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GRAPHIC & PUBLICATION

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Ideas From Life

The relationship between graphic design and life is entwined and can be seen everywhere. Restaurant menus, brand trademarks, calligraphy on neon signs, neatly-composed transportation tickets and logomarks are all designs. Ideas combined with symbols, pictures and text create visuals as a means of communication. The concept and aesthetics behind graphic design are inseparable.

Pleasing and effective graphic designs help us identify shops and buildings, find a pathway in the city or get to know a brand. Good designers can even raise industry standards and educate the masses. Popular designs can inspire, encourage public engagement and re-kindle local culture. In the 50s and 60s, Western design culture and philosophy have spread to Hong Kong and laid a solid foundation in local design. Several generations of Hong Kong designers continue to record each era and bring local cultural characteristics to the international arena through design.

Serving as Creative Director of the Information Services Department, Arthur Hacker chose the 'watermelon ball' as the icon for the Festival of Hong Kong in 1969; Kan Tai-keung used an ancient Chinese coin as a logomark for the Bank of China. In 1993 pop duo Softly covered their album cover with calligraphy of Tsang Tsou Choi. From Chinese culture to daily life in the city, sourcing and application of Hong Kong graphic design were rich and varied, establishing a strong and clear visual language with local personality, a testimony of a progressing world where design changes life.

Behind every 'Very Hong Kong' design is a Hong Kong story. In a place where East meets West, Austrian-born designer Henry

Steiner chose Hong Kong as his home and creative base. He was the first Western designer to establish himself in Hong Kong. At that time, Hong Kong was gradually emerging as an international capital market in the East. Through the design of his many annual reports for public institutions and listed companies, Steiner introduced professional design to Hong Kong, infusing Eastern elements into contemporary design and his work continues to influence local designers today. Alan Chan comments: "Steiner captures the essence of the mission and value of each corporate and communicates the client's message in authentic and easy-to-understand designs. He is a respected and influential designer."

In the 80s, the combination of Chinese and Western symbols was skillfully used as a design language in the local design community. Merging Chinese elements with Western style made Hong Kong a leader in graphic design around Asia. The 90s saw an emergence of designers with new style and the industry was booming. However, when computers became popular in the 2000s, the style of local graphic design was inclined towards Western or Japanese. Creativity became one-sided with computerisation. With the help of the computer, many people became skilled designers instantly. However, the world is flat and soon the style among the global design community became monotonous, lacking of creative thinking that offers novel and unique ideas rooted in local life and culture.

Through this exhibition, we would like to let the public know what is 'Very Hong Kong' design, inspiring Hong Kong people from a professional and subconscious level. After all, design changes life and life inspires design.

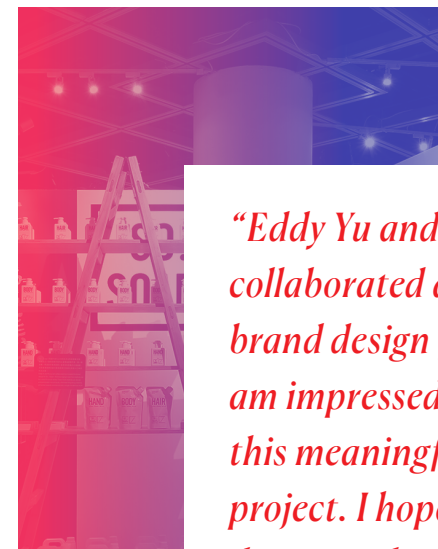
Bella Ip/ CoLab

So...Soap+

So...Soap+ is a community-based, environmentally friendly social enterprise that produces and sells natural soaps and bath products. Founded by Bella Ip, a mother who made natural soaps, she collaborated with design duo Hung Lam and Eddie Yu for branding and business partnership and So Soap+ was created.

So...Soap+ is 100% organically made in Hong Kong, by soap makers recruited from every Hong Kong district. Starting from recruiting the first group of soap makers in Tai Po district in 2010, So Soap+ strives to cope with the social and environmental problems with their positive actions. From the product recipe to the bottle recycling, and even the flexible working hours of the soap makers are So...Soap+'s continuous effort to promote sustainable living.

