

International trademark design a handbook of marks of identity by Peter Wildbur

 VAN NOSTRAND REINHOLD COMPANY
NEW YORK CINCINNATI TORONTO LONDON MELBOURNE

Human beings communicate with each other mainly through the medium of signs. I am using the word 'sign' to mean the written or printed image rather than through physical gestures of body language although both are equally valid forms of communication. In primitive societies signs are often based on pictorial images which directly, or by association, express some quality of the original. Such systems are limited in expressive range and require a large number of sign elements even to provide a very basic language for everyday communication and for storing information.

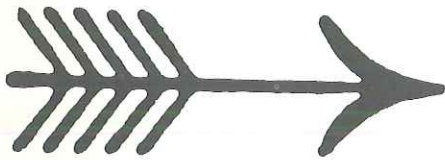
The evolution of these pictographic systems into our present highly flexible alphabets is well documented but it would be useful to point out that the main characteristic of alphabetic systems is that they operate at a linear level with letters, sounds and words being put together in a strict order. The direction of 'reading' may be horizontal or vertical but the sequence remains fixed unlike graphic signs which can be designed to operate in one or more directions.

The letters of the alphabet are only one type of graphic sign and what I would like to do in this chapter is to describe some of the other types of signs and to put them together into a sign 'spectrum'. From this we shall be able to see which areas are the most effective from a trademark point of view and it may enable us to diagnose why certain graphic

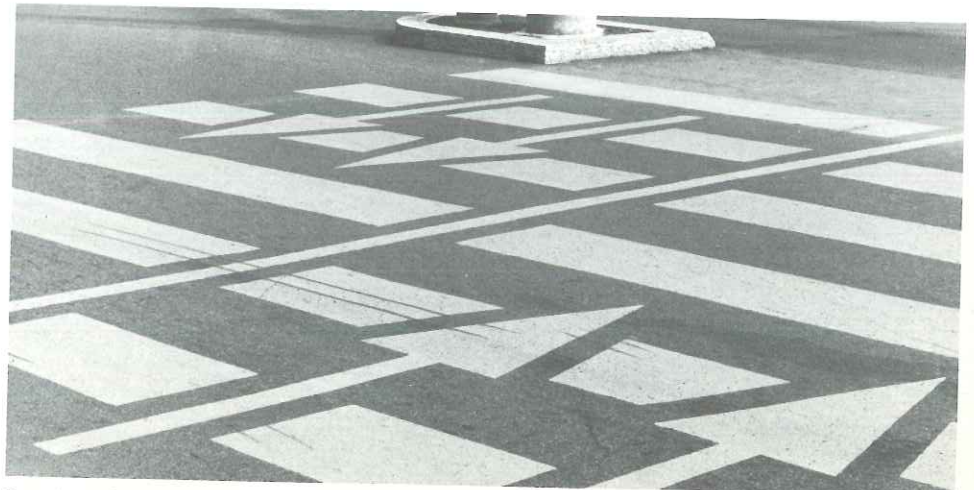
elements in a design are incompatible with others. The designer in producing a trademark is usually working to a time limitation and therefore some analytical knowledge of the types of sign available to him can be as useful as colour theory in avoiding some of the pitfalls in combining colours.

In describing signs we come up against the difficulty of finding suitably descriptive terms since most existing words in everyday use, such as symbol, emblem, logotype have a very wide meaning and are often used interchangeably even amongst designers. On the other hand I would wish to avoid the highly technical terms used by some writers on communication theory, many of whom, I suspect, create their own vocabularies. I have based the following categories on Maldonado's glossary of graphic signs ('Glossary of Semiotics' by Tomas Maldonado, *Uppercase 5*, Whitefriars Press, London 1961), which provides a good basic definition and which has the advantage of being applicable to other fields of communication.

In describing types of signs we can first make a simple distinction between signs which represent or stand for sounds (phonograms) and those which are non-phonetic in origin (logograms).



The ubiquitous arrow sign was probably first used during the early 19th century. Its stylised form is now universally accepted as a vehicle direction sign.



Dutch road sign

Phonogram		Logogram	
Phonetic sign		Abstract sign	Representational sign (pictogram)

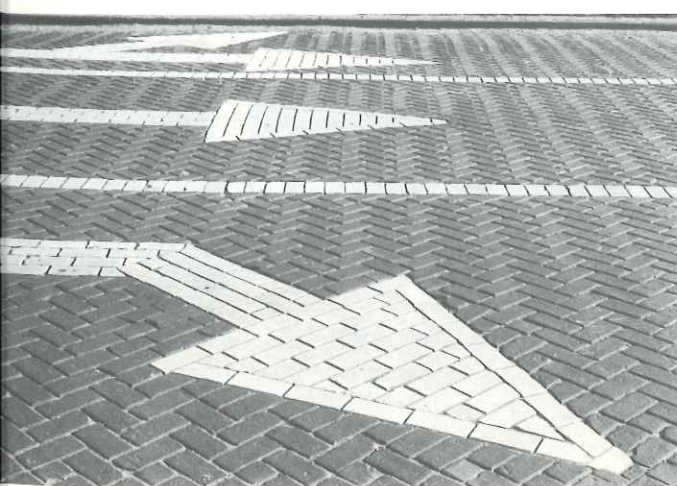
Figure 1

Phonogram		Logogram		
Phonetic sign	Phonetic/abstract sign	Abstract sign	Symbolic sign	Representational sign (pictogram)

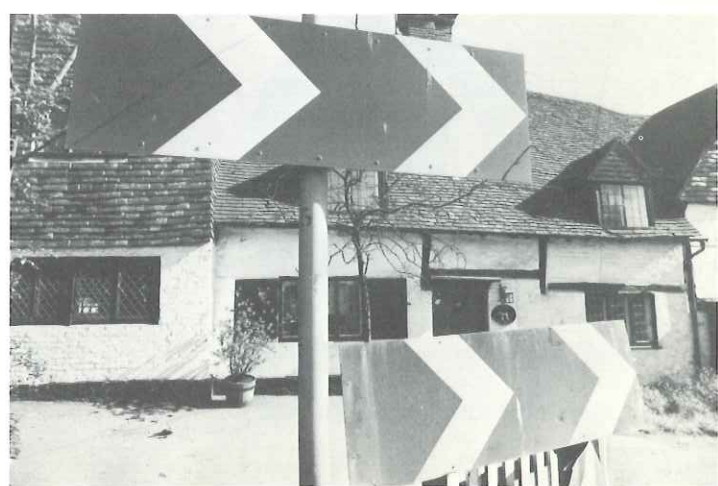
Figure 2

Phonogram		Logogram		
Phonetic sign	Phonetic/abstract sign	Abstract sign	Symbolic sign	Representational sign (pictogram)
Phonetic visual language in coded to certain sounds. Episodic signs are used to present properties of speech such as length, accent and pause	Combining phonetic and abstract elements	Non-phonetic and non- representational	Makes use of one or more representational forms to convey a complex or abstract idea	Based on pictorial referents usually without any secondary meaning

Figure 3



Brick road sign



Signpost, Westerham, Kent

Logograms can be divided into two distinct types: those based on non-pictorial sources (abstract) and those based on pictorial referents (representational). See figure 1, page 9.

Between these three broad groups we can introduce two more categories which share some of the characteristics of those on either side of them. See figure 2, page 9.

Within these five groups we can place most forms of graphic sign ranging from a character of an alphabet to an internationally understood road sign. Before going on to describe these types of sign in more detail we can summarise them as shown in figure 3, page 9.

These sign groups, like colours in the spectrum, have no firm dividing lines but the ability to distinguish essential differences between signs will help us both as designers and users of marks.

It is not, of course, the only way of classifying signs which range from attempts to classify by shape and pattern for documentation and registration purposes to classification by product or service.

Trademarks can fall into one or more of these categories but the majority lie within the middle three sections. The first section includes all marks consisting mainly of letters or words, including invented words, and the

last section includes signs and sign systems where the pictorial representation stands for a simple, often single, item of information.



1

Canadian National Railways
Designer/ Allan Flemming, Canada
Art Director/ James Valkus

Phonetic sign

This is a visual language sign representing a certain sound. The basic signs are the letters of the alphabet but while, in the English language, we accept that there are twenty six characters we should feel ourselves considerably deprived if we were unable to use the much larger range of characters in general use. As children we have to learn to recognise 26 capital letters and about 18 lower case letters (the c o p s v w x z are sufficiently close to their capital form) together with an ampersand (&) 10 numerals and a set of prosodic signs (; : , . ' ' ? !)

Language has evolved over a long period of time and changes in the spoken form have led to modifications of certain letters and the addition of new ones. Today there are pressures to reform the English language, to rationalise its spelling and pronunciation and these could lead to further changes in our alphabet. (See 'The Sound-Spell, an alphabet and a policy' and 'Soundspel - an American approach to a phonetic alphabet', *Icographic no. 9*, International Council of Graphic Design Associations, 1976).

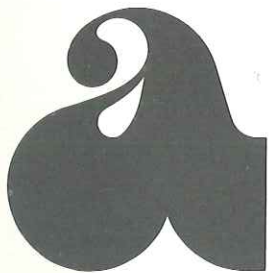
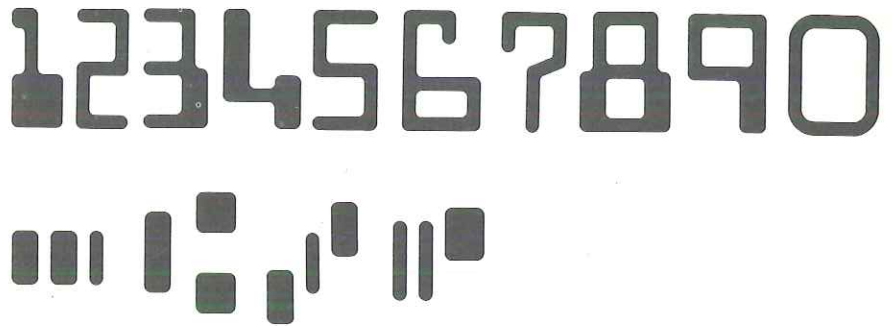
Roman alphabet

