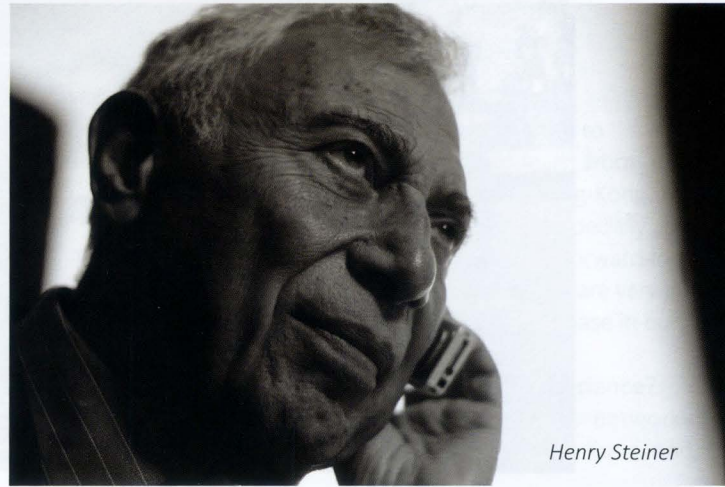


The Power

of Visual Art



Henry Steiner

Have you ever wondered about the ideas behind AmCham's own logo? Henry Steiner, a world-renowned brand consultant, distinguished graphic designer and long-time member of the chamber, explains the rationale behind his design in a recent conversation

By Kenny Lau

In late 2005 amid a re-branding campaign of AmCham, Henry Steiner, a highly acclaimed graphic designer and a long-time member, was asked to do a facelift of the chamber logo which he designed in 1980 and had been in use for more than 25 years.

It was by no accident that Steiner was invited to create a symbol for AmCham because of his international experience and reputation. Born in Vienna and raised in New York, he was educated at Yale where he studied with design guru Paul Rand, before coming to Hong Kong in 1961 on an assignment for *Asia* magazine. He later founded Steiner&Co.

Over the years, Steiner has created a range of iconic logos for corporations in Hong Kong, including the Hilton Hotel, Lane Crawford, Dairy Farm and HSBC, in addition to Hong Kong's dollar bills in the early 1980s. "The banknotes were distinctive because I detailed the old buildings to give a sense of age and strength and introduced the lions as icons."

An AmCham identity

In early 2006, a new logo – or "mark" as Steiner likes to call it – was inaugurated. "The new logo is not as simple as some other logos, but it is in keeping with the dignity and importance of the group," he says. "It was a pleasure and delightful to have the opportunity to

improve upon the previous one."

The AmCham logo is a reference to the historic significance of the United States and Hong Kong. It is based on a Chinese junk sail – a reference to old Hong Kong – in the colors of the U.S. flag, with a star highlighting American identity. The backdrop of 13 stripes – in white and a lighter blue – alludes to the original number of colonies in America before its independence, and was introduced to make the junk sail stand out.

Another feature of AmCham's current logo design, in contrast to the previous iteration, is "AmCham" on the bottom, shortened from the official name of "The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong." It is how "The first National City Banking Corporation of New York" became "Citi" and how "Federal Express" became "FedEx."

"The name you use ordinarily is very important; it is something you



The star highlights American identity

The 13-stripe backdrop symbolizes the original number of American colonies

The Chinese junk sail, in the colors of the U.S. flag, refers to historic Hong Kong

The typeface of Caslon is traditionally British and was extensively used in colonial America

communicate with people," Steiner explains. "The full name is very long, and people simply know us as AmCham."

The font type of "AmCham" is *Caslon*, a British typeface which was very popular and extensively used in colonial America, he adds. "It is a typeface you would see a lot in the early days, because they didn't cast too much of their own design until much later."

Time for a revamp

Often, a logo on a website or in a brochure is the closest that the public will get to the identity of an entity and is a vehicle to build up awareness, Steiner points out. "It is the first contact most people have with a company. If there were no such thing, there wouldn't be any differentiation."

The time for a re-design of a logo is "when you would need to change

clothing," he rationalizes. "In other words, that's when it doesn't fit anymore, when it is kind of worn out and looks shabby or when it is tragically out of fashion. If you wear a jumpsuit of the early 1970s today, people will think you are making a movie."

"It isn't just about giving a fresh feeling. I'd like to have a rationale for everything I do," Steiner says. "You have to be able to explain everything you do to a client in ways that you can see immediately. Sometimes it only happens after you do your design and study it."

"A good mark should be appropriate because what might work for a department store might not work for a bank," he adds. "It should be clear and distinctive, and has to stand out from the competition. When you can do those things, you've got a great design."