



The Man Who Designs the Notes

It would be entirely fair to describe Henry Steiner as Hong Kong's godfather of design. His work can be seen everywhere and every day: he is the author of some of this region's most iconic corporate images.

One of these is the logo for HSBC, which he modestly describes as based on Scotland's Cross of St Andrews flag which he "made into a square and then added those extra 'ears' to it to hold it together", he says.

Steiner first arrived in Hong Kong in 1961, and established his practice three years later. One of his most famous commissions can be seen whenever you open your wallet. It was Steiner, in 1973, who first featured the two lion statues in front of the Hongkong and Shanghai Corporation's headquarters on the currency notes issued by HSBC. He has also been the designer for the notes issued by Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) since 1979.

It is not a simple brief to design a bank note. To start with, how do you make a piece of paper convey value?

One way is for the design to conform with certain security requirements to ensure the note is genuine. This includes using engravings of images featured on the note, patterns that are extremely difficult to mimic

accurately, and having a watermark. Another way is that the note's design communicates its value by showing something about the country's culture, Steiner says.

"Often there will be a celebrity or an important figure, such as a president. Except for banknotes in Third World countries, these people are usually dead. But in the Third World, they like to enjoy [being on a banknote] while they are around," he jokes.

Up until the early 1970s, Hong Kong banknotes often depicted images of the banks' headquarters, and also an anonymous woman dressed in ancient Greek or Roman garb and wearing what Steiner jokingly describes as a "fireman's helmet". Some even sported the mythical figure of "Britannia".

Mythical Animals

When Steiner was commissioned to design the 1979 series of notes for the Chartered Bank (as it was then known), he took a radical approach of suggesting they should feature mythical Chinese animals. Ascending in value, the set of banknotes that were issued in this series started with the fish on the \$10 note, a lion on the \$50, a chi-lin (unicorn) on the \$100, a phoenix on the \$500 and the dragon – the most potent Chinese mythical animal – on the highest denomination, the

\$1000 note. It was the first time in Hong Kong that an international bank had used Chinese iconography prominently.

"I thought the mythical animals have a certain charm and are in tune with Chinese tradition," Steiner says. "Half by accident, they fall into a hierarchy according to their denomination ... There is a myth about the fish that goes over the cataracts until it reaches the dragon gate, which is a narrow passage. If it gets to that point and goes through it, the fish turns into a dragon. So there is a circularity to the story."

The designs proved highly popular, and they still feature on Standard Chartered Bank's current series, also designed by Steiner. And when the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) decided in the mid-1980s the three banks should add a \$20 denomination to their notes, Steiner added a tortoise to the set; inspired by a large bronze sculpture of a tortoise he saw in Beijing's Forbidden City. However, when the HKMA chose to issue its own \$10 note exclusively from 2002, the lion design was sacrificed and the fish was moved to the \$20 note and the tortoise to the \$50 denomination.

A Study in Contrasts

New designs are usually commissioned every seven years because it is estimated this is how long it takes for skillful forgers to begin making accurate copies of banknotes. Steiner has taken the opportunity each time to refine the look of the mythical animals, and also make significant changes to the reverse side of the notes.

In the latest series of Standard Chartered Bank notes, released in 2010, Steiner's design for the reverse side of the notes evoked the contrasting themes of Hong Kong's heritage and technology. This was quite a departure from the previous series, in 2003, which featured depictions of Hong Kong's famous landmarks at various points in its history. The 2010 series has on the \$1000 note a Tang dynasty coin shadowed by a modern smart chip, the \$500 note features a traditional face reading chart and a biometric recognition system, the \$100 has a seal with Sung dynasty characters

superimposed over a circuit board, while the \$50 note has an ancient Chinese lock and a modern bank vault door and the \$20 has an abacus against a binary code pattern.

The deliberate contrasts in these designs harks back to one of the lessons Steiner learned from his teacher at Yale, Paul Rand, one of the giants of the design industry in the twentieth century.

"He said, 'Every design to give it life has contrast.' It can be psychological contrast, where you see two things that do not go together. Or it can be visual contrast. If you had a piece of wallpaper with a polka-dot pattern, that is not graphic design, it is just decoration. But if you change something in there so you see it in a different way, that gives it a visual contrast," Steiner says.

A Special Request

While preparing for the 2010 series of notes, Steiner was given a special commission to design a \$150 note to commemorate Standard Chartered Bank's 150th anniversary. He was given a daunting deadline of just six months and a brief from the client that every designer should dread: "When I asked, 'What do you want on the note?' He said, 'You're the designer, Henry'," Steiner says.

