



Behind the brands: Meet some of the brilliant minds behind your favorite Hasbro products

06 Dec, 2024

Meet Melissa Jones and Angie Northrup, two designers on Hasbro's Preschool & Fashion team - and two of the brilliant minds behind our line of Furby and Furblets interactive toys.

The roles. ?

Melissa: As the product design lead for the Furby brand, I focus on the aesthetic, features, and gameplay, and I collaborate with an amazing team that includes marketers, designers, and engineers of all kinds to make it all come together. The voice, personality, and music of Furby is so iconic. Hours of recording and songwriting are edited then packed into this little friend.

I have a background in industrial design and have been in toy design for 18 years. I recommend ID, which is a vast field that many may not be familiar with. From cars to kitchen appliances to toys, you can learn to design it all.

Angie: I'm the design director for the fashion and preschool brands. I've been working on Girls' brands for over 30 years now, on fashion dolls, accessories, and preschool toys. I love working on any brand that can inspire kids around the world.

A team effort: the new Furby.

Melissa: We had the support we needed from Hasbro while we worked to incubate and nurture the new Furby line. After years of development and testing, we relaunched the newest Furby in 2023 – and it's been a hit. When you create any product, there's a lot of trial and error, and we had to start over a few times to get Furby just right. In the end it was worth it to create a new iconic character for a brand that has been loved by so many kids and fans over the years.

Angie: Recently, the entire development team was recognized with the award for Brand Excellence at the Women in Toys gala, which is a huge coup in this industry. Melissa herself was nominated for the Best Designer/Inventor category. It's been a joy to bring the new generation of Furby to life, and we're immensely proud of the team.

An ear-popping design. ?

Angie: We had to do a lot of testing. Not just because of the complexity of the technology – the challenge becomes reinventing Furby for a new generation. We had to test to make sure we got the right expression of Furby for *this* generation of kids and fans.

The number one thing we learned in testing was that voice recognition is important to new fans. It's one of the things that really resonates because it creates a connection with kids and Furby.

Melissa: Yes, and we tried to infuse more musical play, singing, dancing and lights in this new Furby. Then after Furby, the Furblets arrived! When testing Furblets we found kids loved the fidget play and "surprise" element of the moving ears. Fans found that peekaboo "ear pop" feature to be such a fun surprise and new addition to the Furby brand.

The fun of Furblets.

Melissa: Furblets are a bit different than our core Furby – they're smaller in size and have a lower price point – but we did not want to skimp on sound effects or interaction. Furblets are also very musical and have a ton of really fun features. They have over 45 sound effects, three interactive buttons in play, can harmonize with each other, and can talk with the bigger Furby toys. It's a great way for kids to socialize, share and play with friends.

Angie: It's a smaller Furby product but it's great value. Also, the aesthetics are very exciting. They all have different personalities and there's tons of colors to go with each. We try to make a Furblets for every kid – something that will resonate with their unique personalities.



Coloring in the newest Furby: Cotton Candy Edition.

Melissa: We actually created our new Cotton Candy Furby while designing the first few. These were also two of the top colors while doing aesthetic testing so we had the design in our back pocket for whenever we could make another Furby. For this latest version [sold [exclusively via Amazon](#)], we wanted something fun, with light soft pastels. It gives it a whimsical feel and brings out Furby's sweet side.

Angie: It's a little eye candy, right?

Melissa: Totally! The other ones were more vibrant, with bold or deeper colors than this one. We wanted something with a little more of an uplifting color palette and feel.



The inspiration behind it all.

Angie: Kids are incredibly inspiring. We're so lucky at Hasbro because we can interact with children. When you see them open a toy for the first time, you can just see how their imagination starts creating their own stories in their head.

Melissa: My daughter is my biggest inspiration. She's the perfect age for Furby – and she's my harshest critic. Even back when she was younger, while working on My Little Pony, she would always have her opinion which helps keep that "kid at heart" perspective.

She reminds me, "Mom, it's not *practice makes perfect*, it's *practice makes progress!*" And she's right.

The power of toys.

Angie: Toys are one of those exciting things because there's so many kinds of electronics today. There's phones and tablets and everything. Then we get to watch toys really help kids grow. Toys help them with creativity and help them with learning and relationships. All of those things are what we think of when we're making toys.

Furby Doo-ay (Fun) Facts

- Originally launched in 1998, there have been five generations of Furby since
- Furby looks like a cross between an owl and a hamster
- Each Furby speaks their native language, "Furbish," which uses simple syllables, short words, and varied sounds to communicate with its friend (or "noo-lah" in Furbish)
- The latest iterations are Furby Galaxy Edition, which glows in the dark, and Furby Cotton Candy Edition, which has fur colored to look like the popular sweet treat!
- [Learn more here](#) and follow @Furby on [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#)