

(For Immediate Release)

HKDI Gallery Presents “*Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner*” Exhibition
tracing Hong Kong’s graphic design roots through works of Henry Steiner
hailed as “Father of Hong Kong Design”

(Hong Kong, 3 May 2021) The Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) and the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) (Lee Wai Lee) are holding the “*Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner*” exhibition at the HKDI Gallery, showcasing the iconic works created by Henry Steiner. From now till 30 May 2021, the exhibition features creative designs that Steiner has made for Hong Kong’s renowned brands and businesses since the 1960s. Often dubbed the “Father of Hong Kong Design”, Steiner’s works are pioneering and represent Hong Kong’s multifaceted identity that is progressive, global and pragmatic. The exhibition also pays tribute to Steiner’s legendary story.

HKDI and IVE (Lee Wai Lee) are dedicated to creating a dynamic and diverse design atmosphere and facilitating interdisciplinary dialogues between industry experts, students and design enthusiasts through exhibitions for promoting design education in Hong Kong. Now opened at the HKDI Gallery, *Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner* is curated by the HKDI Department of Communication Design to give a retrospective look into the fascinating works of Henry Steiner in the past 60 years and to explore how they have represented the roots of brand image of Hong Kong’s prominent corporations. The exhibition is divided into five areas that thoughtfully guide visitors into the different layers of Steiner’s visual language: *Symbols, Contrast, Stories, Appropriation* and *Systems*. Akin to written language, visual language can be expressed rhetorically that are evident in Steiner’s works as a creative attempt to facilitate persuasive communications.

“It is our honour to have Mr Steiner, the Father of Hong Kong Design, to launch his exhibition in Hong Kong at the HKDI Gallery,” says Dr Lay Lian Ong, Principal of HKDI & IVE (Lee Wai Lee). “We hope that this exhibition will offer design students, designers and the public a lens into Steiner’s creative journey in graphic design across different times, drawing focus and inspiration to local design and its overall development.”

Born in Austria, Steiner has made Hong Kong his home since 1961. With a unique eye for local visual elements, he has opened up new realms for graphic design that continues to contribute to Hong Kong’s visual culture in transformative ways. His works have enabled graphic design in Hong Kong to gain worldwide recognition. Steiner is the designer of choice for numerous industry-leading corporations and conglomerates in Hong Kong, such as HSBC, Hong Kong Jockey Club, and Standard Chartered Bank. His diverse portfolio includes logo designs, print and banknote designs that are still widely circulated today. His efforts are integral to building a timeless brand presence for these local and international corporations. In 2013, Steiner was conferred the Honorary Fellowship by the Vocational Training Council (VTC), in recognition of his remarkable contributions to the graphic design field in Hong Kong.

“Looking is not seeing,” Henry Steiner reflects on his exhibition in Hong Kong. The act of looking enables one to set out on a course of inquisitiveness. Centring around Steiner’s works and philosophies, *Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner* prompts visitors to

make use of graphic language in understanding the messages that designers aim to communicate behind their works.

“The exhibition has one key takeaway: graphic design is a language,” says Steiner, “unlike ‘seeing’, ‘looking’ is an active quest for solutions.” He once expressed that only when we are mindful of our looking do we become aware of the visual elements around us. It is with the same consciousness that one is empowered to “look” for discoveries.

Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner presents an intimate journey into the thought process of the making of design and attempts to connect various elements, such as shapes, graphics, texts and colours that the public is exposed to on both social media or in print in their daily life. These elements intertwine to become a visual language through which the public can better understand the messages behind. In this exhibition, visitors are encouraged to “look” at the graphic designs created by the “Father of Hong Kong Design” since the 1960s with questions that pique their curiosity to look closer, look further and be inspired to embark on a journey of creativity.

In line with the social distancing measures, the exhibition will be run by sessions. Admission quotas will be implemented. Visitors are required to make online registration in advance at: https://hkdigallery_henrysteiner_admission.eventbrite.com/. For more information on the public health measures and arrangement for *Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner*, please refer to the website of the [HKDI Gallery](#).

Appendix

Exhibition’s Highlight of “Look: The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner”

Exhibition Area 1: Symbols

As the fundamental element of graphic design, symbols with different meanings can be found everywhere. According to Steiner, one must observe closely in order to discover visual symbols and their meanings in the surroundings. Symbols are powerful carriers of multilayered meanings. Steiner uses symbols to visualise the city’s culture and show how different buildings connect the city.

Steiner’s approach to symbols is most apparent from the 1960s to the 1990s when Hong Kong underwent a rapid economic transformation from manufacturing to finance services. Enabled by Steiner’s design, many corporations have successfully built a modern and international corporate identity.



Hongkong Land, Connaught Centre Brochure in 1973

Image courtesy of Steiner & Co.

Exhibition Area 2: Contrast

Contrast shows Steiner's unique design approach. "What gives life to a design is contrast", said Steiner. Designers must be agile in making contrast, as visual contrasts can be made in many ways such as with size, colour, shape, direction and dimension, etc. Contrasts are about the comparison of things that are unlike each other if not being the exact opposites. These elements may at times look different but share conceptual similarities. By posing contrasts, Steiner displays his creativity with an eclectic mix of familiar and unfamiliar elements. He is known to produce unique contrasts in a subtle but noticeable way with the use of split-image or montage in his works.

