DESIGNING LOGOS

THE PROCESS OF CREATING
SYMBOLS THAT ENDURE

15.5 pt   17 pt   18.5 pt

JACK GERNSHEIMER
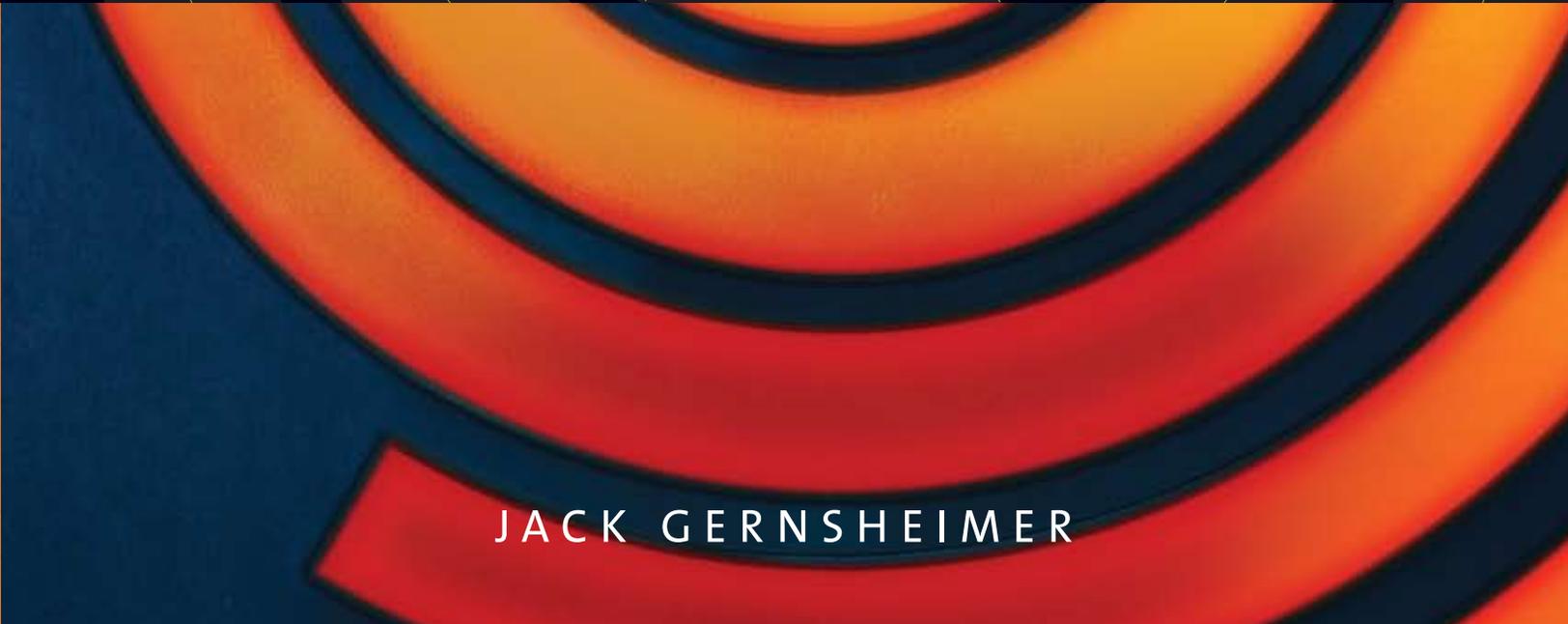
Some Roman bricks from the first century A.D. bear identifying marks impressed into their surface. Later, from the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries, German stonemasons used a system of identifying their work based on a special grid from which to derive their personal mark. The *Mutterfiguren*, or "Mother marks," appeared to be based on that grid.
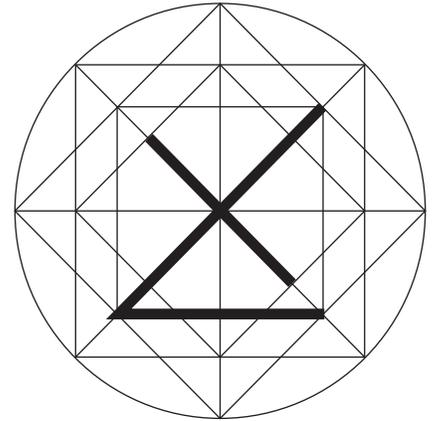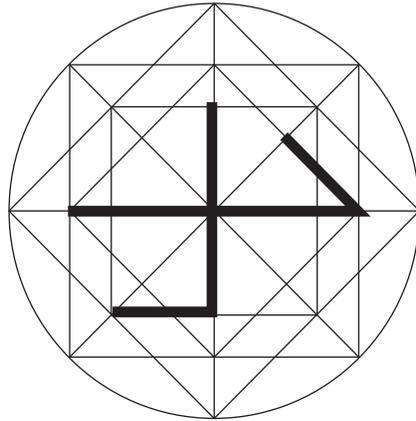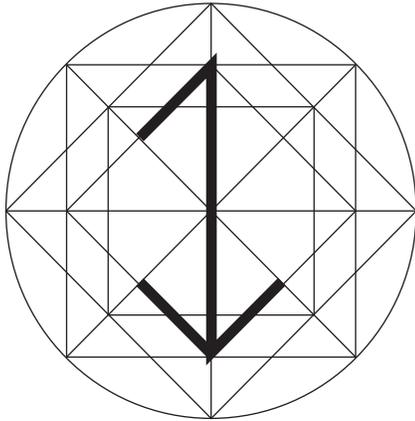
The word "brand" derives from an Old English word that meant "to burn," and it came to mean a mark that was burned into the skin in order to signify ownership. For over four thousand years, brands were used to identify cattle. Brands have also been used on humans as recently as 1822. There are depictions of branding on the walls of Egyptian tombs dating back to around 2000 B.C. The use of fire-heated irons was preceded by less permanent pine tar and paint. Later, brands were sometimes replaced by the more humane earmark, which was a stamped piece of metal clipped to the animal's ear, but branding—searing in the mark as a means of identification—is still being practiced today.