A B C D E F G H I J
 K L M N O P Q R S T
 U V W X Y Z

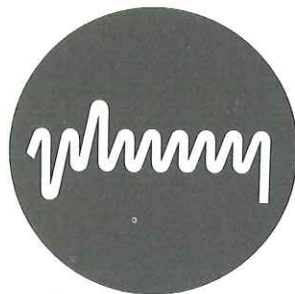
Digital letters



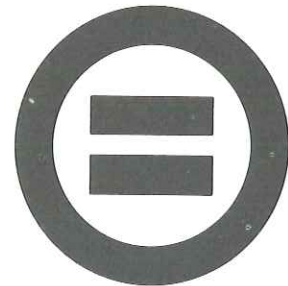
Computer alphabet



2
Artone
 Designers/Seymour Chwast and Milton Glaser, USA



3
The Plessey Company Ltd
 Designer/Norbert Dutton FSIA,UK

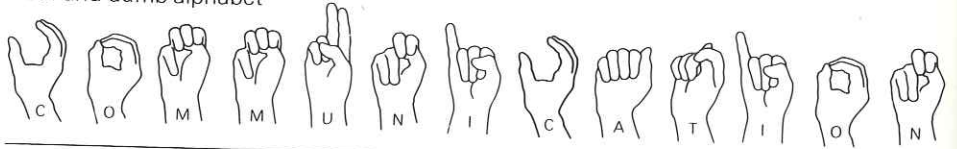


4
Equal Opportunities Commission
 (Government Agency)
 Designer/Kenneth Hollick FSIA,UK

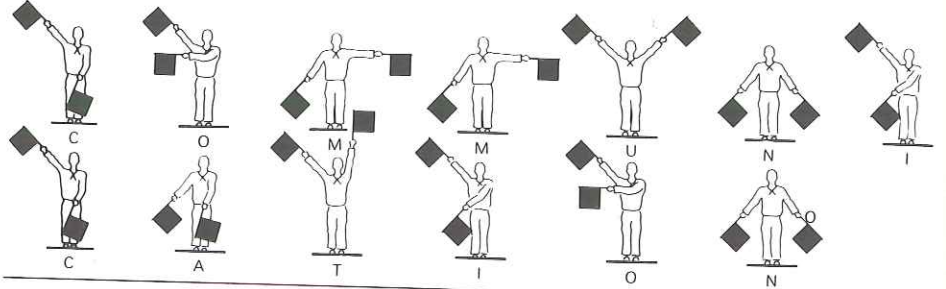
Apart from the large number of basic characters, our alphabet is available in a very large range of type faces or letterforms which are being added to almost daily. Many of these are of ephemeral character but some interpretations of letters for machine reading and electronic printouts are important from the way we have to modify our reading habits and may influence new alphabets in the future.

One of the characteristics of the phonetic sign is that it is a 'coded' language, that is to say that it can be transposed from one sign system into another, from the printed character to braille, the morse code or semaphore.

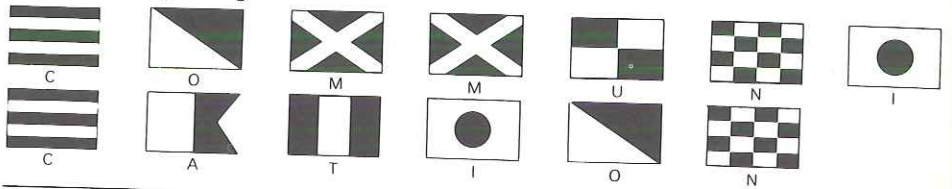
Deaf and dumb alphabet



Semaphore alphabet



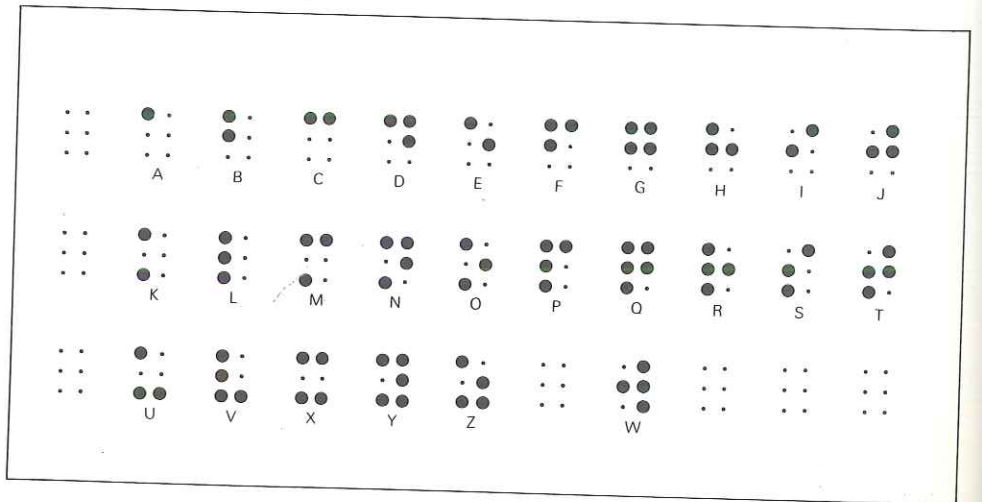
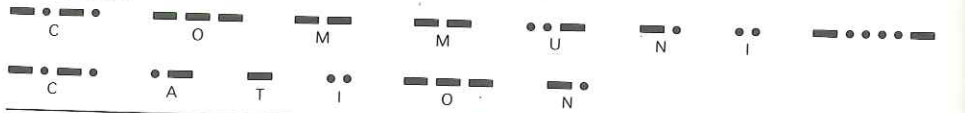
International signal flags

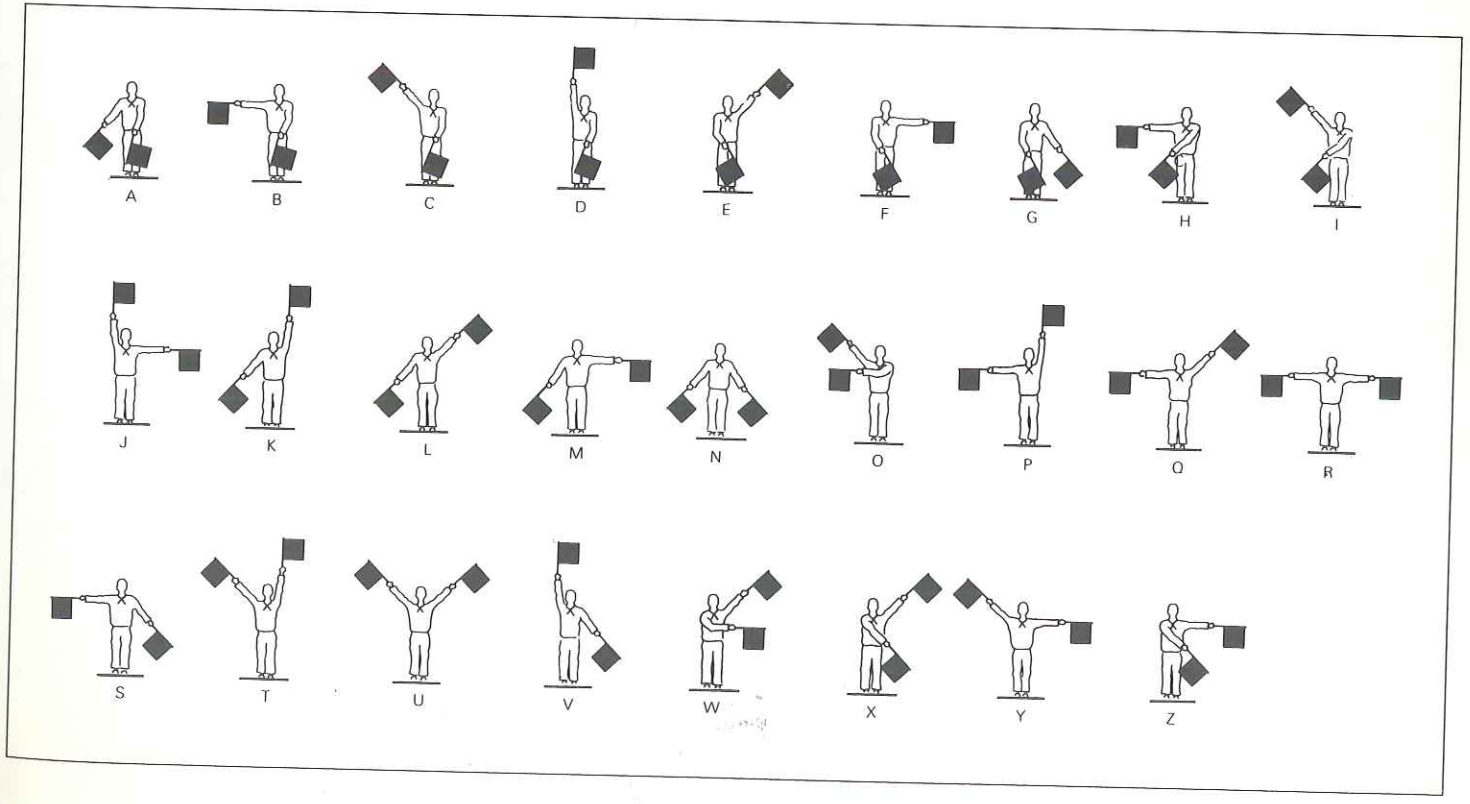
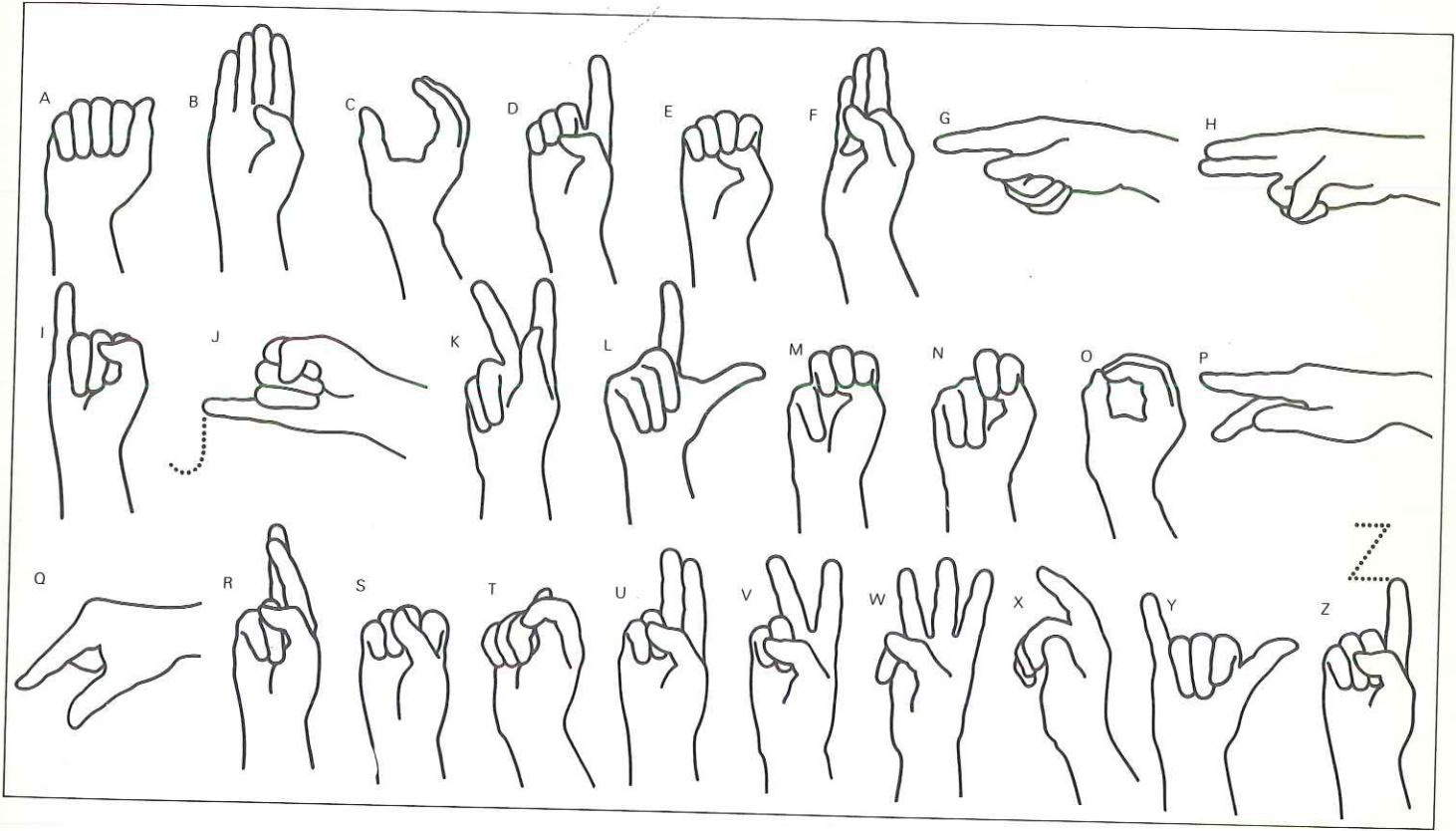


