

Servus Hong Kong

Austria in and around
the Pearl of the Orient



Corporate Logos, Design and Identities

Dieses Chineserl - This Little Chinese

It was 1939. After the Anschluss my mother became increasingly desperate at her inability to obtain a sponsor who would provide the letter allowing us admission to America.

In our town of Baden bei Wien was a Hollywood producer who spent his summers at a neighboring villa. My mother called on him begging for the guarantee, assuring him that as a trained seamstress neither she nor my father, who had a thriving dental practice in Baden, would need financial assistance for the voyage or after we were settled in New York. Sensing that he was not receptive, she pulled out a photograph of her only child. He studied it a bit



This little Chinese boy, Baden near Vienna, 1939

theasiamagazine



SPECIAL TRAVEL ISSUE

The publication design that brought me to Hong Kong in 1961 with all lower case, fraktur italic masthead

and said, "Madame, I must sadly reject too many such requests but how can I refuse this little Chinese boy."

I learned very quickly to read and speak English in New York helped by a love of comic books and reluctance to be identified as a Nazi. My birth certificate name, Hans, had been officially changed by a helpful Ellis Island official who suggested that Henry would sound more American.

Like many others I came here tentatively, having been offered a position as Design Director with The Asia Magazine for which I'd worked in New York. Rather awed by the distance and challenge I went to see Henry Wolf, a respected senior colleague and fellow Viennese émigré (he hadn't changed his given name; his family were Anglophiles, much more sophisticated than mine). Without hesitation he suggested a time period and remuneration. So I came to work in Hong Kong for nine months at the princely salary of one thousand US dollars per month.

Recently a visiting Yale classmate asked the same old question. I replied that I'd come out for a short term job. "So," he said, "isn't it about time you finished it?"

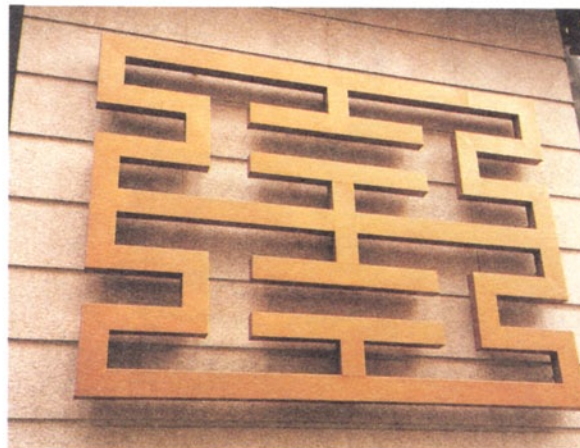
After my design studies at Yale and the Sorbonne as well as a spell with advertising agencies on Madison Avenue, I was a missionary dropped off on the shore of South

China Sea island. The indigenes were benignly curious and rather amused by the outlandish tools and precepts I had brought with me.

I managed to make converts partly by preaching and mainly by example as my disciples spread out to join other companies or start their own.

In retrospect the primitive level of design awareness was a blessing which forced me into a pioneering mode where everything had to be justified to my clients. This is preferable to the automatic acceptance of whatever is momentarily stylish in the effete West. I have Hong Kong to thank for the toughness and discipline of my professional approach.

I have earned epithets like "doyen", "guru", or "father of Hong Kong graphics"; a heavy burden.



Hongkong Hilton Hotel identity program designed freelance in 1962 while at The Asia Magazine



In 1995, my first major project on the Mainland

In June this year I embarked on a pilgrimage to celebrate the centennial of Bloomsday, the date of the events in Ulysses. My first station was Trieste where my hero James Joyce had his first overseas job as a Berlitz instructor. It was my first visit to this now placid city which had once been a thriving Hapsburg hub. I felt at home with the smell of sauerkraut and würstel, the leisurely jugendstil cafes, the moderate, slightly faded grandeur of its architecture. There was nostalgia tinged with a more recent sense of the familiar: I realized Trieste was an Adriatic Macau.

Late in his career Joyce was asked why, since everything he had ever written was about Dublin, he had never returned. He replied, "I never left it."

After more than four decades why do I stay on? My family have been strangers and sojourners since well before we left Spain for Austro-Hungary in 1492; it's in the blood. The



2004 iteration of a series of banknotes for Standard Chartered Bank first designed in 1979

benign non-intervention has allowed me to establish a reasonably successful practice. Chinese visual culture is a continuing inspiration and the challenge of practicing design for the Mainland is stimulating.