THE EMERGING LOGO

The term "logo" dates back to ancient Greece, and it literally means "name," although it became associated with symbols and trademarks. Early Greek design included the development of monograms, first with one letter, then two or more letters intertwined. Reference to monograms goes back to the first century A.D., when they often served as the signature for illiterate signatories. Since some authorities suggested that monograms be recognized rather than read, they truly became direct forerunners of the contemporary logo. In the case of royal monograms, the letters were often topped with the image of a crown. Royal monograms symbolized authority on items such as coins, buildings, clothing, and banners.

Ceramic artists designed identifying symbols that were usually impressed into the bottom of a dish, vessel, or other item prior to firing. The mark then served as a permanent identifier of the author of the piece.

HERALDRY IDENTIFIES COMBATANTS

The herald was the individual responsible for identifying knights taking part in combat tournaments. The existence of a herald at a battle was first recorded in 1173. The herald determined the legitimacy of a combatant by judging the authenticity of the heraldic marks, since the participant wore protective armor that all but concealed his identity. Sometimes known as a coat of arms, the identifying symbol was often worn on the coat. Another name for the shield or crest is the escutcheon. These symbols were also used as a stamp
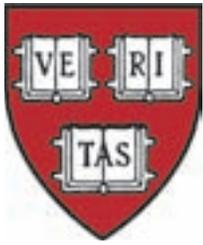
applied to heated sealing wax to secure correspondence, as carvings on tombs, and as banners carried into combat or flying at the family estate.

The herald was responsible for resolving issues related to coats of arms that looked too much like one another. Today, a similar practice is used to determine if a new logo is too similar to an existing one, but it's not the herald that upholds the standards but lawyers and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Coats of arms have extended from family identifiers to towns, cities, and states. They are sometimes used in contemporary logos as well, although usually in a simplified and stylized fashion. Later, coats of arms sometimes took the shape of a lozenge rather than a shield when used by non-combatants.

HALLMARKS AND OTHER STAMPS

In London, objects made of precious metal were often stamped with an identifying mark at Goldsmith's Hall, which is why the stamp became known as a hallmark. These marks served as a guarantee of the metal's purity. The manufacturer of the article has, since 1863, been identified with a stamp known as the sponsor's mark. Early examples of punch marking metals actually exist from the Byzantine era around the fourth century A.D.