Braille alphabet



Morse code





Phonetic/abstract sign

This type of sign combines words or letters with abstract forms. In some cases the abstract elements merely emphasise the character or meaning of a word while in others the letter forms are treated as abstract elements and are used for their shape and pattern values to the exclusion of their original phonetic meaning.

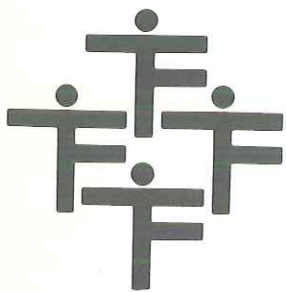
characters are beginning to merge into an abstract pattern.

Further examples of this type of design can be found in the marks for the Alireza Group of Companies, 1/1 on page 49 and Trissl Lift, 9/28 on page 111.

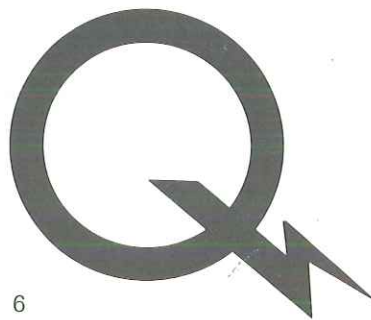
The photograph below shows a boat timetable in which the stencilled phonetic



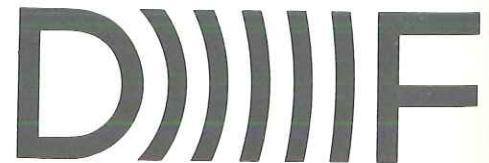
Boat excursion sign



5
Swiss Gymnastic Association
Designer/Peter Kräuchi ASG, SWB,
Switzerland
Mark based on the four F's of the
Association



6
Quebec Hydro-Electric
Designer/Gagnon, Valkus Inc, Canada



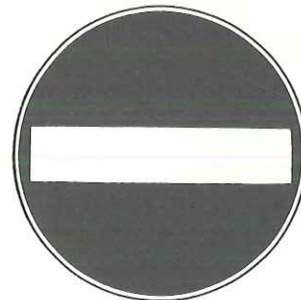
7
Deutsches Fernsehen
(Competition for German Television)
Designer/Anton Stankowski, West
Germany

Abstract sign

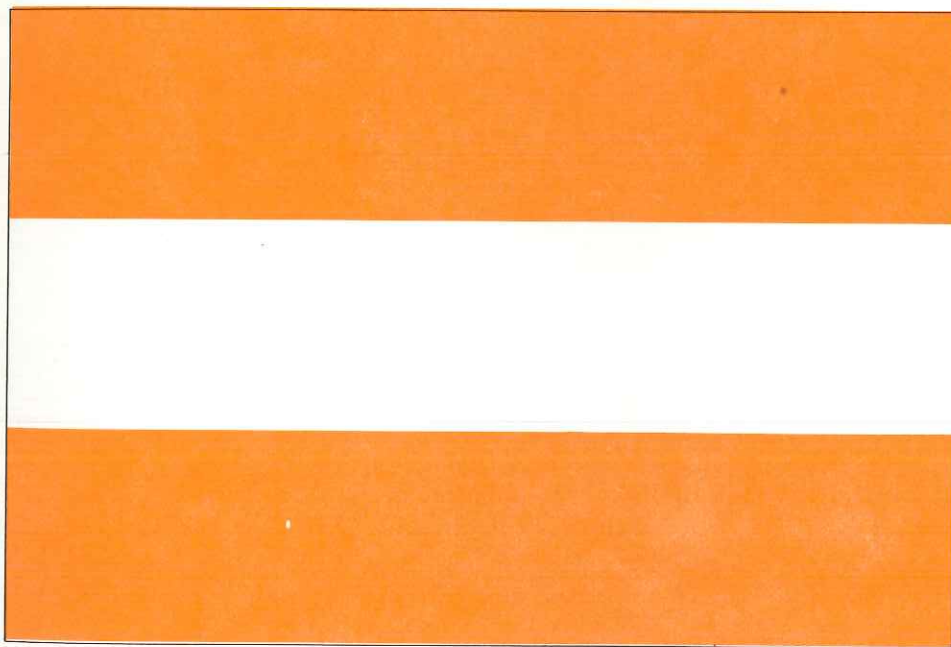
This is a non-representational type of sign although the design may be derived from a representational image through deliberate simplification or stylisation. Even in the most abstract designs it is possible to 'read' representational meanings into the design and this can be deliberately invoked by the designer.

A good example of this type of design is a mark for Compagnie Financière et du Crédit SA, 7/3 on page 90.

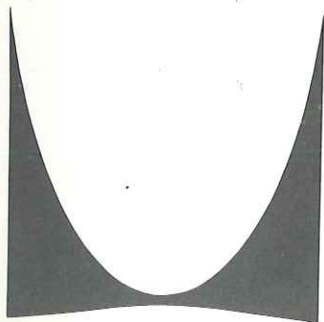
This type of sign has usually to be learnt as its meaning will not be immediately obvious and so it is important that the design be as different as possible from any competing designs. This quality of uniqueness is difficult to achieve in practice owing to the vast number of designs now in circulation and the limited number of primary shapes from which the designer can select.



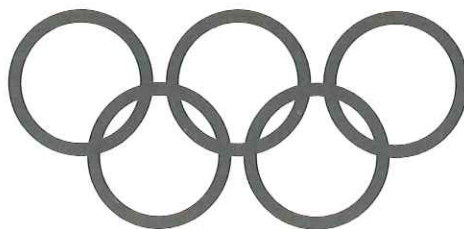
No entrance road sign



Austrian national flag

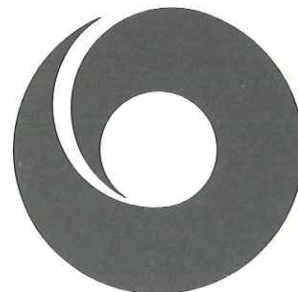


8
Herman Miller Inc
Designer/Irving Harper, George Nelson & Co Inc, USA

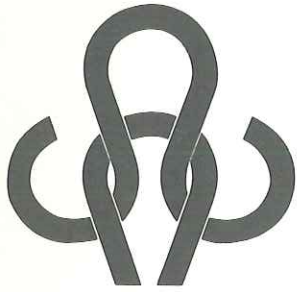


9
The International Olympic Committee symbol
Designer/Pierre de Coubertin

The official colours for the symbol are blue, yellow, black, green and red



10
Shinko Electric Company Ltd
Designer/Kenichi Yoshioka, Japan



11

Irish Double Jersey Association

Designer/Patrick Scott, Irish Republic

Symbolic sign

A combination of abstract and representational elements enables this type of sign to have an immediate recognition value. Its particular characteristic is to go beyond the limited meaning of a purely representational sign and by the juxtaposition of images convey a wider meaning using similar principles to montage.

In some cases it is possible to use methods of optical illusion to get the negative as well as the positive shapes in a design to convey an image only one of which can be seen at any one time. This can have the effect of a 'subliminal' image.

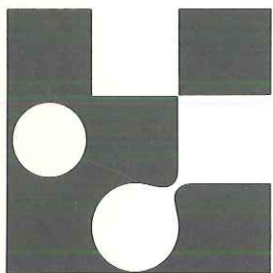
Examples of symbolic signs are the marks for the National Theatre (project), 9/1 on page 105 and the Black Sea Music Festival, 9/10 on page 108.

Representational sign (pictogram)

This is an image related sign which represents, or stands for, the object depicted. It may stand for the single object or for all types of that object as for instance in a pictogram of an aircraft at an airport. Its most successful use is where it stands directly for an object rather than for some property of that object or the result of interaction with that object. If we take three simple pictograms we can see how effective they are in these contexts: first a pictogram of a telephone; this has a direct unambiguous relation to the object. Secondly, a pictogram of a wine glass which may mean wine glass or drinking, but may be used to stand for an abstract concept such as 'fragile' or even 'this way up'. The third example is a pictogram of a skull which is commonly used to denote 'poison' or even 'danger'. The degree of interpretation possible varies considerably and this must be borne in mind when a pictogram is selected.

A pictogram is difficult to recognise if the object is not fairly well known by its shape or has a poorly defined shape. For instance, a motor horn is a commonplace object but not, in present day examples, one that many people would easily recognise in pictographic form.

