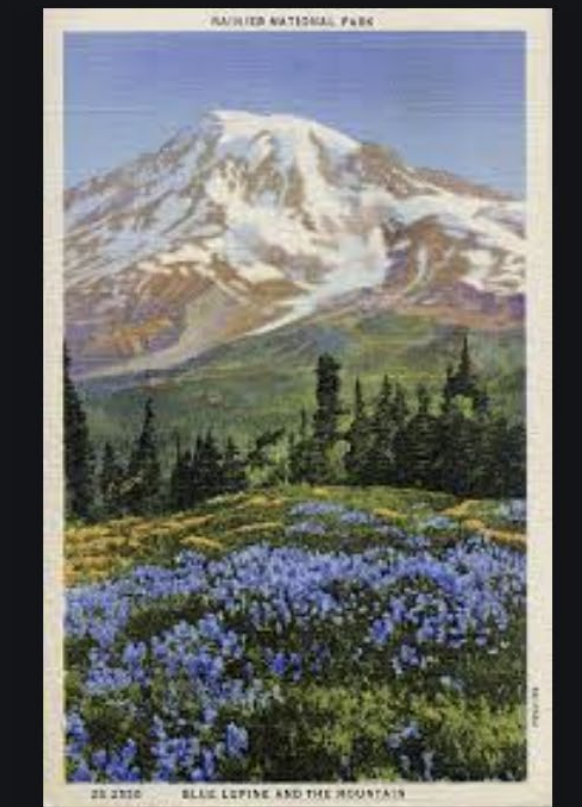




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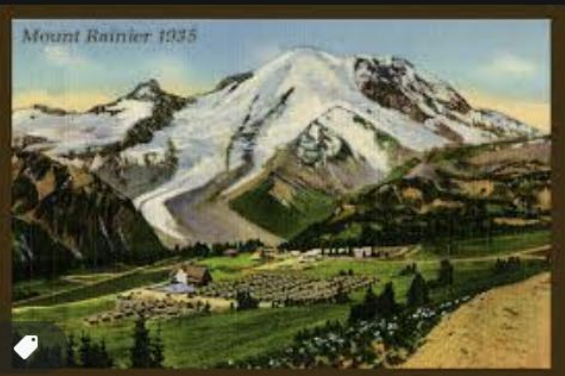
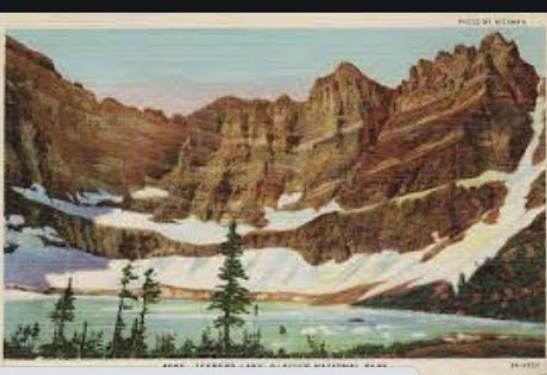
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Collectibles Art & Collectibles Mt Rainier...  
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**PI**

**GAIN FOOD FROM BIRDFEEDER**

THEN ACTIVATE ANY BROWN POWERS IN THIS ROW

**LAY EGGS ON BIRD(S)**

THEN ACTIVATE ANY BROWN POWERS IN THIS ROW

**DRAW BIRD CARDS**

THEN ACTIVATE ANY BROWN POWERS IN THIS ROW

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET**  
*Regulus calendula*

20cm

WHEN PLAYED: Play a second bird in your . Pay its normal cost.

Kinglets' ruby-red crown feathers pop up when they are agitated.

**MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE**  
*Parus gambeli*

30cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Gain 1 or from the birdfeeder, if there is one.

These flame-colored birds are hard to see because they look like the canopies of evergreen forests.

**WESTERN Tanager**  
*Piranga ludoviciana*

30cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Gain 1 or from the birdfeeder, if there is one.

These flame-colored birds are hard to see because they look like the canopies of evergreen forests.

**BAIRD'S SPARROW**  
*Ammodramus bairdii*

23cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Lay 1 on any bird.

Spencer Baird was the first curator of the Smithsonian.

**HOUSE WREN**  
*Troglodytes aedon*

15cm

WHEN PLAYED: Play a second bird in your or . Pay its normal cost.

House wrens will remove the eggs of other birds and take over their nests.

**CHIPPING SPARROW**  
*Spizella passerina*

23cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Lay 1 on any bird.

These sparrows generally feed on open ground, but near trees.

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK**  
*Sturnella neglecta*

38cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: All players lay 1 on any 1 bird. You may lay 1 on 1 additional bird.

This pretty bird also has a beautiful flute-like song.

**COMMON RAVEN**  
*Corvus corax*

135cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Discard 1 from any of your other birds to gain 2 from the supply.

Ravens are omnivores whose diet includes insects, rodents, eggs, birds, and carrion.