European furniture makers routinely stamped their product with an identifying mark, often in the form of a paper label like the one shown here.

Printers also identified themselves with logo-like marks. Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer were the first printers to use a trademark (shown here) to identify their work.

By impressing a mark into paper while it was wet and in the mold, paper manufacturers applied a subtle stamp that permanently marked the paper. Known as watermarks, these marks were used in Italy as early as the thirteenth century. They are still being used to identify high-quality paper products today. Variations of the orb and cross symbol, which resembles an upright Nabisco logo, were often used by printers to identify their work. The use of such symbols associated the printer with Christianity because of the incorporation of the cross. Specific letters and shapes distinguished one mark from another. Over the years, much more elaborate imagery was used for printer identification.

One can clearly see the influence the Wiener Werkstätte trademark might have had on the Volkswagen logo designed in 1938. The logo designed by Lucian Bernhard for Manoli cigarettes appears to be another harbinger of things to come, ushering in the age of minimalist logos. Designed in 1911, it would appear to have had an influence on the contemporary logo for Muzak designed by Pentagram in the late 1990s.
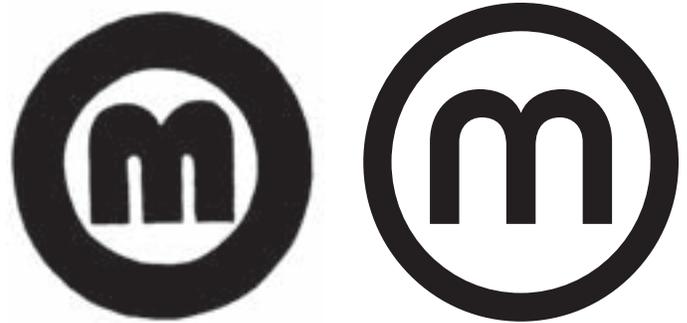
THE MODERN ERA

The Wiener Werkstätte, the workshop in Vienna that was contemporaneous with the British Arts and Crafts movement, was founded in 1903. One of its goals was to remove "useless decoration" from contemporary design. Trademark and monogram design was moving into the twentieth century with a belief that geometric purity and simplification was the order of the day. This attitude was exemplified by members of the Vienna Secession: those artists who, in the late nineteenth century, resigned from the "official" arbiter of aesthetics, the Association of Austrian Artists.

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

European influence on contemporary American design was heightened by the immigration of designers, many escaping political oppression, in the 1930s. Among them were Herbert Beyer, Will Burtin, and Herbert Matter, themselves influenced by the modernism of early twentieth-century European design. Matter, along with Eliot Noyes and Charles Eames, collaborated with American designer Paul Rand on the development of the Westinghouse logo (see page 104), which has become a true classic.

In his 1947 book *Thoughts on Design*, Rand (born Peretz Rosenbaum in Brooklyn, New York) said the designer, in an effort to create the abstract, expressive symbol, "reinstates his problem in terms of ideas, pictures, forms, and shapes. He unifies, simplifies, eliminates superfluities. He symbolizes . . . abstracts from his material by association and analogy."

Highly regarded design critic Steven Heller has said of Rand: "He was the channel through which European modern art and design—Russian Constructivism, Dutch De Stijl, and the German Bauhaus—was introduced to American commercial art." Rand's influence on contemporary logo design is apparent not only within the pages of this book but also in the visual landscape at large. It would be difficult to spend a day in America and not encounter the work of this design master.

Logos have become increasingly important in the commercial world as companies struggle to distinguish themselves from one another in the global marketplace. Because commerce crosses international boundaries, logo design is becoming more and more global in its scope. Not only are logos legally required to be cleared for use domestically, they must also distinguish themselves from marks used in other countries.

Shown below is the D & b Industries
business card. Please adhere strictly to
the specifications when producing cards.

Use the gradient Facebook® logo, as
in 6DPb.*

Cards should be printed on Mohawk
Navajo, Brilliant White, 130 lb. cover,
or an equivalent stock.