Pictograms if they portray a man-made object, are likely to date very rapidly and will need constant redrawing to keep them up to date. This is particularly true of objects

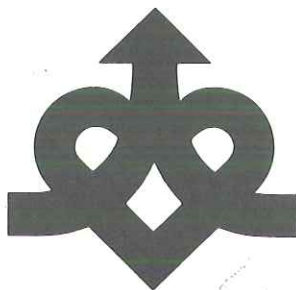


12

Cliche-Schwitzer AG

(Process engravers)

Designer/Gerstner, Gredinger + Kutter, Switzerland



13

Büro für Werbung, Organisation und Sozialprobleme

(Social services)

Designer/Eugen and Max Lenz, Switzerland



14

The Law Society

(Mark for Legal Aid Scheme)

Designer/Richard Daynes FSIAD, London

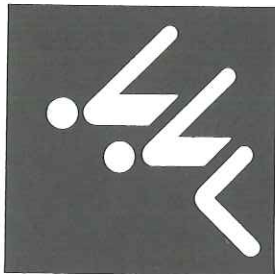


Bicycle track pictogram

which are subject to rapid technological change such as aircraft and vehicles. It seems to be true that as man-made objects become more complex the outer shape of the object becomes less characteristic of that particular item and less easy to differentiate as a graphic image.

A further limitation of a pictogram is that people from different cultures, even within the same country, may not recognise or give the same interpretation to a pictogram.

A pictogram, therefore, requires care in selection both to the time scale involved and the context of its use.



15

Olympic Games, Munich

Designer/Otl Aicher, West Germany

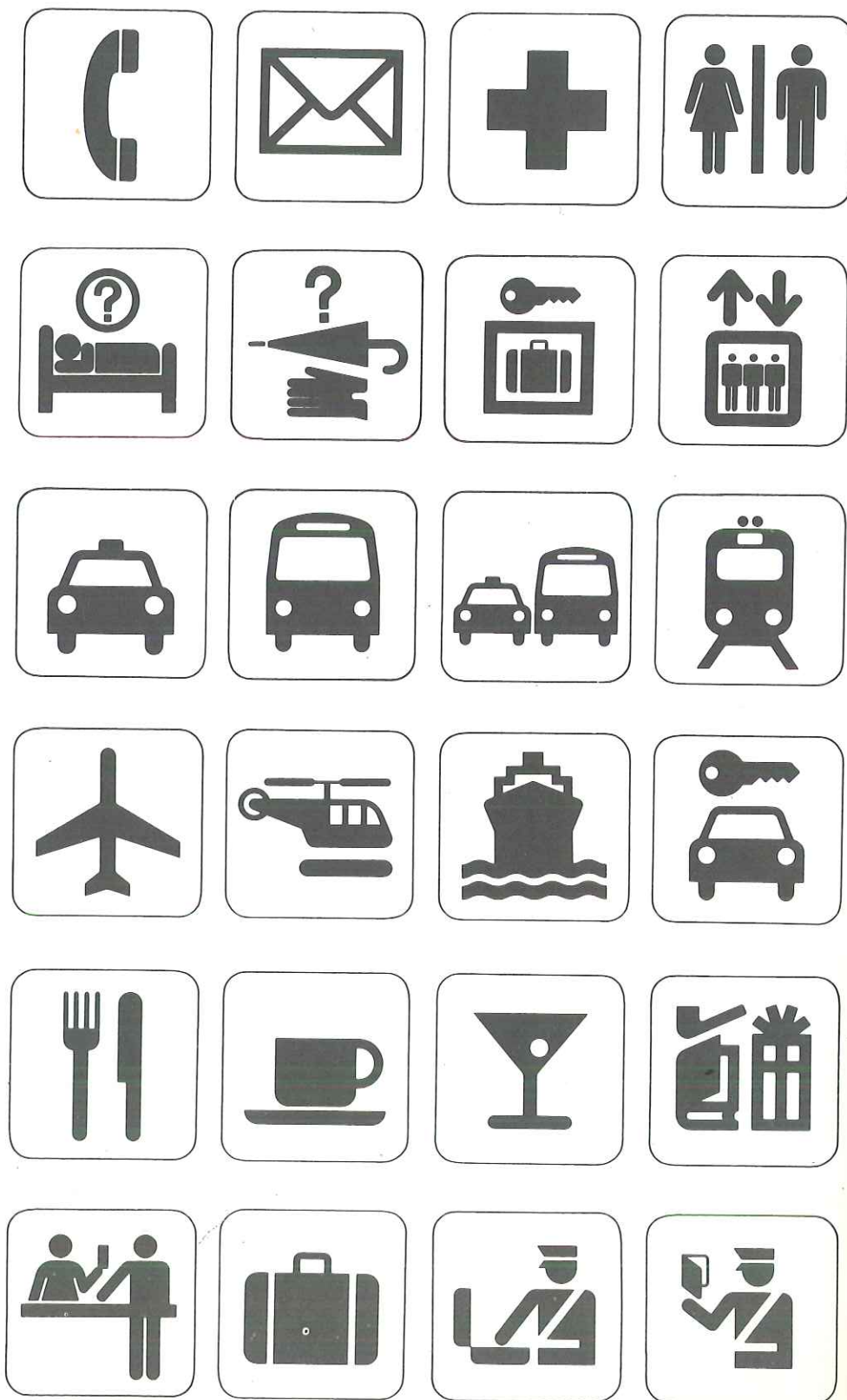
Pictograms for track and field events,
swimming and football

16

**United States Department of
Transportation**

Designers/Cook and Shanosky
Associates Inc, Princeton, New Jersey

These graphic symbols (part of a set of 33 symbols) have been produced by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA). To develop this system of transportation symbols an 'inventory' of symbols was collected from 24 different sources from all over the world. These were then analysed for effectiveness by a design committee which made recommendations on the final concept for each new symbol.



Creating a design for a trademark presents a challenge to most designers for not only has the designer to reconcile the demands of the client's brief which may be very specific in its requirements but he has to ensure that the final design is capable of reduction to postage stamp size, or smaller, without loss of character or definition. The design, in most cases, must be capable of working in black and white since it is almost inevitable that the mark will be reproduced at some time in newspapers or on black and white tv.

The more demanding requirements of a trademark are those of uniqueness, at least within the client's field of activity and some degree of timelessness. The latter is a quality which can best be ensured in a negative way by not using fashionable visual cliches or type faces which are likely to become dated in a few years. One cannot hope to escape some 'period' quality other than by using basic geometrical forms but Walter Herdeg has summed up this requirement perfectly when he says, 'A firm and its registered trademark may well be old, for age shows that they have stood the test of time; but a trademark that is out-of-date is, in both senses of the word, a bad sign!'

There are, of course, occasions when an element of fashion may be particularly important in a design such as a mark for a fashion designer, a night club or a magazine

but the projected time span of the mark will usually dictate the type of solution. Many old trademark designs in this country have been deliberately retained because the period element in the design is of very real value in stressing their traditional virtues. In some cases the original designs remain unaltered but in others they have been carefully simplified for reproduction in small sizes and on different materials.

Amongst the more practical constraints affecting the final design are those of the media and reproduction process. It is quite common for a trademark specification to call for its use in embossed, stencilled, woven or illuminated versions apart from the conventional reproduction processes. For many of these special uses the design can be easily adapted but a major application for a particular medium will have to take into account the prevailing limitations or technology of the medium itself. The use of neon tubes before fluorescent, back-lit signs became widespread is an example where a linear emphasis was derived from the medium in much the same way as in early forms of watermarks (see page 34).

The problem of scale, already touched on, does become important when designs have to be capable of very large as well as very small reproduction. In most cases these will require the preparation of several basic versions of a design in which such things as

the problem of line weight, optical effects, ink spread or tv screen interference patterns are taken into account.

The coordination of a mark into a corporate identity scheme may require the preparation of a detailed constructional grid to enable the design to be reconstructed in parts of the world where photographic reproduction or enlargement is not available. The geometric or simplified form of construction required for this purpose may again influence the final form of the mark.

Considering the content of a trademark design we can separate three elements which are found in most designs. These are the descriptive, the symbolic and the pictographic and they can be found either singly or in combination.

Descriptive marks

The inclusion of some *descriptive* visual image relating to a clients' products is an obvious element in creating a new mark but may present a number of problems in such a small design format. Any one product reference automatically excludes others and an attempt to combine several products or elements common to most of them seldom produces a satisfactory visual result.

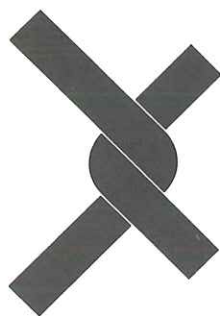
A product itself must also be expected to change, both internally and externally, over a period of time and major functional changes, such as the change from piston to jet engines in aircraft, can make any design obsolete that relies on a purely descriptive image. In many cases there is a change in the emphasis of a company's products with time and some product ranges may disappear altogether. For these reasons it is often more important to suggest the character of an organisation than to show its products.



Acoustic Partition Systems

Designer/Romek Marber, London

The mark is based on a section of the basic structural component

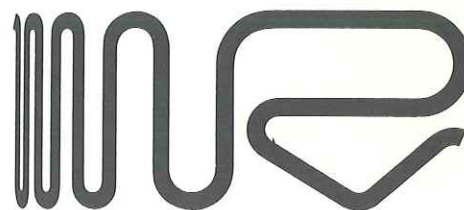


18

Barnards wire fencing

Designer/Romek Marber, London

The mark is based on the basic twisting feature common to all wire fencing



19

Resilience Ltd

(Manufacturers of springs for bedding and upholstery)

Designer/Peter Wildbur, London



20

**Project for an American
pharmaceutical laboratory**

Designer/Peter Kräuchi ASG, SWB,
Switzerland

Mark based on the initial letter D

Symbolic marks

With the widespread use of trademarks by organisations who provide services, skills or information the descriptive approach is of little use and one must create an image *symbolising* some abstract quality of the organisation. This symbolic approach may be just as appropriate, however, for a company which produces a range of products. It is useful if the designer can draw up a list of as many of these desirable qualities as possible because not all of them may be capable of being translated into compact visual form or be combined in the same design. The variety of themes is unlimited and can encompass such diverse ideas as energy, efficiency, precision, and cooperation.

The symbolism may be used to bring together two or more aspects of the organisation or concentrate on one facet which sums up the underlying character of the whole. The Woolmark is a good example of the latter in the way in which it suggests many of the admirable qualities that we associate with wool in a single image. The image selected by its designer is instantly recognisable and manages to convey those overtones of meaning by associating the natural raw material with the craft qualities of hand knitting.

There are a number of conventional and popular symbols which every designer files away at the back of his mind and which can

best be described as off-the-shelf symbols. These can be of value since the symbolism is firmly established in the viewer's mind and all that is required is an appropriate graphic form. Some typical examples of these are: dove/peace, tortoise/slow, lightning flash/electrical danger, entwined snake/medicine (for a classic example of this symbol see George Staehelin's mark for Pharma Information, 10/30 on page 120).