After some initial ideas were rejected, he visited a local art gallery where he saw a photograph of a crowd on a Hong Kong street. It and another picture of a group of people reminded him of a classic print by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai showing a group standing on a bridge and looking at Mount Fuji in the distance.



It was the inspiration that gave him the idea to portray people representative of Hong Kong's history over the past 150 years looking from the Peak over Victoria Harbour.

The idea met with approval, and in the final version, the people in the scene include a colonial era-policeman, a contemporary schoolboy, a traditional mother and child, a modern businessman, a bird fancier, a young housewife and a Chinese coolie. The front cover shows a satellite image of Victoria Harbour and the bank's headquarters.

"To do that in a six-month frame was tight," he says. "It included taking photographs with a photographer who was willing to during Chinese New Year and to get all those people in the right costumes."

One million notes of the commemorative issue were printed and they were first released for sale in 2009. It remains the only \$150 note ever issued in the world. While the issue was aimed principally for collectors, some of the notes have been used in general circulation.

"Some people spent it, which is ridiculous because you had to pay just under \$300 to get one," Steiner says.

Hong Kong's Design Industry

When speaking about the design industry in Hong Kong, Steiner conveys strongly-held opinions. He believes the industry has not evolved in the way he hoped it would when he first moved to Hong Kong in 1961, particularly in the field of graphic design. But he does not blame the designers.

"I am disappointed at the progress that design has made. I lay that at the feet of the clients rather than the designers," he says. "The clients are more concerned with price than quality. They feel if you can get a logo for \$10,000, why pay more? They do not see the difference [because] they have had no education [in the arts]. There are art departments at some of the universities, but leading up to that, there is no general sense of music and art to give you a platform of appreciation."

Steiner also has reservations about initiatives such as the Hong Kong government's plans for a cultural district in West Kowloon ("It should be closer to the middle of town rather than in boondocks," he says). However,

he sees pockets of design excellence in Hong Kong, particularly in the designing of products, such as the cookware inspired by traditional Chinese cooking equipment that was created by the firm Office for Product Design.

Steiner says he impressed most of all with the students and young people who could become the next generation of designers coming through in this region.

"The ones who are coming into their own now are independent, civil and broad-minded. They are terrific," Steiner says. "They are very keen on universal suffrage. I've asked, 'Where does this come from? They haven't picked it up in the schools.' The answer is: the internet. They are going to be counter-culture in a way, and I am very pleased with that." 50

BRUCE ANDREWS
General Editor



石汉瑞 谈钞票设计

石汉瑞作为香港设计之父实在当之无愧。他的作品俯拾皆是，就在我们生活之中：他创作了香港最具代表性的一些企业形象。

汇丰银行的标志便是其中之一。石汉瑞谦虚表示，汇丰银行的标志设计来自苏格兰圣安德烈十字徽旗。「把它改为方形，再加一双『耳朵』，将其合并起来」。

石汉瑞于1961年初次来港，三年后即创立自己的设计事业。每当人们打开钱包，拿出钞票，便能看到他最著名的设计作品之一，那正是石汉瑞于1973年首次将香港上海汇丰银行总部门口的两尊狮子雕像用在汇丰银行发行的钞票上。自1979年以后，他亦一直是渣打银行（香港）钞票设计师。

设计钞票殊非易事。首先要展现一张纸所包含的币值绝非易事？

钞票设计须合乎特定的安全要求，以确保使用者能辨别钞票的真伪，因而钞票设计采用雕版印刷图案并加上防伪水印，以致图案极难仿制。石汉瑞表示，另一种做法是让钞票设计彰显国家文化意涵，从而传达当中的文化价值。

「钞票上往往会印有名人或重要人物的肖像，譬如总统。除了第三世界国家发行的钞票外，钞票上的人物通常已经离世，但第三世界国家的掌权者则喜欢趁自己在世时享受[肖像印上钞票的]尊荣。」他开玩笑道。

上世纪七十年代初以前，香港的钞币往往印有银行总部图象，还有一位不知其名的女子穿上古希腊或古罗马装束，头戴的帽子被石汉瑞谑称为「消防员头盔」。有些钞票甚至印上夸耀「大不列颠」的神话人物。