3.5"

.5"

1.07"

2.14"

1.07"
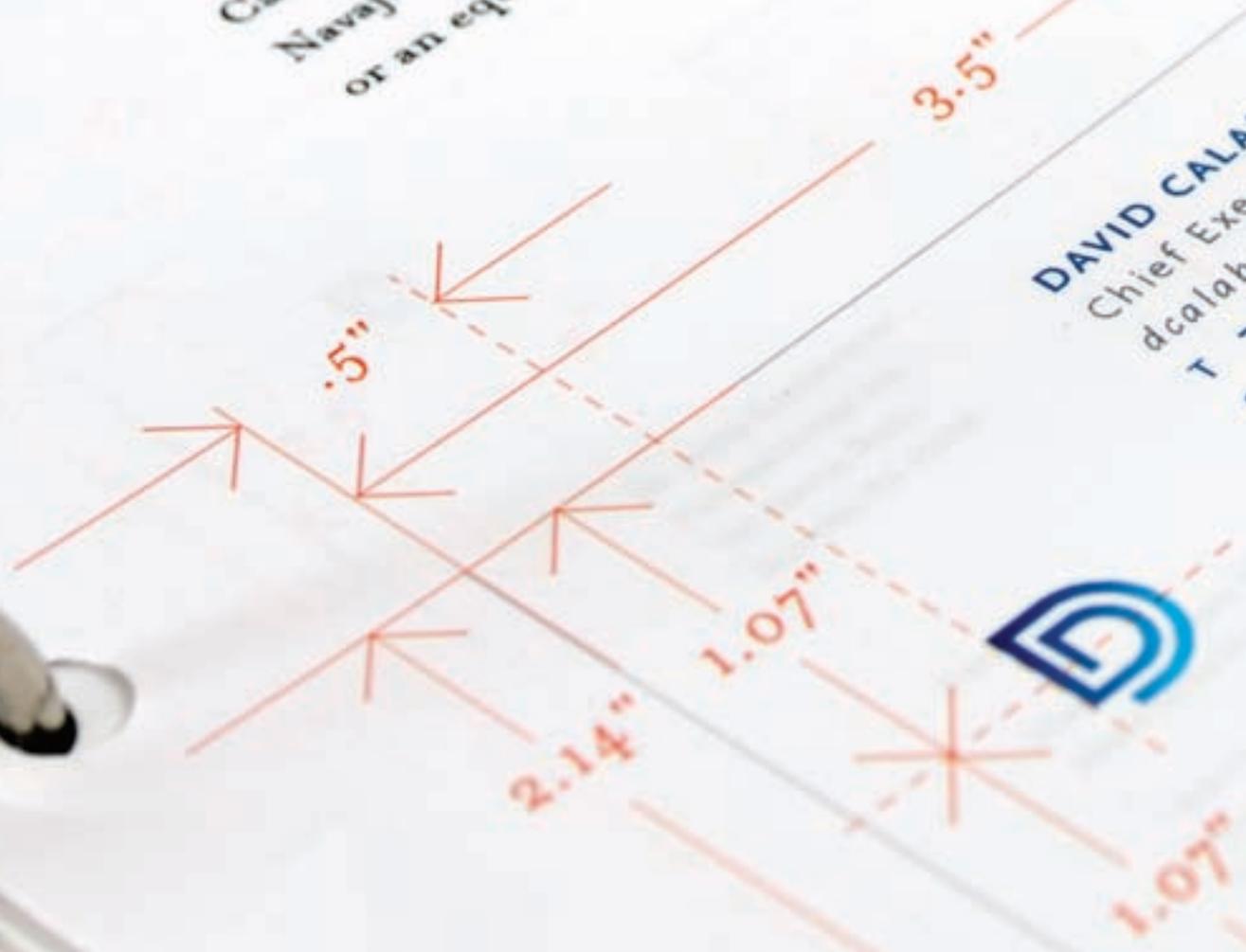
DAVID CALABRIA
Chief Executiv
dcalabria@
T 714 6
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Line 1 / Name / 9/10 Scala Sans Bold / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 2 / Title / 7/10 Scala Sans Regular /Tracking 111 / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 3 / e-mail address / 7/10 (T' 6 p.) Scala Sans Italic / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 4 / Telephone / 7/10 (T' 6 p.) Scala Sans Regular / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 5 / Cell / 7/10 (T' 6 p.) Scala Sans Regular / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 6 / Fax / 7/10 (T' 6 p. Bold) Scala Sans Regular / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 7 / Company Name / 7/10 (C' 6 p.) Scala Sans Regular / Tracking...
"USA, INC." 6/10 Scala Sans Caps / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 8 / Address Line 1 / 7/10 Scala Sans Italic / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 9 / Address Line 2 / 7/10 Scala Sans Italic / Tracking 111 / Scala...
Line 10 / url / 7/10 (T' 6 p.) Scala Sans Italic / Tracking 111...
Line 11 / 800 Number / 7/10 (T' 6 p.) Scala Sans Regular...
Line 12 / Tag Line / 6/10 Scala Sans Regular...