Soaps are daily essentials and using soaps made from natural ingredients can help save the environment and users' skin. It also provides a means for homemakers to support themselves. So So...Soap+ is an instance of which design unleashes community potential and helps solve social problems.



“Eddy Yu and Hung Lam collaborated and created the brand design for So...Soap+. I am impressed and touched by this meaningful social enterprise project. I hope more creatives can devote and participate in social issues, otherwise Hong Kong creativity will center towards commercial side too much and become narrow-minded.”

— Stanley Wong



Chinese Calligraphy/Typography



“The handwriting I see in traditional Chinese restaurants is very approachable and communicates human touch.” — Alan Chan

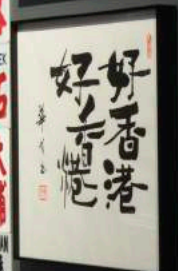


Before the popularisation of computers in the 1990s, handwritten signs were ubiquitous. Any tourist's impression of Hong Kong in the 1970s and 1980s undoubtedly include a plethora of large and colourful neon signs hanging over Nathan Road. Neon signs were all made from blueprints that were calligraphed by old masters in ink. Shop and neon signs in the Northern Wei font dominated Hong Kong's cityscape. It was chosen for its balance between vigour and readability.

In Chinese restaurants, employees wrote the names of guests and their corresponding room or banquet hall on a board every evening. Banquet menus were handwritten. Handwritten signage also served to indicate destinations and fares on minibuses. Calligrapher Fung Siu Wah (alias Wah Gor) is often commissioned to handwrite numerous film titles for use in marketing collaterals. Different styles of Chinese calligraphy and typography in various contexts become important art and cultural heritage in Hong Kong. Each popular font is a part of Hong Kong economic and social history.

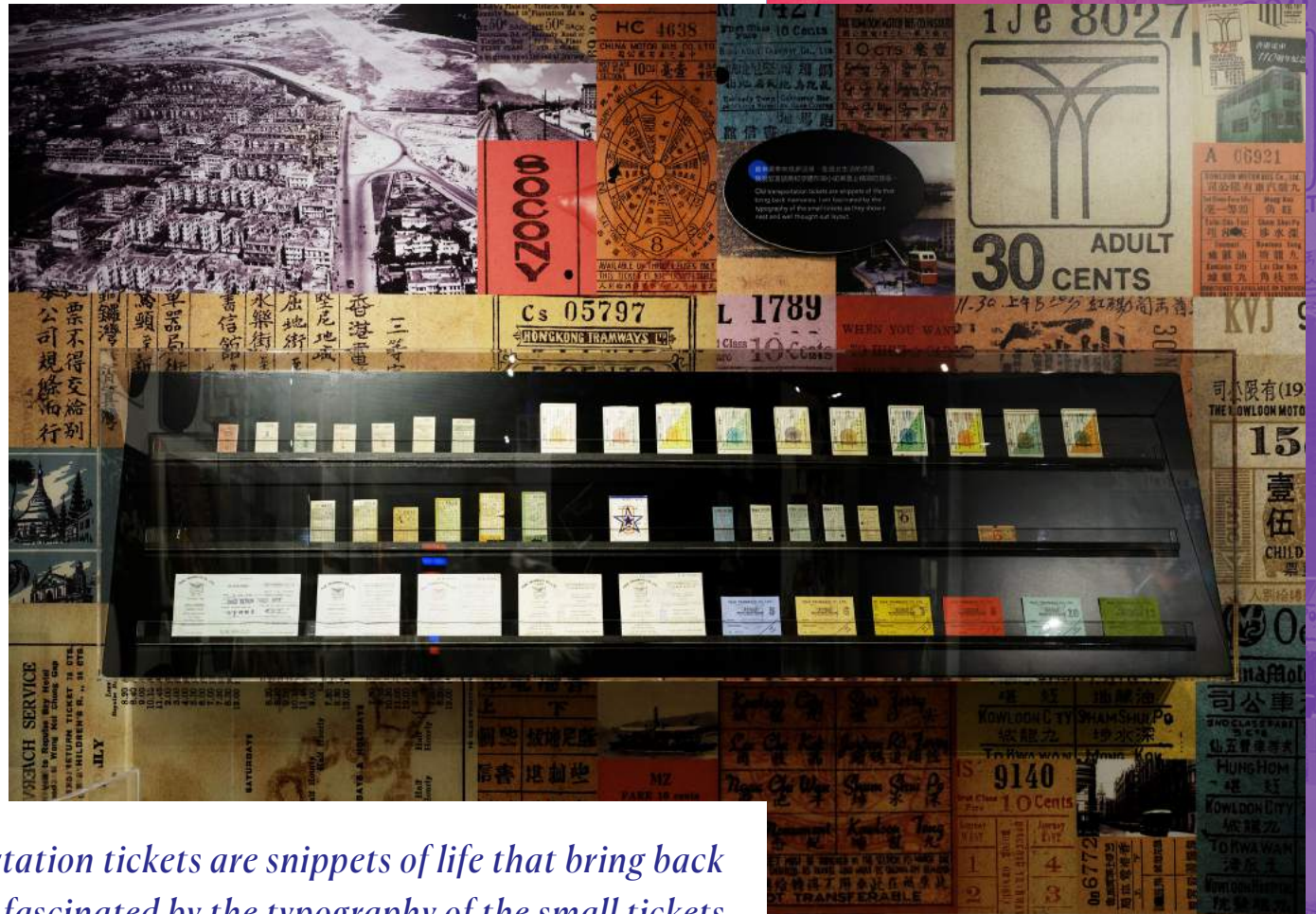
In recent years, the tradition of Chinese calligraphy and typography is being actively preserved and celebrated. Serving as a bridge between the handwriting tradition and digital typography, Trilingua Design's type designer Adonian Chan has created the Beiwei Kaishu font. Dubbed the "Prison font", the variant font used on Hong Kong road signs made by prison inmates before the adoption of standardised Chinese fonts has attracted much interest today as historical and design artifacts. A recent plan is afoot by netizens in social media to revive the Prison font as a computer font.

