

Catherine Jo Ishino, May 11 2015

DOES MODERNIZING MEAN WESTERNIZING?

**Western views of New China's Graphic Design: 1998-2008
+Beijing Summer Olympics 2008**

SLIDE 1

For the purposes of my talk today,
I'm going to focus on one case study
from my longer form paper
i.e. the 2008 Beijing Olympic Sports Logos

SLIDE 2

First off,
I'd like to start with my overall stance,
largely because I assume the audience I am speaking to today
are non-designers...
Like MacNab, I believe 'Designers are visual ambassadors'.

As an example here in this slide,
you can see the logo for the 2008 Beijing Olympics
named "The dancing man".

And you may know
the Games traditionally function as a debut on global stage,
upon which a nation may choose how represent themselves to the
world with the Olympic International Committee's approval.
It is one of the most watched sporting events.
In fact, the Beijing Olympics
had the largest TV viewing audience ever,
with 70% of the world's population watching,
according to Nielsen ratings.

Back to the logo...
What you may see here,
embedded in this imagery
is a combination of Western and the Eastern design.

The 5 Olympic rings represent the different areas of the world participating in the Global Games. As the 1912 designer and co-founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, (coo- bear- ton) explained the six colors, including the white background, were representative of all the flags of the world.

On the Eastern side of design, the red image symbolizes a Chinese seal with a figure of an athlete in the center. The 'Dancing Man' is derived from the Chinese character 'jing', (also the 2nd half of the city name of Beijing).

Here the Zhuan (shoe-wan) clerical calligraphic style is used from the Qin-han (Quen-han) dynasties (221 BC- 220 AD), a time remembered for the reunification of China and its language.

SLIDE 3

I want to take a moment to contextualize my talk:

One, my primary research for this talk was completed in 2009 for a MA in Communications & Culture, (although I already had a MFA in design).

Two, my goal was to incorporate post-colonial theory into the design field, as all the Western trade journal reportings were so negative about Chinese design at the time. (And as a Japanese-American growing up in Michigan, I remember all the USA's negative press surrounding the Japanese automotive design industry during the 1980s.

So I wanted to investigate the ethnocentrism of Western design.

Three, Design Studies as discipline did not begin until 2008 in the USA & UK. (Note: the term, 'Graphic Designer,' was not coined until 1923 by WA Dwiggins- less than 100 years ago)

Four, for the purposes of this talk and time, I'm going to focus on the Design Director of the Beijing Olympics because the strength of his bi-cultural background of East & West.