Besides, having survived one Anschluss I am curious to see how this one unrolls.



An 'imaginary self-portrait' poster from 1989

Supporting the Austrian community in Hong kong,
designed in 2004



Unilever China brand identity, 2001



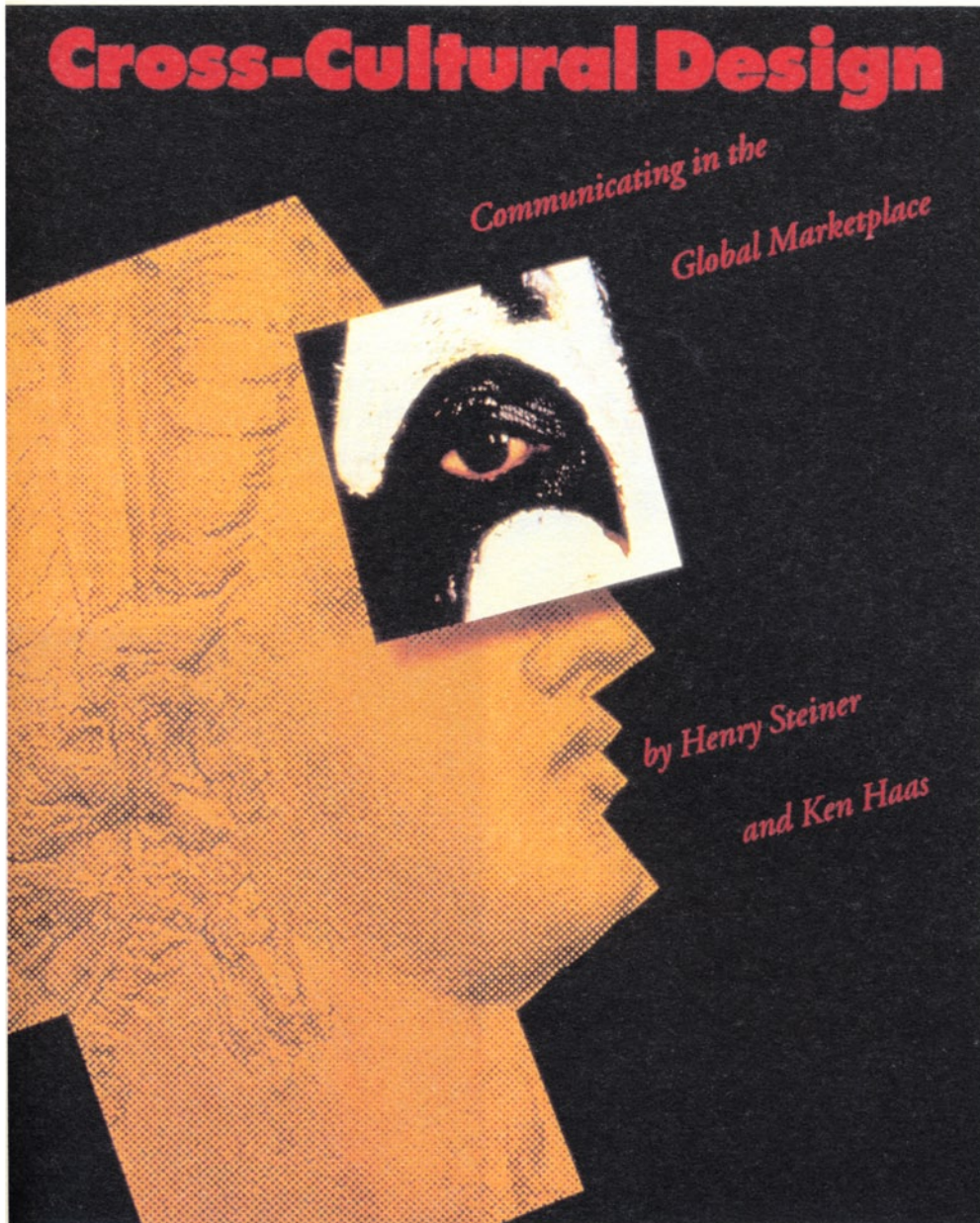
Identity System designed in 1996



In 1984, the new identity capped a fruitful 18-year
consultancy with HSBC



Created in 1964, this department store carries my
longest surviving brand identity



Book published in 1995, recording my thoughts on the techniques for working transculturally