好香港



Old Hong Kong Transportation Tickets

Before the arrival of stored-value smart cards, paper tickets for public transportation in Hong Kong including bus, tram, peak tram and ferry were instances of functional, compact design in which typography, graphics, colours, cost and the choice of materials were all carefully considered. Hong Kong Tramways' tickets depicted the tramway rail switch design, which has been featured in the Hong Kong Tramways logo from 1970s till May 2017.



“Old transportation tickets are snippets of life that bring back memories. I am fascinated by the typography of the small tickets as they show a neat and well thought-out layout.” — Alan Chan

The Phenomenon of King of Kowloon Calligraphy



“Tsang Tsou Choi’s graffiti created a huge treasure of Hong Kong’s cultural and creative ecology. Many designers leverage this cultural phenomenon and create something new out of it. From this, we can see myriad possibilities and influences in creativity with local elements.” — Stanley Wong

The guerilla-style graffiti of Tsang Tsou Choi, aka the “King of Kowloon”, achieved cult status in Hong Kong. Through his free handwriting, Tsang has given Hong Kong an endearing character who is not shy to express himself. His obsessive behaviour is no longer distinguishable from the intrigues of his maniacal typography, compelling us to look at his graffiti art holistically as he invokes our primal and uninhibited desires to express ourselves at the levels of unconscious and collective memory.

Tsang Tsou Choi’s graffiti art inspired a new creative ecology that drew on Hong Kong’s collective memory. The design of Softly’s music album in 1993 exemplifies how typography is one of the most effective design vehicles to communicate a communal bonding. Local lifestyle brand G.O.D. launched a product line that incorporated Tsang’s graffiti into a series of bedding and home products. In 1997, fashion designer William Tang expressed his feelings about Hong Kong’s handover by designing a collection that was made with fabrics printed with the graffiti that became the talk-of-the-town. In 2007, another mountain man created a series of poster combining red-white-blue and Tsang’s graffiti, expressing his wishes to Hong Kong. In the past decade, many designers have drawn inspirations from the calligraphy of “King of Kowloon”, including the recent AXA Hong Kong Streetathon.

