

I was a latch key kid raised by a single mom. With an insatiable appetite of punk, hip hop, skateboarding, and counterculture, I probably should have been in a band. But instead, by the age of 15 I was touring the country playing with yo-yos. By the age of 16 I was a World and National Champion and the day after High School graduation I was on a plane traveling 2,000 miles to be a full time Yo-Yo Pro and designer.

Several years later, with more Championships under my belt and a passport full of stamps, I was at a crossroads. This thing I had spent so much time, effort and love on was not feeling the same. I had helped others build brands, design yo-yos and change an industry. But now it was my turn. At the wise old age of 24 I left my corporate job and went out on my own.

Going back to my roots, I wanted to tell stories with my yo-yos, not just churn out another consumable. Connect them with all the cultures I love. With my brand, Recess, I've continued to travel the world, sharing my passions and ideas with a whole new generation.



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First Base

When you take a recess, you are taking a break. In school recess is the part of the day you can hang out with your friends and just be yourself. For grownups, it's a break from the norm. That's what a yo-yo is too. It's a chance to take a break from homework, or stand up from your desk and do something fun.

That feeling has always been the guiding principle of what I do with Recess. Whether you're learning how to yo-yo for the first time in one of our school programs where we teach thousands of kids every year, or you are just taking some time from your day to reconnect with your inner child, I want the products I put out to give you that feeling.

The core product of the Recess line is the First Base. Think of it like our Air Force 1 or Air Max 1. They're the perfect canvas to tell our stories on, and we tell a lot of them. The next pages I'd like to share some of what we've done. From subtle baseball team palette cues to full collections, the First Base has been the perfect canvas for telling our stories.





Fruit Series : Collection One

Fruit is a funny thing. They come in all these bright colors that have evolved in nature over a millennia. We almost know what they'll taste like by the color of their skin. That multi sensory experience is what I wanted to tap into with the "Fruits" Pack. Letting the juicy, candy colors pop through the graphic, not only coloring the fruit but filling your whole hand with a huge piece of eye candy.

Growing up skateboarding, companies would develop themed graphic series. They would have amazing art with a particular, but nonsensical theme, loosely representing each team rider sponsored by the brand. I really wanted to capture that with the graphics of the First Base.



Fruit Series : Collection Two

The Fruit Series turned into our most successful release and everyone wanted more. For the next wave I wanted less sweetness and more juicy with the palette. Instead of translucent candy colors I worked with the factory and material vendor to get a near opaque plastic that gave a more mature fruity feel. To find the perfect amount of white pigment it took several rounds of samples, but I was very determined to create a unique color palette.

Working with designer Drew Tetz (Dua Lipa, Oasis, Disney) we created a series of immersive art / colors. Where one ends, the other begins. Utilizing plastic color to complete the artwork. Saving production cost with pad-printing ; and integrally connecting the colorway / artwork to the product.



Dinosaur Collection

The goal with the Dino series was to highlight what makes people love dinosaurs. Each color was chosen to represent their characters in the prehistoric themed media kids, and adults, love. Recess has a wide consumer base. These yo-yos will be in the hands of kids learning to yo-yo in our school programs. And also be sold online to older, experienced yo-yo players who love Recess and our cheeky vibe.

To get the perfect graphics for this collection, I had the opportunity to work with one of my favorite artists, Perry Shall, the Art Director for The Black Keys and their label Easy Eye Sound. I wanted something that could be cool to a school aged student, but have a subtle "wink and a nod" for the older crowd. Perry pulled a lot of great inspiration from cartoons like "Land Before Time" and "We're Back". The character design in those movies have such great expression that a wide range of audience can find humor in.

In addition to yo-yos, this collection also had t-shirts, and enamel pins, so it was crucial to pick a palette that could work across different materials, processes, and finishes. I landed on a tight palette that looks good on metal, textiles, translucent or opaque bases.



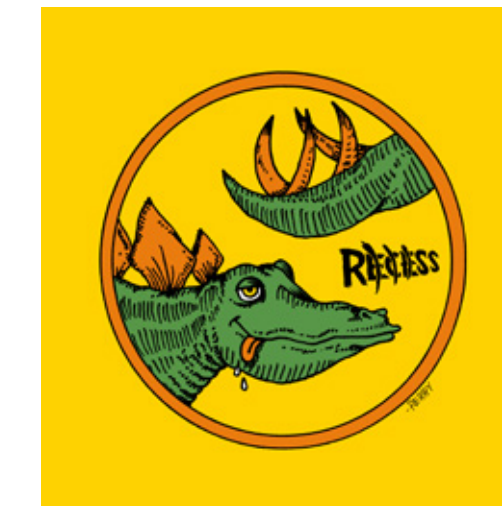
T Rex

T Rexes are typically portrayed as the "main character" Dinosaur. It is designed in blue because I wanted to use one of the more popular yo-yo colors. Red seems to be the obvious choice here - but I was not going for a violent theme. Blue represents leadership, confidence, stability, inspiration.