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Hi-Performance Hardware

Shown here are two pages from the D & D Technologies standards manual. The logo was designed by Chris Werner in 2005. In the case of both the business card and the letterhead, there is a detailed diagram showing how the items are constructed. Also included are callouts on type and color specifications. In the case of the letterhead, preprinted items are labeled, and measurements indicate proper placement of the letter contents such as the date, inside address, and letter body.
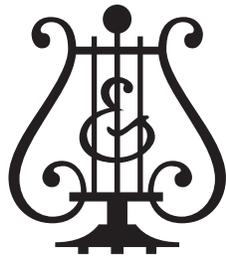
1860s–1900s

1865

1875

Steinway & Sons

Bass

Steinway & Sons has been manufacturing out-standing pianos since 1853. The original logo, conceived by William Steinway, was first seen on key lids in 1865 and was registered in 1876. Nearly symmetrical, the logo takes advantage of the opportunity to position two *S*'s in a Rorschach configuration. In doing so, and with minimal additional activity, the symbol clearly resembles a lyre with an ampersand placed in the center.

  At the bottom are three foot petals, the middle one invented by Steinway in 1875. While there is some ornamentation added to embel-lish and adorn the mark, the design stops short of being frilly, and it has held up admirably over the years. Shown are logos from 1885, 1909, 1929, and 2002. The current version was introduced in 1955. Photos: Steinway & Sons.

The self-proclaimed "world's most famous trademark" for Bass Ale is Britain's first regis-tered trademark. Dating back to 1875, this is a classic example of all options being available. Since few nonrepresentational commercial logos existed at the time, a shape as simple as an equilateral triangle was available for ap-propriation. The drawback to the use of a basic geometric shape to represent a product is that it is seen commonly and, taken out of context, has no relation to the product.

1890

1898

1909

General Electric

The General Electric logo was designed in the 1890s. The circular shape has a timeless quality, and the inner activity near the perimeter of the circle gives a sense of motion and fluidity that is reinforced by the elegant treatment of the interconnected initials. Stylistically reminiscent of the Art Nouveau era from which it came, the logo is currently used on packaging and other applications that have a very contemporary typographic treatment. Because of the classical nature of the symbol and, particularly, its clean circular profile, the mark has a surprisingly neutral appearance that looks stylistically comfortable when juxtaposed with the most contemporary fonts and integrated into the most contemporary environments.

One can't help thinking that after being such a familiar fixture in the visual environment for over a century, the mark becomes emotionally neutral for us, making it even more broadly compatible. While clearly of another era, this classic logo still effectively adorns millions of consumer products and other applications more than a century after its inception.

Dow

The Dow diamond was created by internal designer M. B. Johnson in 1898, when the commercial bleach manufacturer began shipping product. The symbol was adopted as the company logo in 1918 and was registered in 1921. Due to the good fortune of having a three-letter name, the letters fit comfortably into the horizontally elongated diamond. From a public relations standpoint, the company fell on hard times during the Vietnam War. Despite the negative association, however, the logo endured and is still very much in use, although it appears to be used in a very small size in applications where the product brand is dominant, such as Saran Wrap®. Because of the austerity of the mark, major reduction appears to present no problems.

Mercedes-Benz

The Mercedes-Benz logo was designed in 1909 by Gottlieb Daimler and modified in 1988 by Kurt Weidemann. The three points represent engines operating on land, on sea, and in the air. The circle that surrounds the triangular element serves to hold together and strengthen the mark. Because of an outstanding branding effort, both the logo and the name are synonymous with utmost quality. "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz. . . ."

ca. 1985

1986

The Gap

The Gap is another example of a logo that works well within a box. In this case, what's more distinctive than the deep blue rectangle is the widely spaced, ultracondensed serif font. No bells and whistles here; it simply works, year after year, to represent the specialty clothing retailer with consistency and clarity. You can see and recognize this logo from a mile away.