Henry Steiner

Graphic Design Portfolio

Founded his design studio in Hong Kong in 1964, Henry Steiner is often dubbed as the “Father of Hong Kong Graphic Design”. At the time, design, let alone graphic design, was relatively new in Hong Kong. Austrian-born and US-educated, Steiner is freed from deep-rooted traditions and preconceptions about Hong Kong. When Steiner is presented with opportunities to revamp a brand, he was able to give the new brand a contemporary look and feel, thanks to his in-depth understanding of the client’s history and business, as well as his creative propensity for simplicity, elegance and articulated visual expression.

Steiner is known for capturing the essence of everyday life and transforming to a cultural language through design that combines Chinese and Western elements to create resonance with Hong Kong citizens, and set a cultural identity that can be understood by the international world.

Whether it is a logo, brand, or annual report, Henry Steiner delivers the client’s message with a local flavour and sets a high design and aesthetic standard for corporates in Hong Kong. A social space ahead of its time, The I Club repositioned and redefined art as part of tasteful life. A multitude of brand icons and collateral for The I Club, a lifestyle club that incorporated contemporary art, is remembered today through its branding and other collaterals. Like all design pioneers, Steiner has influenced many creative practitioners and even the general public.

*“Virtually everyone has heard of Henry Steiner.
He is among Hong Kong’s first generation
designers who has elevated graphic design to a
whole new level as a respected profession.”*

— Alan Chan

Victor Cheung

Viction:ary



Founded in 2001, Viction:ary is a publishing house specialising in design books. Locally based in Hong Kong yet globally minded, the brand fosters dialogues across cultures and promotes strong, current and original designs with fresh perspectives to explore the creativity. While each of its publications is unique, a “typical” Viction:ary book tackles a design issue through a rich showcase of different dimensions, approaches and practices from around the world. The publisher’s high design and editorial standards help secure a loyal readership and were repeatedly recognised by the international press and revered retailers.



anothermountainman

redwhiteblue Series

Hong Kong is a port city in which mobility and portability has always been a way of life. The modest and heavy-duty red-white-blue nylon bag symbolises the hard work, resilience and adaptability of Hong Kong people.

Stanley Wong (aka anothermountainman) created Building Hong Kong series to promote positive Hong Kong message and spirit. Using the red-white-blue sheet's signature tricolor pattern and plastic texture, anothermountainman's contemporary creations of different forms and functions challenge Hong Kong people to identify what is positive and unchanging amid the sea of change.

Since 2000, anothermountainman has conducted conversations with Hong Kong through exhibitions everywhere. In this context, these bags entered the cultural discourse and became a local design phenomenon. An NGO, New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, collaborated with anothermountainman to roll out a red-white-blue personal accessories line to support the rehabilitation centre. Singer Sam Hui donned a costume made of red-white-blue plastic sheet in a concert, reflecting the spirit of Hong Kong.



Old Hong Kong Tourism Brochures/ Publications

“Hong Kong Tourism Board published a series of travel booklets. Their typesetting makes them easy to read.

Although they were not designed or marketed in a style with which we are familiar with today, design practices were applied.”

— Alan Chan



The Hong Kong Tourist Association (previously the Hong Kong Tourism Board) published a series of publications promoting Hong Kong to tourists. Catering mainly to Western tourists decades before the advent of Asian and Mainland Chinese tourists who were a minority then, these booklets, brochures and leaflets are a shrewd combination of exoticism, research, storytelling and persuasion with the aim to show how they can best spend another day in Hong Kong. As with any marketing collateral, photographs played a major role in directing the readers' attention to points of interest and landmarks that helped them orient themselves around the city. These publications, which contain practical information and seductive advertisements, provide an alternative social and economic register through which we can see the rapid development of Hong Kong's service sector, which lagged behind pre-1949 Shanghai. The section on Hong Kong's nightlife is worthy of note, as it transgressed taboos that would be considered risqué even today and showcased an interesting aspect of the most socially liberal climate within the Chinese-speaking world at the time.

Vintage Product Packaging Design

Every Chinese household in Hong Kong used to keep at least one tin mooncake box for storing accessories, keepsakes, loose change, or even wads of cash. Packaging design has a history as long as the products themselves. It is still common for products to continue using a vintage packaging design in order to enhance the brand's persuasion and reputation as a traditional and trusted product.