Stegosaurus

Typically Stegosaurus are portrayed as aloof dinosaurs, because they move slower. Films often give them a dim-witted sense of hope. They proceed with caution to not be a victim. Yellow represents happiness, caution, imagination, hope, joy.



Pterodactyl

Pterodactyls having the capability of flying which sets them apart from other dinosaurs. Popular media often gives them the "alternative" role. It creates a layer of mystery as they don't interact the same way with many other dinosaurs. Purple represents rarity, creativity, mysteriousness, calm.

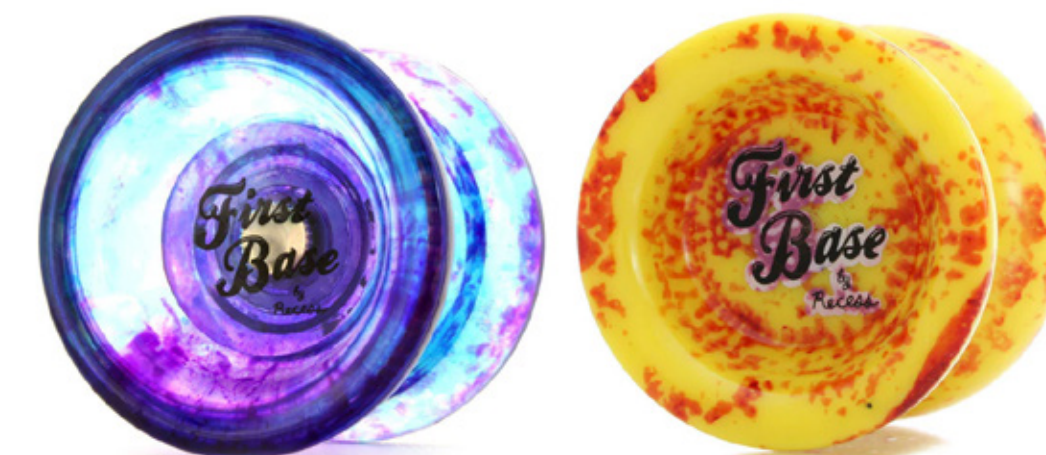




Dyeing Techniques

I love music. Both for the sound and for the cultures that embody it. Growing up I was really inspired by the counterculture of the 60s and Punk of the 70s. The DIY ethos they brought was ingrained in every aspect of their vibe. The recordings. The album art. The dyed, ripped up clothes. I wanted to be a part of it. This led to many trials and errors in dyeing. I learned from my mistakes and eventually I didn't have a white t-shirt left in my closet.

But it didn't stop with my clothes, I realized I could probably dye my white yo-yos too. The first results were a disaster. The color wouldn't stick to the hard plastic like it did with porous textile fibers. Reading about hair dying techniques solved the problem. Hair stylists will use cold water to wash out clients' hair in order to close the cuticle of their hair, locking in the dye. So I left the yo-yos in hotter dyes, for longer than I washed them with cold water to close the pores and lock in the color. The results were very vibrant and bright.



Jawbreaker Development

Dyeing yo-yos is not a cheap or easy process. But it allows you to have more control, and creating a totally unique product for Recess, and hopefully inspired future yo-yoers. When I made a white First Base, I knew I wanted to offer a special dyed editions.

Jawbreaker candy is such a striking palette, with motion conveyed through color. Seemingly being "blasted" onto the candy. Spraying the dye onto the yo-yo was the obvious choice, versus submerging them in dye.

This technique consists of heating your dye solution to boiling temperatures inside of a spray bottle. Mixing in a benzyl benzoate solvent, typically used on synthetic fabrics. Spraying onto your desired product. Then soaking in cold water to lock in your dye.

To achieve the right amount of color blending / mixture, yo-yos must be turned and repositioned between every color being sprayed.





Anodized Laser Engraving

Modern yo-yos use ball bearings to spin longer and advanced materials to maintain perfect balance.

Whether it is made of injection molded thermoplastics or high grade aluminium, stainless steel or titanium, each material has its own aesthetic details.

As you saw with the First Base, plastic can be easily made translucent or opaque, and even customized with dyes. For aluminum, the main material of high end competitive yo-yos, coloring and finishing can be trickier. Anodizing is an industrial process to oxidize a thin layer of color on the surface of the aluminum. To set my yo-yos apart I have taken a lot of care (and trial and error) working with my factory partners to create new techniques to add vibrant color and storytelling to my yo-yos.