National Broadcasting Company

Steff Geisbuhler redesigned John Graham's peacock thirty years after the original bird colored TV screens across the country. Instead of eleven feathers, the number was reduced to six, representing the divisions of the network. The bird is flopped so it looks forward, and the peacock's body is created from the negative space carved out of the inner feathers. The bird's bill, cut out of one plume, smartly and simply defines the peacock. The color palette of nearly primary and secondary colors adds pizzazz to the mark.

The logo for the National Broadcasting Company has been through significant changes on its way to assuming its current peacock form. NBC's earliest logo, introduced in 1943, was a microphone. The accompanying lightning bolts are believed to have been borrowed from parent company RCA. The three chime notes, first heard on NBC Radio in 1927, accompanied the "xylophone" logo of 1954.

The original peacock, designed in 1956 by John Graham, was used to introduce color broadcasts. The peacock went from static to animated in 1957.

The "snake" logo came on the scene in 1959 and departed in 1975. It was animated, and the field behind it changed color as the familiar chimes played. Problems ensued in 1975 when a highly simplified and stylized *N* logo was found to conflict with an existing logo for Nebraska ETV Network. The issue was resolved and NBC used their red-and-blue version for a number of years. That logo was arguably the most graphically sophisticated of the lot, but the earlier peacock reemerged in a refined and much improved form in 1986.
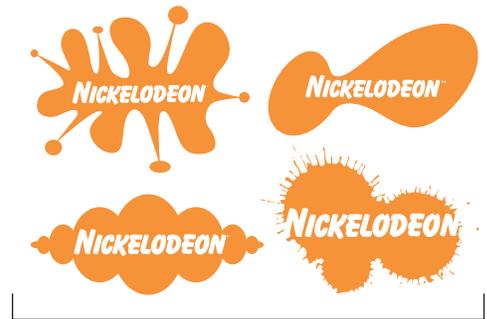
ca. 1986

Nickelodeon

Like its sister company before it, Nickelodeon helped usher in the age of alternate logos tied together by a common element. Candy Kugel, a director involved in the MTV logo's development in 1981, has said, "[The MTV logo by Manhattan Design] was totally asymmetrical, as far away from the peacock or an eye as you could get."

The Nickelodeon logo, by comparison, is conservative. Because the obliqued, rounded, and friendly logotype consistently reverses out of orange blobs that vary in shape, the mark meets the challenge of looking fresh and varied yet consistent and instantly recognizable. The MTV and Nick identity systems get high marks not for following the rules, but for breaking them.

1987

Pfizer

The Pfizer logo was designed in 1987 by Gene Grossman. In a fashion similar to but preceding GlaxoSmithKline, the symbol had a shape reminiscent of a medicine tablet. The oval shape is less often used than the circle, adding distinctiveness. The letter *f* has even more prominence than the initial cap *P*. I worked on a logo that offered the same phonetic challenge. My client Pfaltzgraff (see page 124) also had a silent *P*. I was drawn to the idea, as it appears Grossman was, of accentuating the *f*. By making the *f* the most prominent character, Grossman heightened its status, diminished that of the silent initial, and created visual interest and appeal.
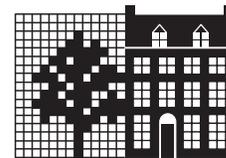
1987

