

The 12-sided Megaminx is really something to puzzle over

十二面空心 最難魔術方塊亮相

For the fastest puzzle fans, the traditional three-layered, six-sided Rubik's Cube is not enough — they can **solve** it in 20 seconds. But when the newest hollow 12-sided puzzle was introduced to Taiwan recently, players spent 18 minutes to solve it.

It is almost 40 years since the first puzzle cube was invented, and the one everyone knows is the three-layered Rubik's Cube successfully marketed by the Hungarian professor of architecture Erno Rubik in 1977. However, the world's first such puzzle was a magic pyramid invented in 1970 by the German scientist Uwe Meffert. It hit markets in 1978, selling more than 90 million units that year. To date, more than 160 million have been sold.

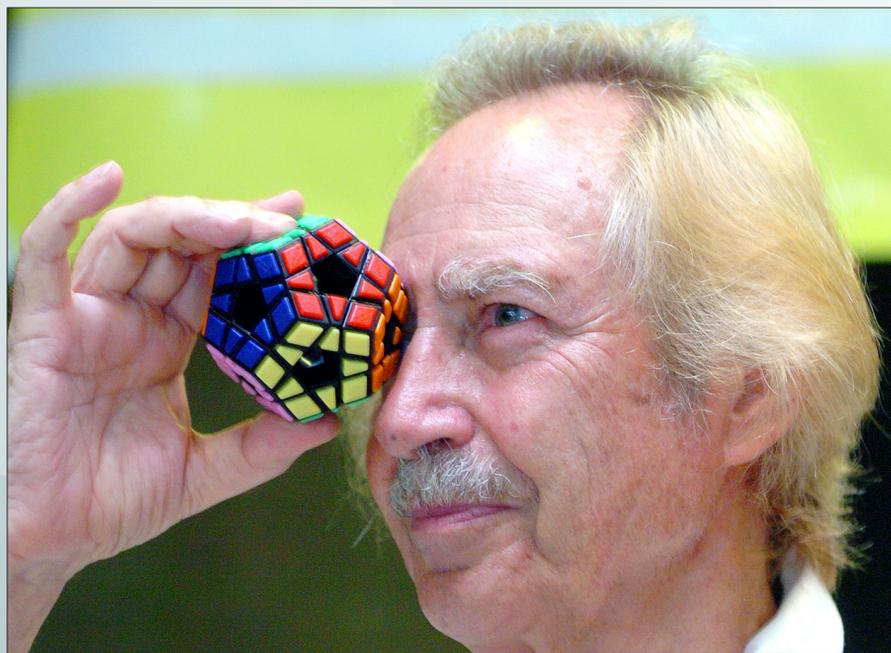
Meffert recently brought his latest invention, the **hollow** 12-sided puzzle, to Taiwan. This **innovative** hollow puzzle makes it possible to see straight through the puzzle, and by increasing the number of sides from six to 12, the difficulty is increased further.

Kuo Chun-yi, a magic puzzle wizard who is an assistant professor in the mathematics department at National Taiwan Normal University, says the increase from six to 12 sides increases the variations so that more time is required to solve the puzzle, while the hollow design deprives the user of the possibility to use the colors as a criterion for judging progress, which means that the slightest lapse in concentration leads to confusion as soon as the puzzle is turned.

Two magic puzzle wizards who took the new invention for a spin at the event required 18 minutes to solve it. Kuo, who has been playing with magic puzzles for 10 years says that normal people might not even solve it in an hour or two. He said that if he played around with it a few more times, he might be able to get down to between five and 10 minutes, so considering that he solves the standard six-sided magic cube in 20 seconds, it is easy to see that the 12-sided puzzle is quite complicated.

There were also egg-shaped puzzles at the event, **whetting** the curiosity of visitors. Kuo, who has more than 70 magic puzzles in pyramid and other shapes said the egg-shaped design made it even more likely that the user would confuse directions, but because it is built on the traditional three-layered, six-sided principle, he could probably solve it in just two minutes.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY PERRY SVENSSON)



六面正型的傳統三階魔術方塊不夠看，高手只要二十秒就可破解。最新的空心十二星型錐體魔術方塊日前在台首度亮相，玩家第一次接觸，花十八分鐘才完成。

魔術方塊問世已近四十年，大家最熟悉的是由匈牙利建築系教授魯比克所發行的三階魔術方塊，一九七七年上市即造成熱銷。而世界上最早出現的是一九七〇年由德國科學家烏維·麥菲特發明的魔術方塊金字塔，一九七八年上市，該年就創下九千多萬顆銷售量，至今全球賣出一億六千多萬顆。

麥菲特日前帶著他的最新發明「空心十二星型錐體魔術方塊」來台，他的新創舉是將魔術方塊設計成空心，可以看穿整顆方塊，再搭配由六面增為十二面，讓破解難度更高。

當日獲邀示範的魔術方塊達人、師大數學系助理教授郭君逸說，六面增為十二面本來就會讓變化型態增加，得花更多時間操作破解，空心的設計則會讓使用者失去判斷顏色的基準，稍不注意、一翻面就搞混了。

現場兩位魔術方塊達人初體驗，花了十八分鐘才破解。玩魔術方塊已有十年的郭君逸說，一般人可能玩上一、兩個小時都無解，他在多玩幾次後，大概五到十分鐘就可完成，但像傳統三階魔術方塊，他只要花二十秒，可見空心十二星難度確實很高。

現場另有蛋型魔術方塊，也讓民衆好奇。擁有金字塔、粽子等七十多種魔術方塊的郭君逸指出，蛋型因彎面設計，更容易讓人搞混面向，但因仍是傳統三階六面的原理，他大概只要兩分鐘就可破解。

(自由時報記者李文儀)

TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

1. **solve** /salv/ v.

破解 (po4 jie3)

例: None of the students were able to solve the teacher's puzzle.
(沒有半個學生能破解老師的謎語。)

2. **hollow** /'halo/ adj.

中空的 (zhong1 kong1 de5)

例: We were all surprised to discover that a wall in the basement was hollow.
(發現地下室有一面牆是中空的，令我們驚訝不已。)

3. **innovative** /Inə'vetɪv/ adj.

創新的 (chuang4 xin1 de5)

例: This company has built its reputation on being innovative.
(這間公司以創新聞名。)

4. **whet** /wɛt/ v.

增加...的興趣 (zun1 jia1 ... de5 xing4 qu4)

例: The smell of the barbecue whetted my appetite.
(烤肉的香味讓我食慾大開。)



Top: Uwe Meffert, the inventor of the original magic cube, looks through his new invention, the hollow 12-sided magic puzzle at an event in Taipei on July 25.

Above: Kuo Chun-yi, left, and Hsu Chi-chiang, second left, demonstrate the new hollow 12-sided magic puzzle as its inventor Uwe Meffert, second right, talks at an event introducing the new product to the Taiwanese public in Taipei on July 25.

PHOTOS: LIAO CHEN-HUEI, LIBERTY TIMES

最上圖：七月二十五日，在台北舉行的一場活動上，魔術方塊金字塔發明人烏維·麥菲特「透視」自己新發明的空心十二星型錐體魔術方塊。

上圖：七月二十五日，在台北一場最新空心十二星型錐體魔術方塊的發表活動上，發明人烏維·麥菲特（右二）致詞時，郭君逸（左）和許技江（左二）在一旁示範破解魔術方塊。

照片：自由時報記者廖振輝