Although these packaging of traditional products were not designed by “professional” designers in today’s understanding of the term, these designs had a creative “handicraft” feel to them, and reflected an aesthetic that was both functional and attractive. It did more than distinguish one product or brand from another. For instance, the mythology of Chang’e, the Chinese goddess of the Moon featured in the Kee Wah Bakery’s mooncake tin and paper box packaging became a household icon. Chan Yee Jai’s pastry packaging convinces customers of the gastronomic delights inside highlighted by the attractive bilingual typography printed on the tin box.

“Kee Wah, Hang Heung, and Chan Yee Jai packaging often reminds you of your childhood. Without professional graphic designers at the time, the printing house might have randomly applied freehand sketches by technicians or illustrators as the packaging design. Together they form a strikingly ‘Very Hong Kong’ style.” — Alan Chan



Alan Chan

Saint Honore Cake Shop Packaging Design



In Hong Kong, branding, advertising and packaging for cakes and pastries got an infusion of new ideas in 1982 by designer Alan Chan. Using a single calla lily as the design motif, Saint Honore Cake Shop's dark blue-coloured (later purple) packaging aims to give a feel of discreet luxury to the company's baked products. As an exotic flower native to southern Africa, calla lily was scarce, expensive, and thus difficult to get in Hong Kong in the 1980s. It was thus chosen for the brand for its exclusive and stylish quality. The extensive advertising campaign of newspaper ads and television commercials for the opening of Saint Honore's first store in Happy Valley has captured widespread attention and public acclaim. The calla lily packaging became inspiration and was imitated by competitors, also stimulated a high-end cake shop market in the 80s and 90s.

"I have selected Saint Honore Cake Shop's packaging designed by Alan because at that time, the image of two calla lillies placed diagonally across the pastry box was a breakthrough. I was so impressed as a young designer at that time. Until now, no other pastry packaging design has given me such surprise." — Stanley Wong

Hong Kong Logos

The image of a company or a brand is symbolised by its logo. Logos have become an indispensable part of Hong Kong people's daily life. Logo design reflects this close connection between the business and organisation that it represents with the people who use the service. Some great logo designs that have touched Hong Kong people's everyday lives are included in this exhibition.

The large sign bearing the logo for Hong Kong's Hilton Hotel informed people who just arrived in Central that they have come to the heart of the city and a top-notch hospitality facility is open for business and leisure. Created by Henry Steiner in 1963, the double letter H seems to become a universal graphic language for hotels.

The Festival of Hong Kong was organized in 1969, 1971 and 1973. Created by the Information Services Department's Art Director Arthur Hacker, the logo is a sphere, painted in red motion vector stripes on a white background, to give a festive mood. For many Hong Kong people growing up in that era, the sphere logo reminded them of their beloved plastic soccer balls, which encapsulates the joy of childhood. This is an instance designers can keep designs grounded in everyday life so that abstract logos are lively and appreciated by all.

Kan Tai-keung created the logo for the now defunct Urban Council using the silhouette of