Historical Landscapes

Designed in 1987 by Jack Gernsheimer, this logo represents a landscape designer with the specialty of matching the period of the gardens with that of the dwelling. The imagery includes a noncontemporary residence and a tree. The combination of the grid and the matching windows ties the two segments together. Elements such as the door top and the dormers quietly reinforce the historical nature of the building, while the grid on the left suggests graph paper used in planning. Despite its complexity, the adherence to the square matrix gives order to the mark. The inclusion of the tree, albeit structured in appearance, softens the logo.
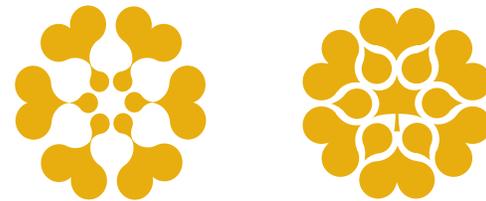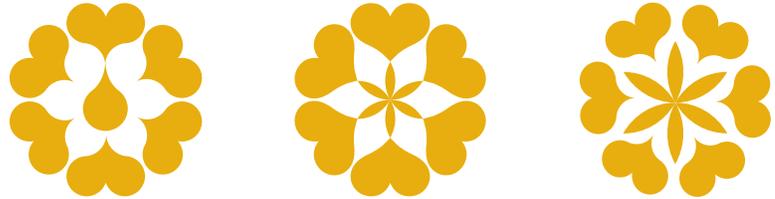
DUTCH GOLD HONEY

The Dutch Gold Honey logo, designed by Jack Gernsheimer in 2002, is the result of the interaction between six hexagons overlapping a six-pointed rosette.

The hexagonal cluster represents the honeycomb, where the honey is collected. The rosette is a common component of hex signs, which are seen in the region where the company is located, known as Pennsylvania Dutch country. According to local lore, the six-pointed rosette is believed to ward off evil and bad luck.

The overall floral quality of the logo gives added relevance to the mark because pollen, collected by bees from flowers, is an essential part of the honey-making process. The clustered element holds together well, is self-contained, and has a distinctive silhouette for quicker recognition.
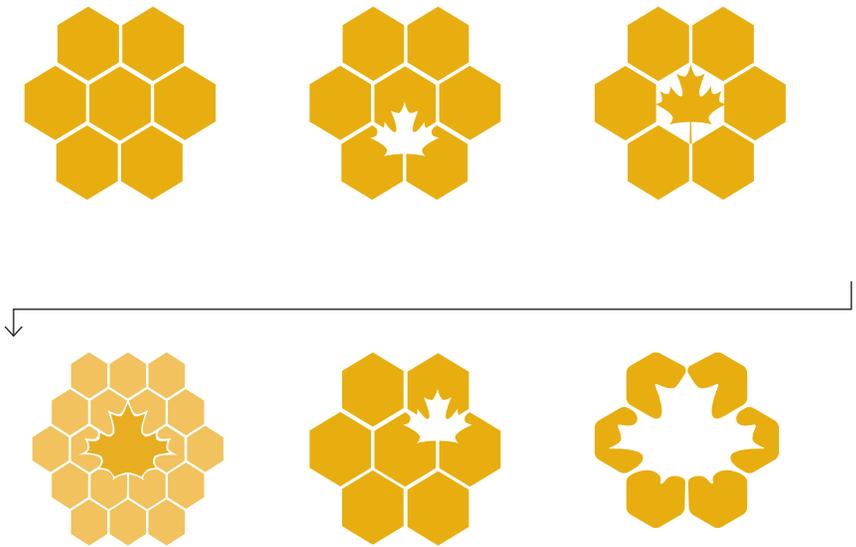
Dutch Gold Honey / McClure's Maple Syrup

Hearts and Drops

This alternative looks at hex sign–like designs combining stylized hearts, drops of honey or syrup, and flower petals in the negative space. These symbols layer in a lot of relevant imagery, but order is kept because they are arranged in a circular configuration and have a well-balanced ratio of positive to negative space. The hearts support the idea that both the syrup and the honey qualify as comfort food, while the hex elements give the mark a clear sense of local color.

Dutch Gold Honey

Chosen Alternative Exploration

McClure's Maple Syrup

Concurrent Exploration

While the Dutch Gold Honey logo was being designed, a concurrent exploration was being pursued. Because DGH is the parent company of McClure's Maple Syrup, this alternative explored the use of imagery relevant to both honey and syrup. Various degrees of interaction between the cluster of hexagons and a stylized maple leaf silhouette were observed. Arguably the most successful symbol was the alternative that placed the large leaf in the center, creating a pleasing symmetry. The rounded shapes added warmth and softness to the overall mark.

Shown on the right is a close-up of the embossed logo on the front and back panels of the plastic honey jar.