



Terry Duckham/Asiapix Studios

## Working with Henry Steiner

It turns out that world-renowned graphic designers are driven by the same motivations as work-a-day journalists: a tight deadline and a hot meal.

I was flattered when Henry Steiner – a globally recognised branding expert who has worked with HSBC, IBM and other corporate giants – referred to me as an inspiration behind the new look he created pro bono for the Human Rights Press Awards' 20th anniversary.

"It's not often that an attractive young woman picks up the bill," he joked about a working lunch we had in the FCC in August. It was then that I laid down a hard deadline, the way only a news editor can. "The taxi meter was ticking. The flag was down," Steiner added.

The process of creating a new mark for the HRP began at this lunch, when Steiner spent most of his time doodling on the FCC's yellow paper placemat. He drew quickly while we tossed around the images usually associated with protest and censorship: barbed wire, a chain, a fist, a placard, a bullhorn, a loudspeaker, a microphone. Steiner told me not to show his sketches to anyone yet (the clucking chicken idea was probably not going to make it).

Later, he started taking photographs of padlocks – old locks, rusted locks, locks holding doors or chains holding doors closed. One particular image – the black silhouette of an open lock hanging

loose against a neon-red Chinese sign – struck him.

At the HRP's fundraising luncheon, Steiner used a PowerPoint presentation to take the audience through his months-long creative process. He explained that the curved part of the lock is called the "shackle" – an appropriate term for an organisation that often awards journalistic works about jailed dissidents and speakers.

The small indent on the edge of the shackle is called the "notch." And when viewed from the side, it looks like a person's face in profile, with the notch as the nose. "Reporters are nosy," Steiner said. "They have a nose for news."

It was apt that a media award had a design that included a play on words.

Steiner drew locks wherever he could – once, ironically, on a large *South China Morning Post* photo of Xi Jinping against a red wall at a military event.

"I'd rather get an idea down quickly than to put it in a nice book," Steiner said.

This is how Steiner came up with the "unLock", a bold new mark set in black and ochre. (For font geeks out there, he chose the appropriately named "Impact", which has a blocky, headline-type look).

He and his team at Steiner & Co. are painstakingly redesigning the HRP's materials, from the look of our website to our entry forms and business cards. They also created great T-shirts, a few of which Steiner signed with elegant silver ink at the December 10 fundraiser.

"For a man with a key, everything looks like a lock," he said.

*unLock T-shirts are available at the FCC Front Office for \$200. Proceeds go to the HRP.*