传统瑞兽

当时的麦加利银行（现称渣打银行）委托石汉瑞设计1979

年系列钞票时，他一改常规，大胆提议在票面印上中国的瑞兽。按面值高低，该系列中发行的钞票包括10元纸币上的鲤鱼图案，50元纸币上的图案，100元纸币上的麒麟图案，500元纸币上的凤图案，面值最高的1000元纸币则印有龙图案（具超凡力量的中国瑞兽）。这是香港首间国际银行在钞票上明显采用具有中国文化象征的图案。

「我觉得瑞兽具有某种魅力，并突显中国传统」，石汉瑞说道，「纯粹出于偶然，它们的强弱程度符合各自的纸币面值……有个『鱼跃龙门』的神话故事，讲述鲤鱼跃过龙门，便会化成一条龙。因此，这个故事含有轮回的寓意。」

事实证明，这个设计大受欢迎，直到现在，这个设计概念依然见于渣打银行当前的钞票上（亦由石汉瑞设计）。上世纪八十年代中期，香港金融管理局（下称「金管局」）决定由三家发钞银行发行面值20元的纸币。因此，石汉瑞在该套钞票中增添乌龟图案，设计灵感来自于他在北京故宫看到的一尊铜龟像。然而，金管局于2002年决意自行独家发行面值10元的纸币，狮子的设计图案因此被摒除，鲤鱼图案则成为面值20元的纸币，乌龟图案则成为面值50元的纸币。

对比设计

技艺熟练的伪钞制造者一般估计需时七年才可精确地仿制钞票，因而发钞银行每隔七年便会委托设计师设计新钞票图案。石汉瑞每次都趁此良机修润瑞兽的外观，并对纸币背面作重大改动。

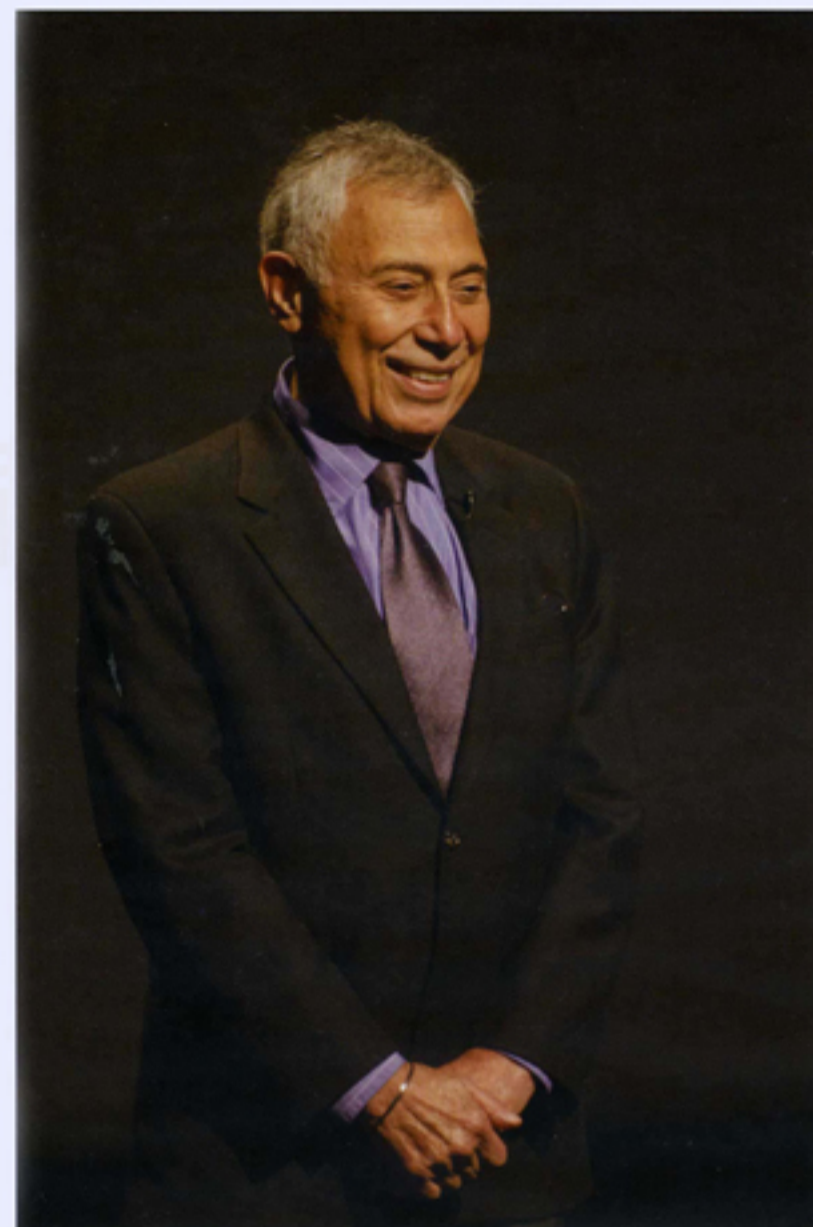
渣打银行于2010年发行最新的钞票系列中，石汉瑞的钞票背面设计采用香港文化遗产和科技这个对比鲜明的主题，糅合古今科技图案，以表扬中国发明技术。与2003年一系列的取题截而不同，后者主要描绘香港在不同历史时期的著名地标建筑。2010年钞票系列的1000元纸币以现代智能晶片和一枚唐代铜钱作图案；500元纸币以生物识别系统衬托一幅传统面相图；100元纸币印有以电路板并附有宋代文字的印章；50元纸币以现代银行金库的大门为衬托的一把中国古锁；而20元纸币则以二进制代码图案及算盘为背景。