For symbolising events of a national or international character, the designer can draw on a large field of formal and patriotic emblems including flags and heraldic devices. Heraldry however is an area to view with caution. Originally a vigorous form of personal identification combined with genealogical information it now appears to have become so institutionalised that the formal rules have replaced any concern for visual qualities.

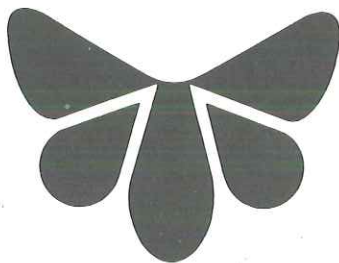


21

International Wool Secretariat

Designer/Francesco Saroglia, Italy

A certification trade mark for products of pure new wool



22

Irish Silk Poplin

Designer/Louis le Brocquy RHA, FSIAD,
D.Litt, France

Mark based on a stylised female silk moth



23

Chicago Pharmacal

Designer/John Massey, USA



24

Kenneth Harris

(Hearing aid consultant)

Designer/Ron Ford FSIAD, Bristol

Typographic marks

A good many trade marks make use of letter forms, sometimes because an existing mark has been registered as a word or initial letters. In some cases the designer uses letter forms as a starting point much as a composer might compose a piece of music around a set of notes. This *typographic* approach requires more than a collection of letters to qualify as a trademark. It has to contain some graphic organisation or addition to its formal content which will enhance or characterise the nature of the client's activity. This may be achieved by the addition of some new element or by distorting or regrouping the letterforms to express qualities of the product as well as retaining to some degree their alphabetic meaning. The letters themselves do not have to be recognisable to produce an effective mark but either result is justified if the designer has been able to arrive at an appropriate and memorable design.

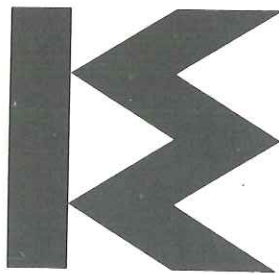
Having selected the most appropriate elements for a mark the design process is one of fusing these statements into a formal whole and synchronising them in such a way that form and meaning become inseparable. There are several examples in this book of designs created by the combination of two simple images, each of which is recognisable on its own but which achieves new meaning by juxtaposition. Stephan Kantscheff demonstrates this in his mark for a music festival held on the Black Sea coast where

he has combined the image of a musical stave with a sea horse in such a way that the negative image of one becomes the positive image of the other, 9/10 on page 108.

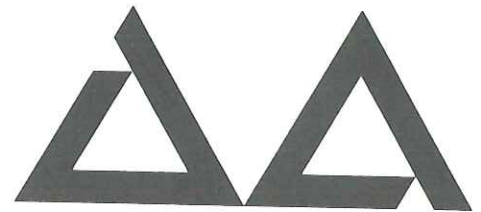
Contrasting images of flask and flames are combined in Tor Pettersen's mark for Chelsea Drug and Chemical Company, 5/1 on page 75.

A design for a trademark can be of almost any external shape but any collection of marks will show that most designs are of a compact nature so that regardless of use and in whatever type of context they retain their individuality and remain isolated from other graphic features.

A glance through this book will show how limited, in one sense, the trademark designer's vocabulary is with, only rarely, the luxury of an additional colour. A large proportion of these designs are composed with simple geometric shapes bounded by a straight line or compass curve and often utilising lines of equal thickness throughout. With such a limited range of shapes, reminiscent of a composer's keyboard, the designer has to make every detail of the design work for him with the 'negative' shapes, that is the white spaces left between the black 'positive' areas, treated as an additional element in the composition. A good example of this is the mark by Rolf Harder for the Canadian Association for Retarded Children, 10/8 on page 115 and a



25

Kilkenny Design WorkshopsDesigner/Louis le Brocqy RHA, FSIAD,
D. Litt, France

26

Delta Acceptance Corporation Ltd

(Finance company)

Designer/Chris Yaneff, Canada

Mark based directly on the Greek letter



24

Kenneth Harris

(Hearing aid consultant)
Designer/Ron Ford FSIAD, Bristol

Typographic marks

A good many trade marks make use of letter forms, sometimes because an existing mark has been registered as a word or initial letters. In some cases the designer uses letter forms as a starting point much as a composer might compose a piece of music around a set of notes. This *typographic* approach requires more than a collection of letters to qualify as a trademark. It has to contain some graphic organisation or addition to its formal content which will enhance or characterise the nature of the client's activity. This may be achieved by the addition of some new element or by distorting or regrouping the letterforms to express qualities of the product as well as retaining to some degree their alphabetic meaning. The letters themselves do not have to be recognisable to produce an effective mark but either result is justified if the designer has been able to arrive at an appropriate and memorable design.

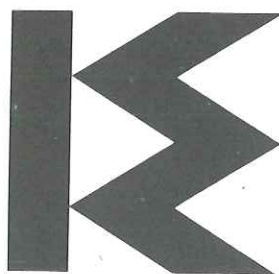
Having selected the most appropriate elements for a mark the design process is one of fusing these statements into a formal whole and synchronising them in such a way that form and meaning become inseparable. There are several examples in this book of designs created by the combination of two simple images, each of which is recognisable on its own but which achieves new meaning by juxtaposition. Stephan Kantscheff demonstrates this in his mark for a music festival held on the Black Sea coast where

he has combined the image of a musical staff with a sea horse in such a way that the negative image of one becomes the positive image of the other, 9/10 on page 108.

Contrasting images of flask and flames are combined in Tor Pettersen's mark for Chelsea Drug and Chemical Company, 5/1 on page 75.

A design for a trademark can be of almost any external shape but any collection of marks will show that most designs are of a compact nature so that regardless of use and in whatever type of context they retain their individuality and remain isolated from other graphic features.

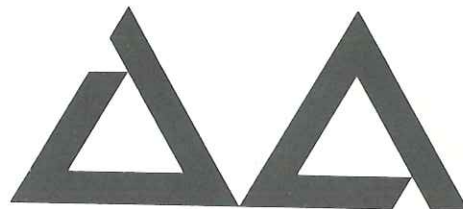
A glance through this book will show how limited, in one sense, the trademark designer's vocabulary is with, only rarely, the luxury of an additional colour. A large proportion of these designs are composed with simple geometric shapes bounded by a straight line or compass curve and often utilising lines of equal thickness throughout. With such a limited range of shapes, reminiscent of a composer's keyboard, the designer has to make every detail of the design work for him with the 'negative' shapes, that is the white spaces left between the black 'positive' areas, treated as an additional element in the composition. A good example of this is the mark by Rolf Harder for the Canadian Association for Retarded Children, 10/8 on page 115 and a



25

Kilkenny Design Workshops

Designer/Louis le Brocquy RHA, FSIAD,
D.Litt, France

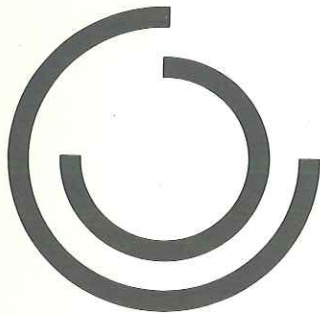


26

Delta Acceptance Corporation Ltd

(Finance company)
Designer/Chris Yaneff, Canada

Mark based directly on the Greek letter



27

Certina

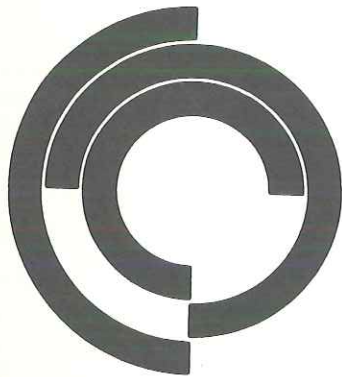
(Swiss watchmaker)

Designer/Carl B Graf ASG, SWB,
Switzerland

mark for the Central Office of Information designed by June Fraser and Mike Butts, 7/12 on page 92.

From this point of view, the starting point for the designer can equally well be a geometric shape, a letter form or a conventional image.

To some extent, the designer must be able to view his images with the eyes of a child: two horizontally placed dots can equally well stand for eyes as for rollers of a printing press; a heart shape can signify computer dating or, by a shift of emphasis, a cardiac research centre. The designer becomes a magician only needing to indicate the context of the image to set it firmly and unambiguously for us.



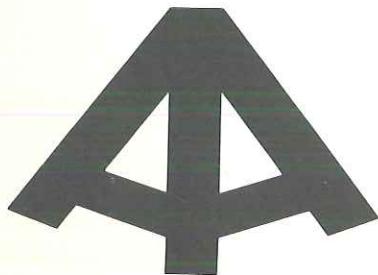
28

Jon G Darby

(Photographer)

Designer/Jonathan de Morgan, Leeds,
England

The designer learns to manipulate shapes and forms much as a composer learns to build notes but only a few designers achieve that magical quality which can transform merely black and white shapes into a memorable and human image.



29

Associated Adhesives Ltd

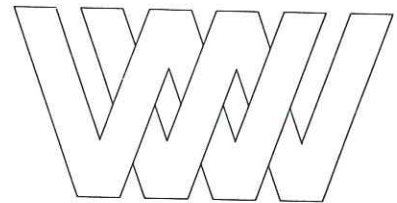
Designer/Peter Gauld FSIAD, London



30

Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association

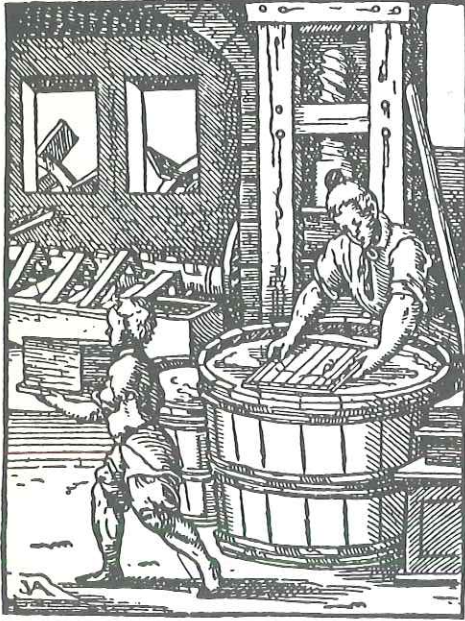
Designer/Burton Kramer, Toronto, Canada



31

Wilson Walton Signs Ltd

Designer/Alan Fletcher, Pentagram, London



Early wood engraving of a papermaker at work

Watermarks

Paper making first evolved in China about the beginning of the first century AD and the earliest forms were made from vegetable fibres in bamboo moulds. The secret of its production spread rapidly throughout Asia and was brought to Europe from Egypt and North Africa. Paper making in Spain and Italy is recorded in the 12th and 13th centuries and paper mills in other European countries soon followed. The earliest known watermark appears in an Italian paper made in Bologna in 1282. Papermaking in England dates from the end of the 15th century.