Exhibition Area 3: Stories

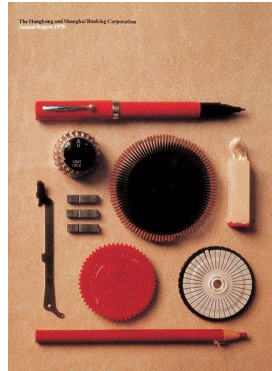
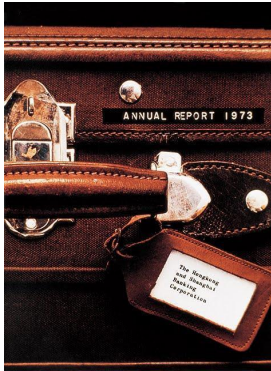
Steiner once said that "the biggest challenge is not to make a picture of something, but to manifest the meaning of the picture". He believes that graphic designs carry stories with designers being the narrators. The "*Stories*" section, is a walkthrough of Steiner's process behind his visual storytelling. He turns historical information into visual narratives and themes with rich, symbolic metaphors.

Exhibition Area 4: Appropriation

Appropriation presents Steiner's creative attempts at appropriation by borrowing existing visual vocabulary and adopting it into his works to create a brand-new meaning. Appropriation demands a thorough understanding of visual vocabulary and the designer's ability to transform it into something new. Steiner's works evidently take roots from borrowing – but goes beyond mimicry to create new meanings.

Exhibition Area 5: Systems

Systems illustrate the visual structure of graphic design. Colours, shapes, lines and typography in visual systems are interrelated, just as columns, beams and floors in buildings. It is designers' tasks to articulate order, consistency, and coherence of these elements in a unique way in their designs.



HSBC, Annual Reports in 1973 and 1979
Image courtesy of Steiner & Co.



HSBC, Visual Identity System 1983-84
(Steiner made use of a hexagon to present HSBC's brand identity as modern and international. Its bright identity system gives it a sharp presence in the finance industry.)
Image courtesy of Steiner & Co.

Exhibition Details of Look: *The Graphic Language of Henry Steiner*

Exhibition Date	From now until 30 May 2021
Website	www.hkdi.edu.hk/en/hkdi_gallery/
Facebook and Instagram:	hkdi.gallery
Enquiries	+ 852 3928 2566 hkdi-gallery@vtc.edu.hk

To download high-resolution images of the exhibition, please access the [link](#).

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About Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI)

The Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) is a member of VTC Group. HKDI was established in

2007 with the mission to be a leading provider of design education and lifelong learning, including architectural, interior and product design, communication design, digital media, and fashion and image design. With a view to providing professional designers for the creative industries, it promotes the “think and do” approach and encourages interdisciplinary thinking in its broad range of design programmes. HKDI maintains a strong network with industry and provides its students with essential practical experience enriched with cultural sensitivities and sustainability. Overseas exchanges are actively arranged for students to broaden their international perspective.

www.hkdi.edu.hk

About The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE)

The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) is a member of the VTC Group. The nine IVE campuses provide vocational and professional education and training for secondary graduates as well as people in employment. IVE programmes leading to the award of Higher Diploma and Diploma of Foundation Studies cover various academic disciplines including Health and Life Sciences; Business; Childcare, Elderly and Community Services; Design; Information Technology; Engineering, as well as Hospitality. Interdisciplinary Programmes are also offered to nurture a diversity of talent with professional knowledge.

www.ive.edu.hk

About HKDI Gallery

Affiliated to the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), HKDI Gallery is a dynamic exhibition space with unique vision, with a track record of engaging with parties at home and abroad, including internationally acclaimed museums, designers and curators. With contemporary design as the cornerstone, HKDI Gallery presents a series of top-notch exhibitions every year ranging on graphic design, architecture, fashion, product design, multimedia and so on, including the retrospective for the Pritzker Prize-winning Spanish architect Rafael Moneo, the solo exhibition for the Oscar-winning artist Tim Yip, the retrospective for Hong Kong design legacy KAN Tai-Keung, the Asian debut largest solo exhibition for one of the most influential German industrial designer Konstantin Grcic, the exhibition of Japanese posters in 20th century, etc. Conjoining the design expertise of Hong Kong Design Institute, HKDI Gallery inspires tomorrow's creative talents and promotes design education & creativity to everyone by staging museum-standard exhibitions and education workshops.

www.hkdi.edu.hk/hkdi_gallery

About Henry Steiner

Henry Steiner, hailed as the Father of Hong Kong Design, was born in Vienna, Austria prior to receiving a master's degree in graphic design at Yale University and a Fulbright fellowship to further his studies at the renowned Sorbonne University. Upon graduation, Steiner became the design director of The Asia Magazine. In 1961, Steiner accepted a nine-month contract to be posted in Hong Kong and has since made Hong Kong his home. In 1964, Steiner established the Graphic Communication Limited, now Steiner & Co., a leading design consultancy that focuses on branding and corporate identity. Steiner has created some of the most iconic graphic designs that shaped Hong Kong's visual identity for clients, such as HSBC, LaneCrawford, Shangri-La Hotel, Swire Properties, Sun Hung Kai Properties, and Hong Kong Post.

<http://www.steiner.hk/index.html>



Henry Steiner, known as “the Father of Hong Kong Design”, showcases his works at the HKDI Gallery.