上述刻意的对比设计，可追溯石汉瑞在耶鲁从师于保罗·兰德(Paul Rand)所学到的教益。Paul Rand是二十世纪设计业的巨匠之一。

「他说道，『对比给设计赋予生命。这可以是心理上的对比，让人们同时看到两个搭配不当的事物并列一起，也可以是视觉上的对比。如果你有一幅带圆点花纹图案的墙纸，那不叫做平面设计，而仅仅是装饰而已，但如果你改变当中某些元素，以另一方式来观看这幅墙纸，这便赋予其视觉上的对比』，他说道。

特别要求

在为2010年钞票系列做准备时，渣打银行特别委托石汉瑞设计面值150元的纸币，以纪念渣打银行成立150周年。期限仅六个月，时间仓促，客户的设计要求更让设计师头疼不已。「当我问道，『你希望钞票是什么模样？』他答道，『汉瑞，你才是设计师』」，石汉瑞说道。



当部分初步构想遭否决后，他便到本地一间艺廊参观，在那里看到一幅香港街头人潮涌涌的相片。这帧相片及另一幅描绘群众的画作令他回想起日本画家葛饰北斋的经典版画，该幅版画描绘一群人站在桥上远远眺望富士山。正是这幅画作赋予他创作灵感，描绘代表香港过去150年历史的人物从山顶俯瞰维多利亚港的场景。

这个构想获接纳，在最终版本中，场景中的人物包括一名殖民时代的警察、一名当代学童、一对穿上传统服饰的母子、一名现代商人、一名雀鸟爱好者、一名年轻主妇和一名中国苦力。钞票正面以维多利亚港两岸的卫星图像及银行总部作背景。

「要在六个月内完成，时间比较紧迫」，他说道，「要有一位摄影师愿意在农历新年期间拍摄相片，还要安排模特儿穿上合适的服饰拍照，并不容易。」

渣打银行发行了一百万张纪念钞票，并于2009年首度发售。截至目前，它仍是全球唯一发行过的150元纸币的发钞

银行。此次发行主要面向收藏者，但部分钞票已在市面流通。

「有些人把它花掉，这样做其实很荒谬，因为差不多要花300元才能买到一张。」

香港设计业

说起香港设计业，石汉瑞强烈认为，该行业没有如他在1961年刚来港时所希望的那样发展起来，特别是平面设计方面，但他并无归咎于设计师。

「对于设计业至今所取得的进展，我感到很失望，但我会将原因归咎于客户而非设计师」，他说道，「客户关心价格多于品质。他们觉得，如果可以花一万元设计标志，为何要多花钱？由于他们缺乏艺术修养，看不到当中的微妙差异。即使部分大学设有艺术系，但此前，人们对音乐与艺术整体上缺乏认知，更谈不上艺术欣赏。」

石汉瑞对某些举措亦有保留，譬如香港政府的西九文化区规划。（「它应当更加靠近市区，而不是在偏僻地区」，他说道。）但是，他也在香港看到卓越设计的亮点，尤其是在产品设计方面，譬如设计机构Office for Product Design受传统中式烹饪器具启发而创制的锅具。

石汉瑞表示，学生和年轻人给他留下深刻印象，他们当中很多都能成为区内的新一代设计师。

「如今正逐渐成熟的一代具公民意识，特立独行，思想开明。他们实在很了不起」，石汉瑞说道，「他们非常热心推动普选。我曾问道，『这种想法来自哪里？他们在校内并未学到这些。』答案就是互联网。他们在某程度上反主流文化，这让我感到非常欣喜。」

安报施
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