It was in Europe that the use of a fine wire mesh was developed in the paper making mould and it was the use of wire with its great flexibility that led to the invention of the watermark or more accurately the 'wiremark' since it is the wire impression that is implanted in the paper fibres during its production. The early papermakers' moulds were composed of a wooden frame supporting a matrix of fine parallel strands of wire which acted as a sieve in holding the macerated fibres after the water had been drained away (see early wood engraving at left). When dried and held up to the light the impression of these wires shows up as thin translucent 'laid' lines. If a simple design is made up out of wire and attached to this 'sieve' then it will also show up as an impression when viewed against the light. The constraint of producing a design from a length of wire without solid areas led to the

characteristic linear nature of these early watermarks. The French term for a watermark, *un filigrane*, sums up very well the character of these early designs.

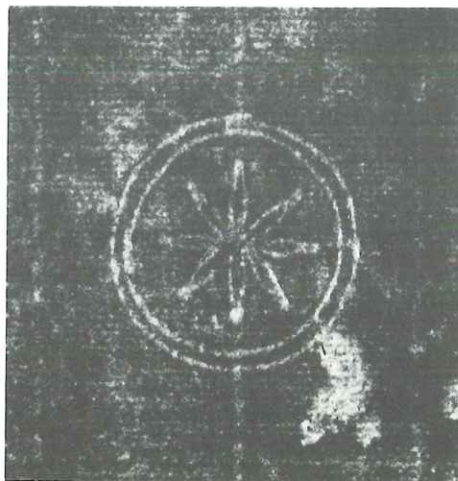
Early Watermarks were probably used to denote the maker or the location of the mill but were later used to denote the size and quality of a sheet. The Jester or Fool's Cap watermark, (see illustration) first seen about 1540, gave its name to the paper size of foolscap.

The fact that a watermark is indestructible has led both to its control for excise purposes and its use for many forms of security printing. This latter use has acted as a strong stimulus to produce more sophisticated forms of watermarking leading to coloured watermarks and shadow marks capable of rendering photographic tones.

Developments in technology may render the watermark obsolete for security purposes as paper can now be marked magnetically and it is of interest that developments in photography now allow us to photograph watermarks that were previously indecipherable through being covered by print or manuscript (the photographs below are examples of these beta-radiograph prints).



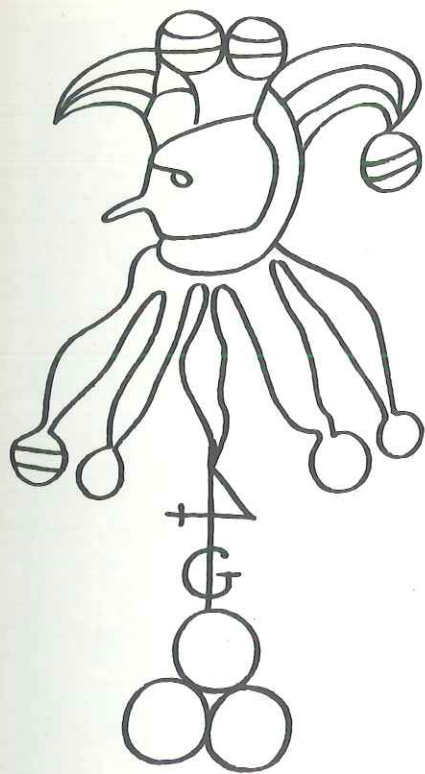
Negro head, Italy, c 1436



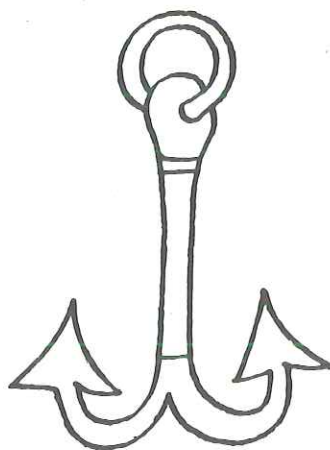
Star in circle, 1495



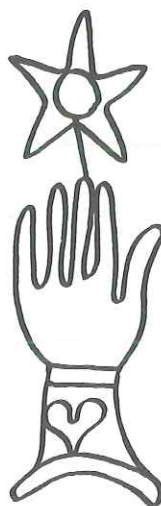
Bull, England 15th century



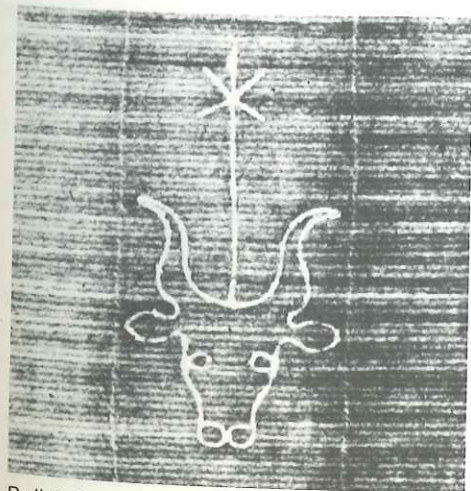
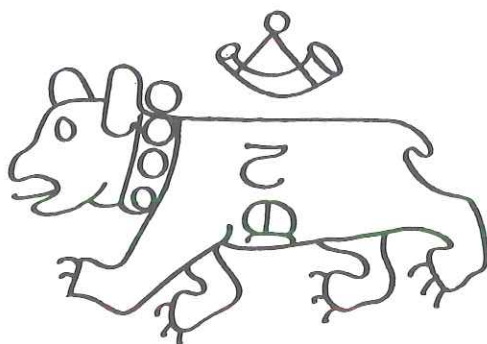
Foolscap, Rostoff, 1555



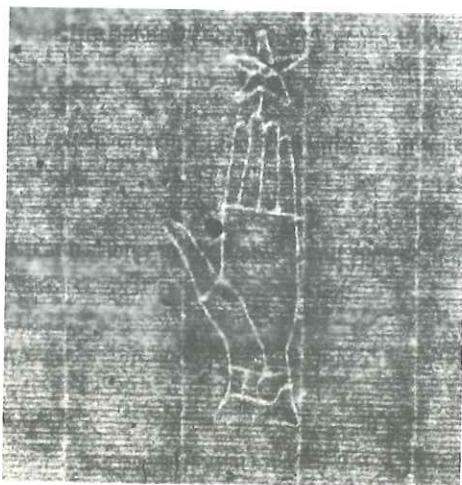
Anchor, Milan, Italy 1428
Bear, place of origin unknown, 1560



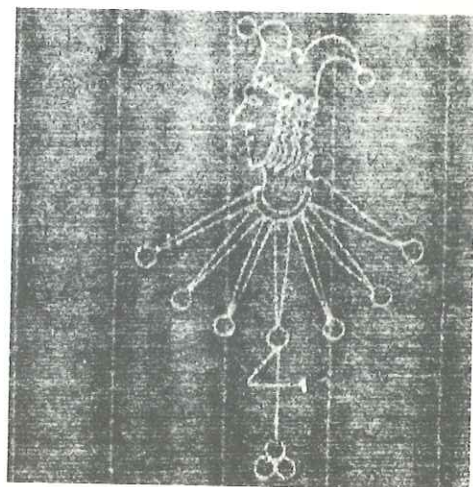
Watermark of a hand, Perigeuse, France
1540-50



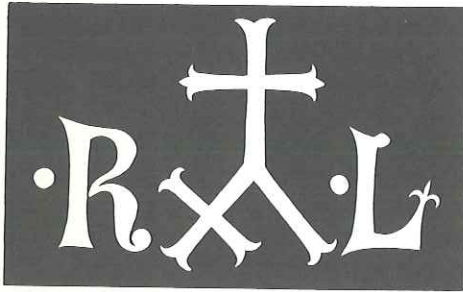
Bull & Star, England, 15th century



Hand & Star, England, 1563



Jester, England, 18th century



Mark of Richard Lant, bookbinder, on the cover of the Ipswich Domesday Book

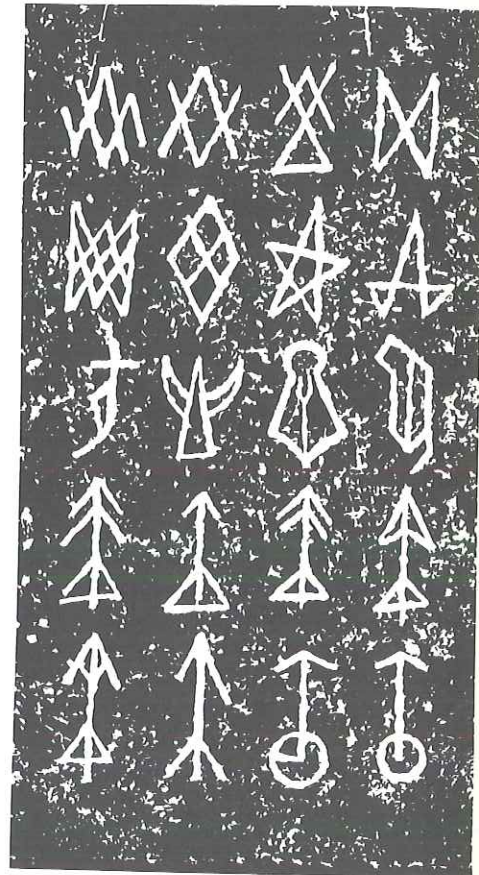
Merchants' marks

Merchants' marks were the direct forerunners of the modern trademark. They were in widespread use in Europe and this country from the end of the 13th century and were used originally to identify the owner of goods or the quality of his merchandise. Later on as trade guilds developed they identified membership of a guild or company and in certain trades the marks were registered and given protection by law. Some merchants used both a trade mark and an heraldic mark and there are some examples of a merchant mark appearing within an heraldic design.

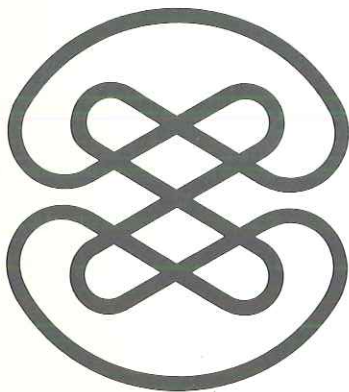
These trading marks served to overcome the limitations of language both local and foreign at a time when there were few forms of printed matter and no mass produced containers by which the shape of the container could identify its owner. If we remember that each mark had to be repeated by hand, probably by brush, on each bale or container then we see that elaboration was difficult to achieve.

