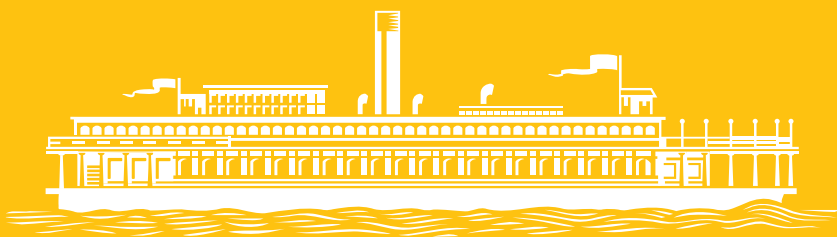


Classics
The work and legacy
of Walter Landor
by Bernie Gallagher
July 2009



Landor

Classics

The work and legacy of Walter Landor

Following are just a few examples of Walter Landor's work and legacy, with brief descriptions of the creative processes involved. The first five express the timeless quality of Walter's designs, while the last five demonstrate the personal and emotional connections such symbols establish between companies and their customers.

"A good design should last. If the effort doesn't show, then it's a good design. It must never look designed."
—Walter Landor

Cotton Incorporated

J. Dukes Wooters, former president of Cotton Incorporated, met with Walter Landor aboard the *Klamath* in 1971 to discuss the association of cotton growers' need for a new logo. The design had to identify cotton as a homegrown alternative to synthetic fabrics, and convey a sense of its being "natural ... timeless."¹ Landor's team came up with the tagline *a natural wonder* and the graphic portraying a cotton boll growing out of the two *t*'s to communicate that cotton is unique and pure, an organic fiber with a bloom and roots.



Bernie Gallagher is senior documentation specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

© 2009 Bernard Gallagher and Landor Associates. All rights reserved.

LEFT The final design for Cotton Incorporated.

¹ Rodney McKnew, telephone interviews by Jessica Myerson (13 April, 7 May, 2 June, 4 June, 8 July 1993), transcript from the Landor Archive Project, Landor Design Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Landor



LEFT Lander's design for Alitalia aircraft.

MIDDLE Levi's "batwing" garment tag.

BOTTOM Ore-Ida Golden Fries packaging.

Levi's

When Levi Strauss & Co. executives wanted a new garment label for their blue jeans in 1969, they came to Walter Lander, whose designers developed the distinctive red-and-white "batwing" to be placed on back pockets. The red shield mimicked the pocket's stitch pattern and incorporated the Levi's lettering. This was among the first designs to mix capital and lowercase letters throughout a single logo.²



Alitalia Airlines

In 1967 the national airline of Italy—a country celebrated for its fine designers—selected Walter Lander of San Francisco to create a new identity system for its aircraft. Although Alitalia was an international carrier, Lander's interviews revealed that air travelers thought of it as a small domestic line. Alitalia's image also needed to be modernized. The graphics had to be adaptable to a complex variety of aircraft, such as 747s and DC-10s, as well as flight uniforms, plane interiors, ticket counters, and printed materials. Lander's aggressively visible design emphasized the vibrant spirit of the Italian people. The logo is "very classical. Fortunately, it had a vertical stabilizer that was the A in Alitalia.... It's still [as] good today as it was then."³



Ore-Ida

After nearly 20 years in the frozen-food business, Ore-Ida Foods of Boise, Idaho, approached Walter Lander in the late 1960s to develop new package designs for its potato products. Lander's consumer research found that the Ore-Ida name itself had greater recognition than the logo outline representing Oregon and Idaho. In addition, the company's cellophane bags and waxed paper containers were outdated. Lander's final bi-leaf design was placed on white poly bags showing photos of the products they contained.

² David Bowman, interview by Jessica Myerson (15 April 1993), transcript from the Lander Archive Project, Lander Design Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

³ Rodney McKnew with Taft Tong, Lillian Sader, Richard Young, and Sheppard P. Pollack, interview by Jessica Myerson (5 July 1993), transcript from the Lander Archive Project, Lander Design Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.



LEFT The refreshed Del Monte ram's head label.

BELOW LEFT Sign for a Wells Fargo bank branch.

BELOW RIGHT The lighter, playful Frito-Lay logo.