Laser engraving removes a layer of anodize exposing a raw layer of metal to be re-anodized. This method can be used to highlight artwork, create new patterns, and give a new dimension to the product.

Look closely at the yo-yo with a black/silver finish and red re-colored engravings. Some of the red re-anodize bleed into the original anodize color. To stop this from occurring we started extending the “nickel seal” process of anodizing. Which is a thin, diluted later of nickel plating which protects the anodize from wear / damage. Extending this process also prevents the re-coloring from bleeding into the original anodize.



Color Blocking with Anodize

There are a lot of similarities between blocking a yo-yo and blocking a shoe. First you've got the shelf read. For a shoe it's the lateral view that draws the consumers attention and makes them pick it up. For a yo-yo it's the round face or the cup of the yo-yo. Then, for a shoe, there's On Foot. How the consumer sees the shoe as they're wearing the shoe. A yo-yo also has a Profile view. This is the shape of the yo-yo, how it fits in your hand, what you see when you're doing tricks. Finally, whether it's a shoe or a yo-yo, you have to think about how it will look in motion. On court, in a marathon, or a thrown a yo-yo spinning at 4,000 RPMs.

As you have seen, the graphics and body color is really important for a plastic yo-yo with a broad consumer appeal. But for high end competitive level yo-yos, considerations are different. Instead of plastic, these are made of high grade metal, usually aluminum but sometimes combined with other metals like stainless steel or titanium. Bright, or visible color combinations are important on the face of the yo-yo for audience/judging perspective. As the performer, you are landing the string in different ways in the profile of the yo-yo. So having clear visibility could be the difference between winning and losing.

These yo-yos are spinning so fast, and computer machined to such high tolerances that the way color is applied can drastically effect the performance. In order to have the thinnest, most durable application high end yo-yos are anodized. This is traditionally an industrial application, so it can be difficult finding a factory that can morph it into that creative dynamic. Interesting color combinations takes some communication to get them up to speed.

Selective splashing

This pattern is called "splash" anodize, as the mask is "splashed" onto the desired part.

Splashing just the gap of the Yoyo, or just the front facing cup can provide a few types of functional and aesthetic differentiation.

Splashing just the front cup helps the player maintain focus with less distraction looking down into the gap - and it also provides more attention when performing, as a yoyo with varying color will really pop against a black backdrop. It also gives the yoyo some motion even while in a static position.

Splashing just the gap can provide a cleaner forward facing appearance, while also giving you other color blocking options, as the front of the yoyo typically has more maskable surface options.



Fade Anodize

Fade anodizing creates a hard division / horizon between colors, and across a round object. Giving two distinct, bold, colors. Similar to an AF1 with a contrasting sole that creates a line between the sole and upper.

Fade anodizing also brings a spinning color into consideration, as the colors blend together when the yoyo is spun. So a properly combined mix can create a totally new third color.



Color Blocking with Laser Engraving

Laser engraving is typically used to mark yoyos with artwork, but in these cases it's used to create unique patterns and color blocking techniques.

The static-like finish was developed with our factory by spinning the yoyo on a dremel, focusing the laser on certain parts of the yoyo, and running a "test pattern" where the laser just engraves back and forth. It is not only a cool and distinctive pattern, but it creates it's own internal color blocking and contrast, as within the pattern bits of the anodized color show through against a stark white engraving. Similar to how an argyle or plaid has internal color blocking, but also gives an entire garment an individual look.

Used on the rims can help the player focus on the gap of the yoyo. It breaks up an otherwise dark colorway with a cleaner approach as opposed to anodize which is impossible to apply so evenly to an angled surface.



Jawbreaker Finish Air Force One 1

Creating a proprietary pattern / finish / material / color really sets apart a product, which is always a goal with my designs. I created a pattern sampling the Jawbreaker dye process I developed, and then applied it to a variety of AF1.

Utilizing various densities of the pattern for different blocking purposes, and subtle applications of such a noisy pattern are my favorite applications.



Jawbreaker Dyed Air Force One 1

To create what I thought was the most interesting use of the pattern, concentrations of spray to create blocking. I masked and dyed an AF1 as a tangible proof of concept.

Dye can be unruly, as you can see by the concentration on the eyestay, and uneven application in some places. But there is some great color blending, the swoosh, the “AIR” sole motif, heel tab, and toe cap are some highlights.

Masking



Spray One



Results One



Close-Up



Masking Two



Spray Two &



Close-Up



Results Two