The marks were nearly always constructed around a vertical stem with the main elements at the top and base, and other elements flanking or crossing the centre.

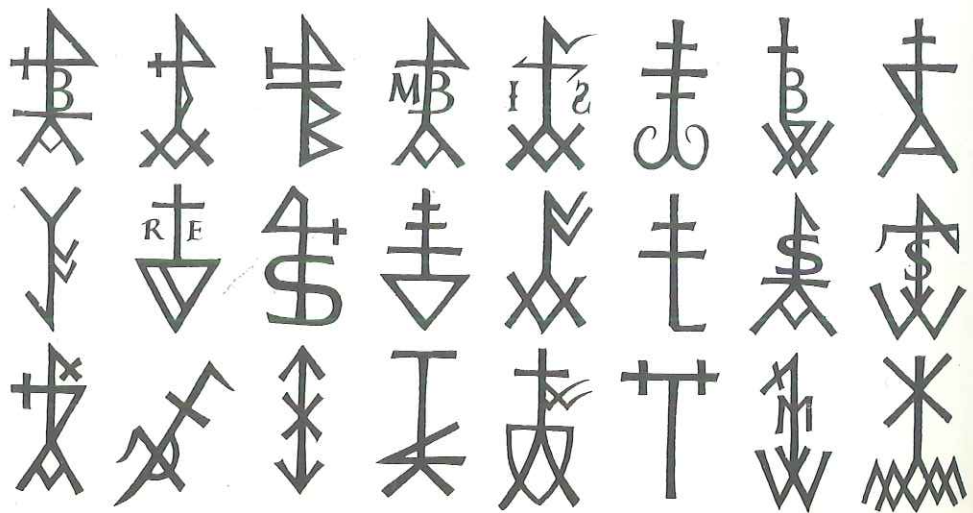
The reason for this particular form and for its continuing use over several centuries is not clear but it has been suggested that the early marks were derived from the Runic alphabet.



Masons' marks from English churches



Builders' mark from a house at Shrewsbury

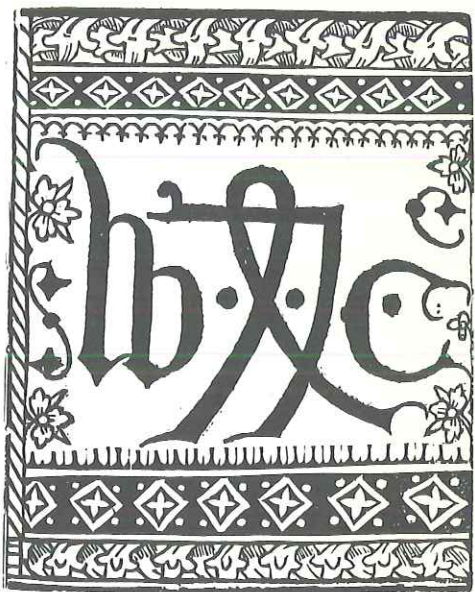


Merchants' marks, 14th-17th century

Polonia 1100 2

84 10

Registrum Articulorum Diversa scripta grammata et omnia
 in hunc modum: In quibusdam civitatibus Civitatis Bruges in quibusdam
 rebus hinc et mercatoribus ipsi violenter ablati et in quibusdam
 quorundam amicis et adpugnatis crudeliter mortificati et sub
 mersio ex tribus manibus de Civitate Bruges quodam deusis flandria
 ceasentibus in mari ab Angliis illata conuenerunt, sed in ordine
 manuum et deponarum de scribitur in hunc modum
 Primum natus vulgariter Cogge die de Mgr seu Rector fuit
 quatuordecim annis in eadem manu mortificatus et submersus Omnis
 proannus heres hermannus Ethel Omnis Bruges cum hermono
 hiddense qui ad quibusdam aliis civibus Bruges parte habuit in eadem
 manu quam ad apparuit et scribitur fuit ad Balore in et
 nobilitate transierunt a fuit quodam natus portus per laparum
 Item habuit idem marquis de prius et prius hinc fuit in dicta
 manu in. Sapa hinc Item in Sapa filio annis vulgariter habuit
 Item in Sapa cere Item in Sapa cepi Item in Sapa ad deponatibus Annis
 et propter quod a claudis captus ad Balore in et propter flandria
 Johannes Crippwald habuit in eadem manu in Sapa hinc sub sig
 innotato
 Johannes morigh habuit in ea in Sapa cepi sub signo presena
 Johannes misener qui post dictam manum captus defunctus est
 omnis heres herborndus can der herde habuit in ad dicta manu
 in Sapa hinc et in Sapa cepi sub signo innotato
 Henricus schadeland qui fuit Johis misera immediate prescripti
 fuisse habuit in hac manu in Sapa hinc sub isto signo
 Conradus Bomigh habuit in eadem manu in hinc omnis dicti
 vulgariter bollard et in Sapa hinc sub signo apposito
 Petrus lorcherb qui omni postea defunctus est omnis heres
 est innotato Johannes misener habuit in eadem manu in Sapa hinc
 et innotato cepi sub signo presena
 Johannes can der Cappelley in dicta manu submersus habuit
 in eadem manu in Sapa hinc Item innotato annis deponatibus Annis
 hic et innotato angulis taxata ad Balore per nobilitate Item
 innotato in manu Engelberti boneth habuit per magnas libras vul
 gari deni scripsit cere singulis sub signo innotato Omnis heres
 et fateri carnalis est Conradus can der Cappelley omnis Bruges
 Bernhardus mellichusen habuit in ea innotato omnis in qua
 eius innotato vulgare hinc vulgare hinc vulgare hinc vulgare hinc
 Arnoldus van huten habuit in ea innotato hinc sub hoc signo

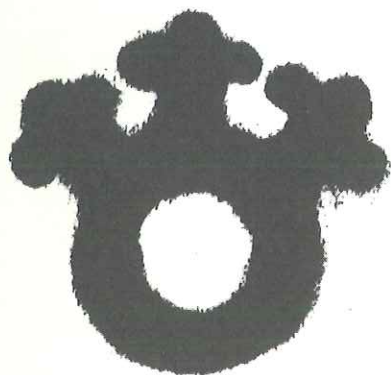


Mark of William Caxton, 1422-1492, the first English printer

In this and the binding mark the owners' initials are assuming an equal importance with the trading mark and show the beginning of the departure from the earlier stylised forms

Hanseatic trading marks dating from 1406



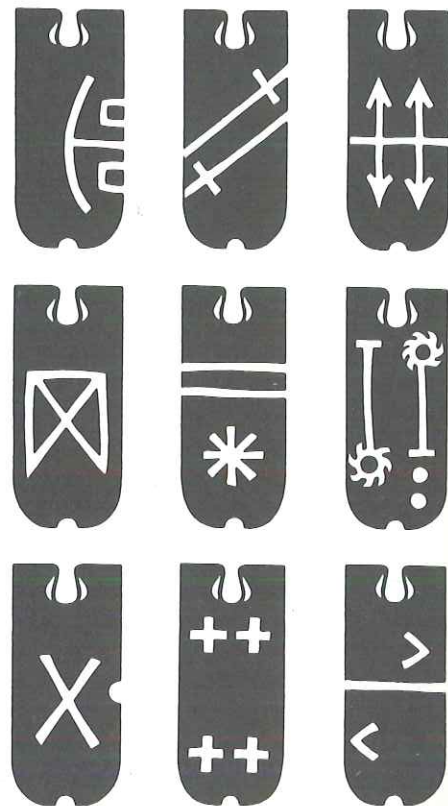


Branding marks

Cattle branding, usually associated with the American West, was also quite common in Europe up to the beginning of this century. The nature of the mark and the painful method of application resulted in designs where distinctiveness and absolute economy of means were combined.

Many different types of animals and birds were marked to register ownership but one of the more interesting and best documented of these types of mark was that used to establish the ownership of swans. Swans have been kept in a semi-domesticated state in this country from about the 12th century, although these particular marks date from the 15th-17th centuries. The marks were inscribed on the upper mandible of the beak and a register of the marks was kept by a swan-master.

