

# Mound Man's Games Combine Design, Inventiveness

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Games, anyone? From Keith Havens of Mound, the answer is yes — over and over and over again. An artist, "basically a painter," Havens started creating games and toys in 1960, because he felt the field offered scope for artistic design as well as inventiveness.

He became so enthusiastic about the design potential of table games that he now assigns such projects to his students at St. Paul School of Associated Arts, where he has taught five years.

He also uses students to test games he has invented. Once he perfects the parts and performance of a game, he makes up a model to look as much as possible the way he hopes the marketed game might look.

He may present the same game in different styles, to show its possibilities to the company to which he submits it. For instance, one of his newest games to be accepted for the market is called "Jati," being marketed by 3M. It involves small square tiles to be placed on a board marked off in squares.

Originally, the "board" was a piece of stiffened burlap, rolled scroll-style and packaged in a round tube big enough to hold the tiles also.

But Havens realized this packaging wouldn't fit into the 3M "Bookshelf Games" format, to which he planned to submit it. So he reworked the game with plastic boards and box packaging — and it sold.

Havens has about a dozen games "on their way to market." As he produces the models, he sends them to the various game companies as a writer sends off manuscripts. Sometimes they come back, sometimes

they're kept to be "evaluated." (Three new ones are being evaluated by different companies right now.)

"All my games are strong in design and color to begin with," Havens said. "What happens when they get to

the manufacturer is something I can't control."

Another thing likely to be changed is the name of the game. Havens sends in all his creations with what he considers a catchy title, but it's rarely retained by the manufacturer.

Working titles on some of the games stacked around his studio at 109 E. 26th St. are "Polka Tilt," "Chabaqua," "Top Totem," "Gusher," "Zodiac," "8 Gates" and "Crossroads."

"Sometimes the name of the game may be changed four or five times before the final one," Havens said.

The most difficult type of game to sell, Havens said, is the strategy game. He has the explanation for that: "People don't like to think."

"What I try to do is come up with some novelty," he said. "But one of my drawbacks is that I get too elaborate."

Some of the games are designed for compact packaging by ingenious folding. "Zodiac," for instance is played on an octagonal board with hollow center, made in two halves, each folded map-style. "8 Gates" has a hexagonal board with spinning arrow built into the center of it, yet folds into a 12-inch square.

Among the most eye catching of Havens' recent designs is a chess set with a pyramid shaped piece of

wood at each end of the rack that holds the chessmen, and the black-and-white chess board folded pup-tent style to make a top for the case.

For somebody else, all this game making might be a fulltime job. For Havens, it's just a sideline.

He is a practicing artist and has, in fact, a show hanging until January at the School of Associated Arts.

He designed the combination drawing table and easels he used in his own studio — and they're also part of the equipment of Minneapolis School of Art, where Havens graduated and later taught.

Havens dreamed up something he calls "Wordy Birds," sketches of such imaginary birds as the Fireside Chat, the One Felt Swoop, the Howling Gale.

A calendar company has brought out a book calendar illustrated with these nutty birds and a firm in Iowa is negotiating to put them on sweatshirts.

Almost ready to submit to publishers is Havens' newest effort — "The Three Bears Revisited." He's updated the text to include such things as Goldilocks sipping instant soup, made from a mix, and the Three Bears watching television. Colorful and delightful illustrations strike a modern note, too.



Minneapolis Tribune Photo by Wayne Bell

KEITH HAVENS, ARTIST, WITH SOME OF THE GAMES HE HAS CREATED

*Aim of the games is good design as well as diversion*