Del Monte

In 1967 the country's leading manufacturer of canned fruits and vegetables changed its name from the California Packing Corporation to Del Monte Foods, the oldest and best known of its retail brands. Company president Jack Countryman asked Walter Landor to update the ornate "ram's head" shield that had been used on Del Monte product packaging since the early 1900s. The job was a perfect match between Walter's design philosophy and the new image Del Monte wanted to project. While retaining the shield's basic elements, the Landor team streamlined and simplified the symbol, resulting in an understated elegance that has stood the test of time.⁴

"Design should connect—connecting what the client is selling."—Walter Landor

Wells Fargo

Landor revived the well-known historic image of the Wells Fargo stagecoach in 1960 when Wells Fargo Bank merged with American Trust Company. The new bank's officers realized that the "trust" lay with Wells Fargo, while the image of a modern, progressive bank belonged to American Trust Company. Landor's symbol set the stagecoach inside a contemporary stylized diamond. This combination of old and new placed Wells Fargo in the forefront of consumer recognition for banking services. A Landor survey reported that "72 percent of Californians [could] identify it, without any lettering."⁵



Frito-Lay

Frito-Lay, the acknowledged "leader in the snack food world," turned to Walter Landor in 1979 to create a new corporate visual identity that "could be applied nationally on all packages, point of sale [displays], stationery, trucks, and signs." Landor's consumer research determined that the company's brand equity resided in the Frito-Lay name but not in its existing graphic symbol. The design team produced an eye-catching logo in which the letters *F* and *Y* curved to resemble snack chips, offering a "lighter, playful look of food and fun."⁶



⁴ Richard Young with Lillian Sader, Edward Skubic, and George McLean, interview by Jessica Myerson (16 June 1993), transcript from the Landor Archive Project, Landor Design Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

⁵ Philip Durbrow, "Design Systems: Compound Interest on Identity Equity," *United States Banker* (May 1984); and Joan Chatfield-Taylor, "Designing the World Around Us," *San Francisco Chronicle* (27 July 1979).

⁶ Ruth, MacIver, "F-L's New Look Provides Increased Visibility," *Snack Food* (January 1981).



LEFT A FedEx delivery truck with the tagline *The World On Time*.

BELOW LEFT Most people see a bird in the BA monogram for Bank of America.

BELOW RIGHT The World Wildlife Fund panda created in 1986 is still in use today.

Bank of America

As the largest bank in the United States, Bank of America provided a full range of financial services. However, Lander's consumer surveys found that smaller clients viewed the institution as impersonal and oriented primarily toward large corporate accounts. In addition, most people mistook its existing sailing ship logo for the trademark of the Encyclopedia Britannica. In 1969 Walter developed the BA monogram to communicate "something quite wonderful and strange happening between [the two letters]. The majority of the people see a bird. It was conceived as... a non-threatening symbol more like an old-time monogram. It's a very personal statement." The new logo helped Bank of America present a friendlier face to customers.⁷

World Wildlife Fund

An adorable panda is the unmistakable embodiment of the World Wildlife Fund, the largest privately financed conservation group in the world. In 1986 Lander reworked the old logo, creating a strong, recognizable symbol that would overcome all language barriers. The fund still uses this furry black-and-white ambassador to carry its preservation message throughout the world.⁸

FedEx

In June 1994, Lander capitalized on the strength of a widely used colloquial name and officially turned Federal Express into FedEx. The new designation was simpler and had already gained currency as "a household name and even a verb." When creating the new graphics, Lander maintained the traditional purple and orange that had boldly identified Federal Express in the past. An arrow within the new brand name and the tagline *The World On Time* symbolize "the company's speed and efficiency."⁹ ■



Bernie Gallagher is senior documentation specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. His expertise lies in data mapping historical object information.

Bernie has worked at the museum for over 20 years, overseeing the cataloging of objects by curators, specialists, volunteers, and interns and maintaining proper data standards in the database systems. His specialties include the collections of information technology and communications and work and industry.

Bernie earned an MA in history museum studies from the Cooperstown graduate program at the State University of New York, College at Oneonta, where he wrote his thesis on Walter Lander, "A Brand Is Built in the Mind: Walter Lander and the Transformation of Industrial Design in the Twentieth Century." His research and subsequent thesis form the basis of this article.



⁷ Marty Olmstead, "Man of a Thousand Designs," *PSA Magazine* (March 1980).

⁸ World Wildlife Fund, "What is the story behind the panda logo of WWF?" panda.org/faq/response.cfm?hdnQuestid=26920021711544 (accessed 22 January 2006).

⁹ Peter Hall, "Stealth Identity Program. A Cold Call Lands a Massive Makeover Job for Lander Associates—Implemented Under a Cloak of Secrecy," *Step-By-Step Graphics* (January-February 1995).

www.landor.com

Beijing
Chicago
Cincinnati
Dubai
Geneva
Hamburg
Hong Kong
Istanbul
Jakarta
London
Madrid
Mexico City
Milan
Mumbai
New York
Oslo
Paris
San Francisco
Seoul
Shanghai
Singapore
Sydney
Tokyo

hello@landor.com