**FRANKLIN'S GULL**  
*Leucophaea pipixcan*

91cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: Discard 1 to draw 2 .

These gulls make floating nests of plant material on prairie marshes.

**COMMON NIGHTHAWK**  
*Chordeiles minor*

56cm

WHEN ACTIVATED: If this bird is to the right of all other birds in its habitat, move it to another habitat.

Nighthawks are crepuscular, hunting flying insects at dawn and dusk.



# Immersion and Aspiration



We see this



We Imagine  
this



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# Aspirational Imagery

- Establish our identity
- I want to be that!
- Immersion



# Immersion

- Narrative



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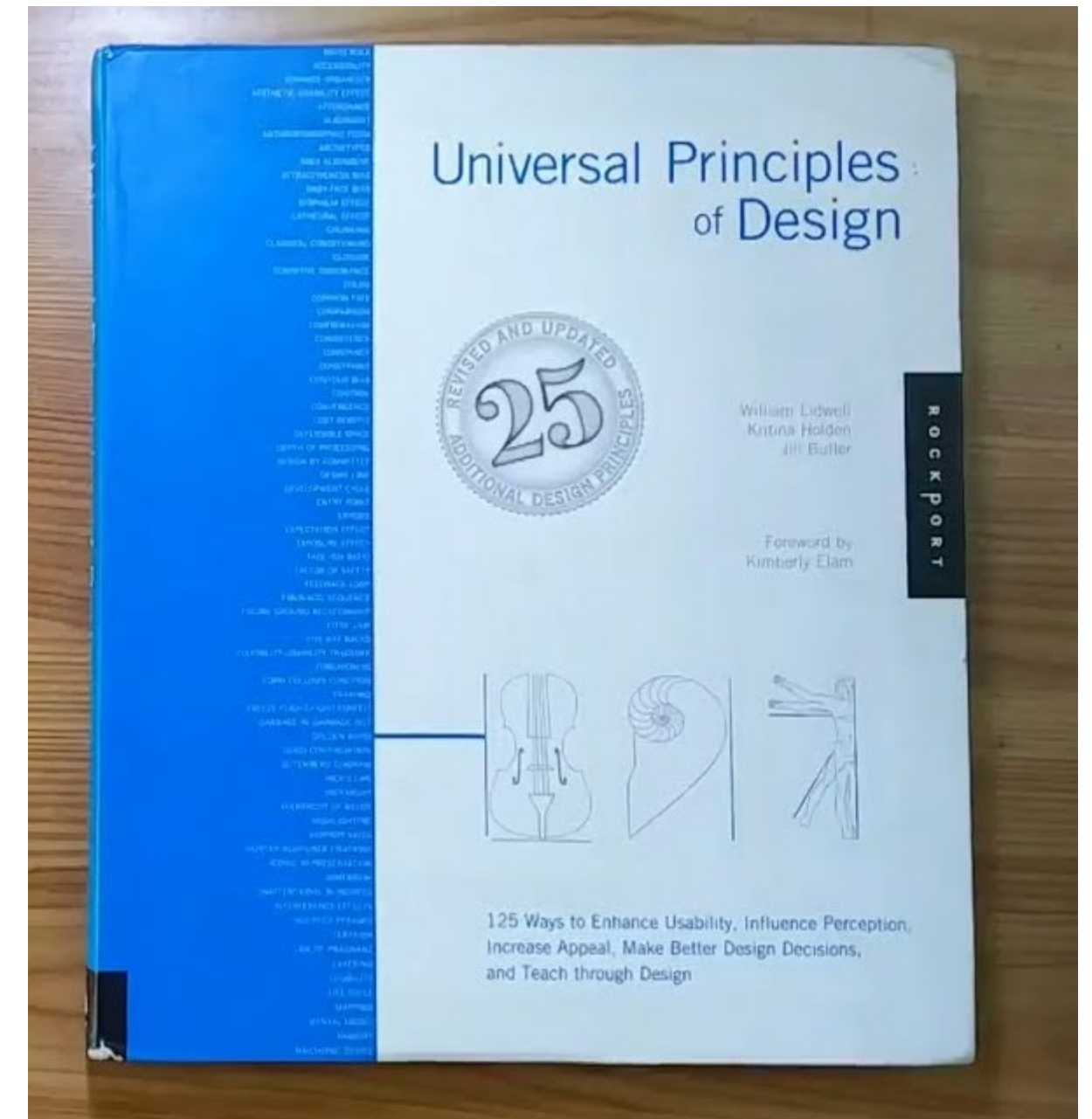
# Aesthetics

- Communicate the mood
- Enthrall your audience
- Support the gameplay/theme/narrative
- Reduce cognitive load



# Visual Design through a UX Lens

- **Universal Principles of Design**  
William Lidwell, Jill Butler, Kritina Holden



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A DISCUSSION OF VISUAL DESIGN FOR BOARD GAMES



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# Thank You!