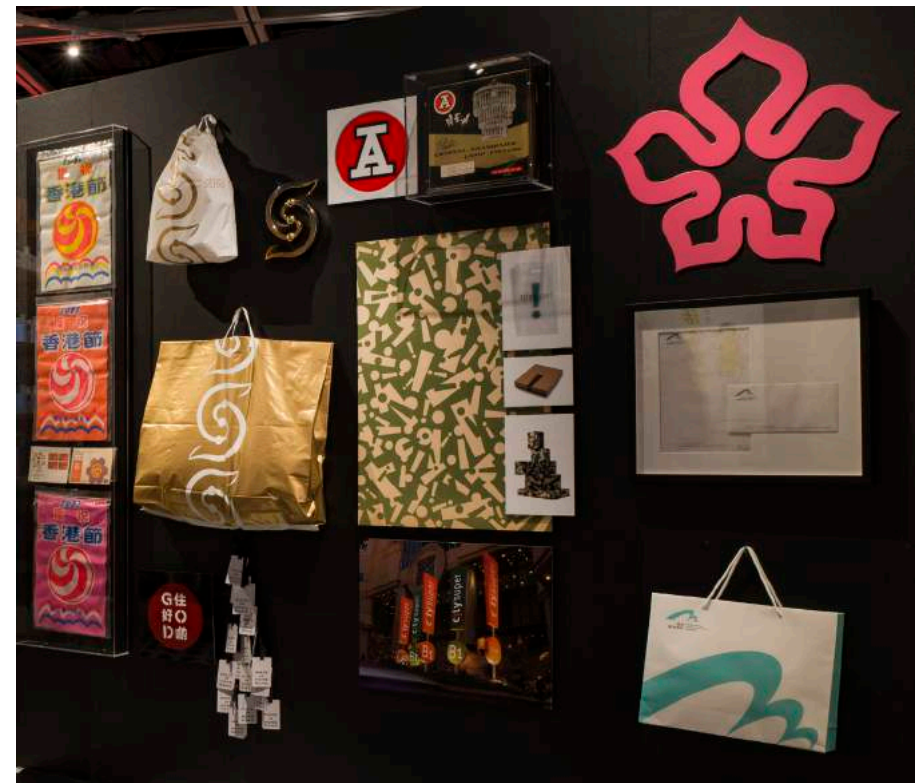
a bauhinia. Considering that the Urban Council was Hong Kong's first local government body to oversee municipal services and parks, the bauhinia is a fitting logo as the flower is commonly found in Hong Kong's parks and is considered to represent the city. The logo feels familiar and close to us.

The Bank of China logo, created by Kan Tai-keung in 1980, is based on the shape of an ancient Chinese coin. Kan meticulously integrated a Chinese character into the coin, creating a timeless East-meets-West design. Chinese people used to tie coins together with a thread that went through the hole in the middle, for the convenience of counting and carrying around.

Opened in 1996, City'super commissioned Alan Chan to create its logo, which is simply an exclamation mark that conveys the excitement of the new experience bring to customers who look for quality and choice.

The Hong Kong International Airport on Lantau Island commenced operation in 1998. The facility's iconic roof designed by Lord Norman Foster is easily recognisable by the public. Alan Chan adopted its architecture form to create the logo. It also conjures up images of flying, as it resembles the trajectory of aircraft takeoff and landing, from one destination to another.

"All the eleven logos selected are outstanding design in its own right. My favourite is the Hong Kong Telephone's logo that communicates brand essence with multiple meanings. The letter 'T' embedded in the circular orange logomark stands for Telephone, symbolizing the telephone line pole in front of the sun and the bell that rings in an old telephone set." — Stanley Wong



Kan Tai-keung

Cultural Poster Series

Kan Tai-keung is an artist, designer, calligrapher and educator who is known for his masterful and vigorous Chinese aesthetics in contemporary design. Incorporating Chinese imageries and ink brushstrokes, the poster series is unmistakably contemporary Chinese. The posters' typography also reminds us of the calligraphy we find in a work of ink wash painting. However, the contemporary and clean feel to the posters reflect Kan Tai-keung's ambition to honour the Chinese tradition in the 21st century, rather than orientalising it. The meticulous use of greyscale in the brushstrokes, and other transitional colours when it is warranted, becomes a design language in which Kan is fluent. When it is combined with photography, typography and graphic design, Kan unleashes the full potential of East-West cultural encounters through his masterful and bold visual art explorations. This series of cross-decade posters has influenced the new generation designers, and brought much inspiration and direction for Chinese designers.

“Kan Tai-keung is among the first generation of Chinese designers who insists to fuse Chinese or Eastern traditions with contemporary aesthetics. Bridging East and West, he paves the way for Hong Kong design and has influenced how the new generation of designers interpret oriental design and position themselves.” — Stanley Wong



Lau Chi Chung

Old Textbooks Showroom

Textbooks could become a mirror on our formative past, and to the way we are taught, and grow up. Re-reading and re-learning the texts and illustrations of these old textbooks raise interesting questions on socialisation, education and book design. Photographer, art director and multimedia artist Lau Chi Chung, has collected and is still collecting kindergarten and grade school textbooks and related objects. In addition to making the collection available to the public, Lau also gives workshops on related topics.