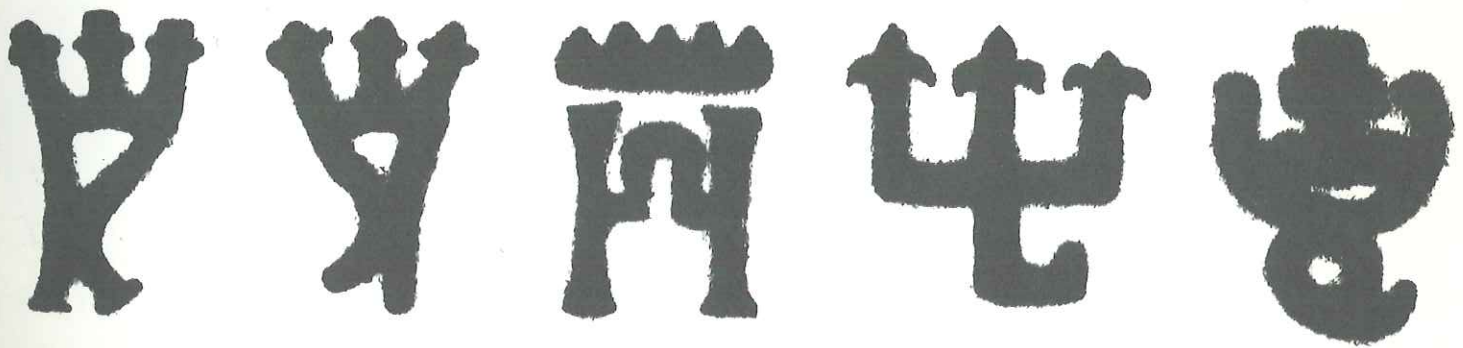
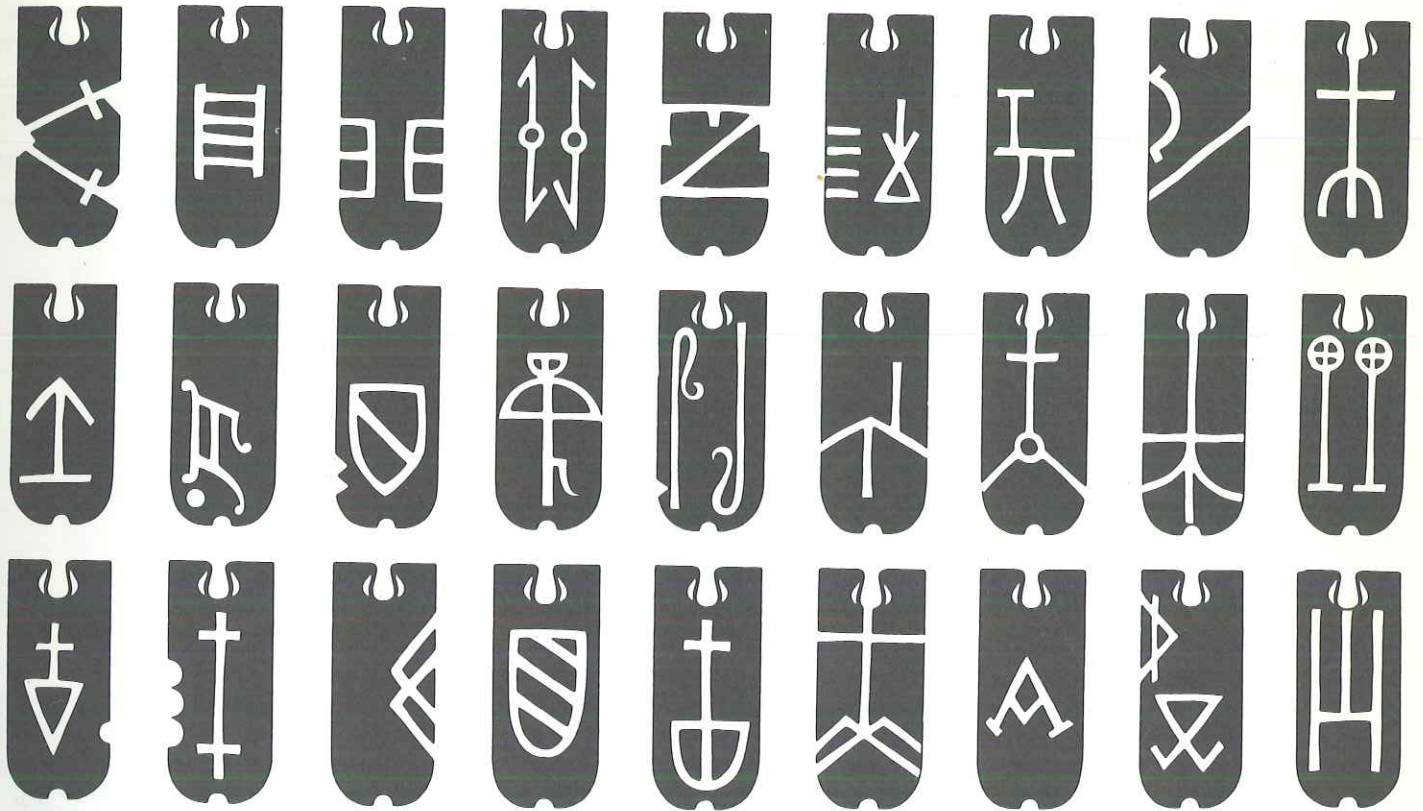
The marks have a strong visual link with merchants' marks of the same period, using a limited number of motifs and may be based on their owners' heraldic device.



Swan marks from Lincolnshire and Suffolk, 15-17th centuries



Essex Forest cattle brands, 1908





Suffolk and General; lead plate, seven-pointed star

Firemarks

Firemarks were a form of identification used by fire insurance companies from the late 1600's up to the beginning of this century. They were used to distinguish the properties insured by a particular company in the days when buildings were rarely numbered and precise addresses uncommon. The marks were attached to the outside of buildings, usually between the first floor windows and, to begin with, were cast from lead but at the beginning of the 19th century copper, tinned iron and brass were also used. Many of the marks were gilded and most painted in bright colours for maximum display value.

Following the great fire of London in 1666 a number of mutual fire insurance offices were set up and it was the fire insurance companies who for the next hundred and fifty years provided the local fire 'brigades'. It was not until 1866 that the Metropolitan Board of Works took over the London Fire Engine Establishment and it became a public undertaking.

Each company had its own design although there were often a number of variants produced and many of the marks included the policy number under the design. The image was often derived from the Company's name or location and rarely showed any direct connection with fire with

the exception of the mythological designs for Phoenix Assurance and the Salamander & Western Fire Assurance. Most of the designs were based on heraldic or patriotic motifs and it is the constraints of metal casting or embossing that give them a more vigorous quality compared with other contemporary printed designs.



Salamander & Western Fire Assurance Society, copper plates showing salamander in fire. (The lizard-like salamander was believed



to take the shape of a human and to go unscathed through fire)



Phoenix Assurance Company, phoenix rising from flames, tinned iron, c 1815



Westminster Fire Office, lead plate, issued before 1735

Protector Fire Insurance Company, copper plate showing fireman and burning house, c 1830.



Leeds and Yorkshire Assurance Company, copper plate, showing a ram's fleece, c 1850

Above and at right Sun Fire Office, lead plates, 1729



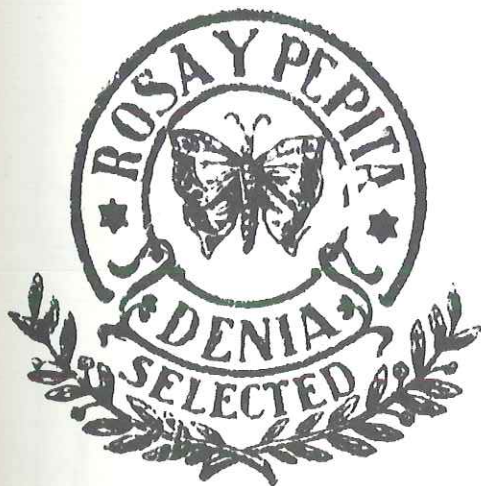
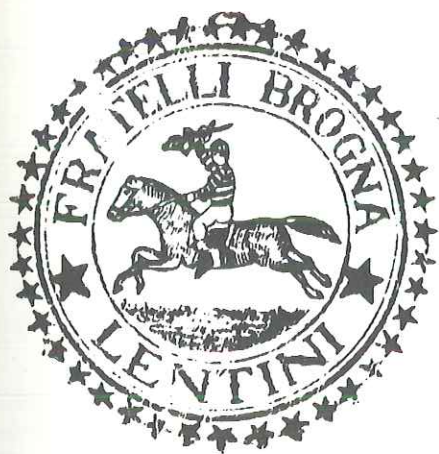
Fruit wrapping papers

These delightful citrus fruit wrapping papers are one of the most ephemeral of all printed matter, seldom surviving the unpacking of the fruit in the shop. Printed on thin white or coloured tissue paper their sole reason as marks is to identify a brand, a grower or a country. Many of the designs are true examples of folk art which have somehow survived the pressures of industrialisation. The majority of the fruit comes from southern countries: from Spain and Southern Italy, particularly Sicily, and from Israel and from other countries of the Middle East. The continuing use of individual wrappers is no doubt due to the difficulty of marking the textured surface of the fruit but they probably also help to retain the flavour.

The imagery is taken from a wide variety of sources: fruit and sun, the methods of transport by ship or train, patriotic symbolism, heraldry and a number of geometric designs perhaps a distant reflection of Islamic patterns. Colours are always strong; predominantly blue and red with infillings of yellow, orange or gold but unfortunately black and white reproduction gives only a hint of their richness.

The soft, unsized tissue has also contributed to the quality of these designs since the design must be relatively simple with open lines to allow for ink bleed. Many of the earlier designs appear to have been printed from, or inspired by, wood engraved blocks and it is possible that many of these wood blocks are still being used today. This is surely an example where the medium has contributed to the 'primitive' quality of the design and we can compare it to the elaborate multi-coloured cigar box labelling used since the early years of this century where the use of coated papers allowed full scope for more sophisticated reproduction techniques.





Some early forms of trademarks

Tradesmen's cards

These trade cards were the early precursors of the trademark as we know it today. The use of the word 'card', however, is misleading as they were not the equivalent of our business card and were not, in fact, printed on card at all, but on good quality paper. Their size varied considerably but could be as large as 14" x 8" (356 x 203mm) and they served a dual purpose as advertisement and hand bill.

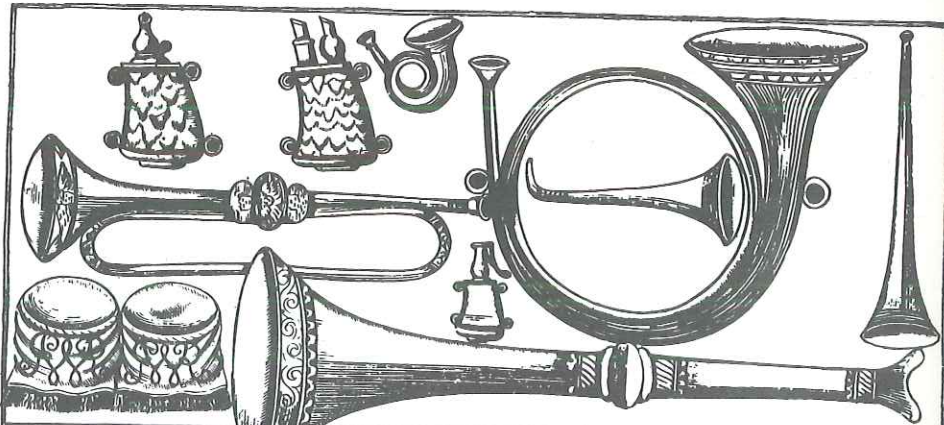
The early versions were printed from wood engraved blocks combined with hand set type, the imperfections of the metal type characters complementing the direct simplicity of the woodcut image. These wood engraved versions gave way to the more flexible copper engravings of the 18th Century in which the artist was able to integrate image and lettering in a way not previously possible.

Many of the images on these tradesmen's cards are derived from earlier shop signs. They have an appropriate simplicity and directness in showing the products or

services of their owner which was later lost in the elaboration and decorative use of the medium. It is interesting to note how the constraints of machine printing in the early nineteenth century, before the introduction of photographic reproduction, also led to a simpler, more direct form of image.



At the Old Collier and Cart,
at Fleet-Ditch, near Hol-
born-Bridge, Are good Coals,
Deals, Wainscote and Beach, &c.
sold at reasonable Rates, by
John Edwards.



All Sorts of Trumpets and Kettle Drums French Hornes, Speaking Trumpetts
Hearing Hornes for Deafe people & all Sorts of powder flasks and also Wind
Ganes made and minded by William Bull Trumpett maker to his Maiestie
Who liveth att the Signe of the Trumpett and Horne in Castal
Street Neare the Myuse.