

Under The Sea Chess Board

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I was tasked with designing and creating a chess board for an exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame with an "Under the Sea" theme. The aim was to incorporate influences from various eras and artists into the design while maintaining a marine theme. It was crucial to prioritize quality, durability, and piece differentiation by position. Above all, the chess set had to be visually appealing to beginners, using elements that evoke thoughts of bubbles, splashes, and vibrant colours.

In my initial research, the works of Joseph Hartwig and Gabriel Schama greatly influenced me. Hartwig's renowned Bauhaus-Schachspiel chessboard featured pieces shaped to represent their movement, while Schama's laser art showcased intricate details and depth. In my contemporary research, the Memphis Movement's furniture design stood out most, emphasizing shape, line, and colour. This design style complemented the marine life theme and, after thorough study and brainstorming, was incorporated into my chess set.

The chess set both visually and functionally met brief standards, embodying the expected "bubbly, splashing, and colourful attributes." Distinctive from other novelty chess sets, it featured chunky, three-dimensional pieces with a two-dimensional art style, giving it a cartoon-like feel. The pieces were engraved with abstract cartoon faces and exaggerated features, such as oversized tails, inspired by cartoon aesthetics. One side featured warm tones, while the other was cool. To distinguish the black and white sides, a wood stain was applied. Patterns inspired by the Memphis Movement, consisting of geometric shapes and wavy lines filled the pieces and the board. Engraving was used on the board to indicate piece movement, enhancing functionality.

The intricate engraved and laser-cut features were thoroughly crafted using Illustrator, along with the colour choices for the pieces displayed on the poster. Although I faced challenges due to my limited experience with laser cutting and Illustrator, the result was worth the effort. Not initially vector drawing the pieces with the laser cutting requirements was my biggest mistake as many of the lines were detached, hence having to go back over and connect the lines. Colouring the pieces in Illustrator required a manual approach, which was very time-consuming. In the future, I may explore alternative platforms with a bucket tool.

Reflecting on the initial brief, the final design undoubtedly appealed to new players, capturing the essence of ocean life, and was created at a high level of durability. The chess set's pop cartoon-inspired pieces introduced an element of novelty, the board's border featured giant bubbles, and the water-drip bases on the pieces added to the whimsical factor. Chess beginners would find these features impressive, as they deviate from the conventional chessboard aesthetics.

The completed chess set not only met all the brief's requirements but also offered a unique experience for players. Each piece possessed its own personality and identity, from the main characters to the pawns, evident in their expressions, physiques, and accessories. The set's attention to detail and thematic features truly embraced the "Under the Sea" theme, presenting a truly remarkable approach to the industry standard chess set.

REIMAGINED IN COLOUR:



SIDE VIEW

