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HUVENEERS

**RMIT  
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ARCHIVES  
JOURNAL**

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**PIETER HUVENEERS**



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**Cover**  
Layout for Australia Post Corporate Identity Manual, designer Pieter Huveneers, RMIT Design Archives, ©Australia Post.

**Below**  
Shelf of corporate identity style guides designed by Pieter Huveneers. Unknown photographer. Courtesy Tanis Wilson.

**Previous Page**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'Savings Will Shape His Future' (1954), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives. (Detail).

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It was May 2018 when I received an email from Ian Morrison, Heritage Librarian at LINC Tasmania, about Pieter Huveneers' design archive, which Morrison described at the time as 'a truly stunning collection of national and possibly international significance.'

Although only a recent arrival to Australia, I was aware of Pieter Huveneers' contribution to corporate identity design through the Re:collection website.<sup>1</sup> Harriet Edquist, then Director of the RMIT Design Archives, and I travelled to Launceston to assess the archive in August. Our assessment confirmed Morrison's impression of a significant collection that I could only compare to American designer Paul Rand, the major difference being that Huveneers practised across half a century and three countries and was not resident long enough in any of them to be captured within national design histories. For the next year, Edquist worked with Tanis Wilson, the widow of Pieter Huveneers, to sort and prepare the archive, after which Tanis donated it to the RMIT Design Archives.

What was also apparent when reviewing his archive was that Pieter Huveneers was a collector himself, in that he had not only retained his childhood Montessori colouring-in book, but also copies of almost all of his commercially printed posters designed in England between 1950 and 1964, as well as product prototypes and packaging from his time as a design consultant at Smiths Clocks (England). His collection also included process work and client presentations for his corporate identity work in Australia, as well as small collections of mechanical gears, the ordered forms of which clearly appealed to his astute eye. In his retirement in Sydney's Blue Mountains and Tasmania, he also remained an active painter, who clearly took pleasure in the graphic arts he had developed across his lifetime.

Petrus Hubertus Huveneers was born in Utrecht on 3 April 1925, second of three children of Jan Joseph Huveneers (1893–1967) and Hubertina-Josephina-Margaretha van Helden (1891–1968). He completed high school in 1941, and enrolled in the College of Arts & Crafts, Arnhem (now part of ArtEZ University of the Arts) in what was then the German-occupied Netherlands. After starting his first year, he was transferred to a labour camp from which he soon escaped and spent the remainder of the war as a farm labourer and interpreter for the Allied forces.

He resumed his studies in 1946 and, upon graduation in 1948, immediately began designing posters for art galleries and international industrial fairs in the Netherlands. His ability to translate and communicate across cultures was to be an important asset as he embarked on his international career.

This special issue of the *RMIT Design Archives Journal* provides a small insight into the breadth and diversity of Pieter Huveneers' practice, examining his contribution to design in England and his corporate identity design in Australia from 1970 to the present day. 'Huveneers: From Dutch Poster Artist to international Design Consultant' examines his rapidly developing reputation as a graphic designer in England between 1950 and 1964, where he established enduring relationships with leading practitioners of the day, and contributed to the growing field of corporate identity, as private companies and national public services sought new ways to communicate internally and externally. His poster designs were frequently reproduced in leading graphic design journals throughout his time in the United Kingdom, and demonstrated the increased status and growing importance of the design profession within business and government services.

Dominic Hofstede provides a case study of Huveneers Pty Ltd's successful tender for Australia's largest corporate identity system, as the Postmaster General was separated into the postal and telecommunications organisations, Australia Post and Telecom in 1972. These essential communication services needed to be accessible and efficient, and Hofstede shows how engagement with all levels of the organisations was vital in the research phase to adequately understand the corporate image required and develop the requisite corporate identities. The program was then developed into comprehensive corporate identity manuals, and senior executives were embedded in the studio so that the respective corporate identities would be comprehensively understood and implemented throughout these two complex organisations. Such a comprehensive blueprint for change took over five years to develop and implement to the exacting standards set by its architect, Pieter Huveneers.

**Opposite**  
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, 'Stand From Under' (c.1951), designer Pieter Huveneers. Courtesy Tanis Wilson.

1. Dominic Hofstede, Pieter Huveneers 'Re:collection', re:collection website, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://recollection.com.au/biographies/pieter-huveneers>.

STAND FROM UNDER

**Opposite**

Huveneers Pty Ltd, colour specification pages from the Telecom Corporate Identity Manual. c. 1975, RMIT Design Archives. ©TelstraCorporation2021

2.

Richard Buchanan, "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking," *Design Issues* vol. 8, no. 2 (1992): 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511637>.

3.

Tony Golsby-Smith, "Fourth Order Design: A Practical Perspective," *Design Issues* vol. 12, no. 1: 16. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511742>.

Stephen Banham provides a case study of a different kind, walking two central city blocks in Melbourne to show how the many 'little symbols' created by Pieter Huveneers and his international team of designers become inscribed in our streetscape and daily lives. From Wales Corner and post boxes above ground to underground telecommunication, Huveneers' totalising approach to the infrastructure of communication design extends into performance art and the disrupted consumerism of Myer and Target. These enduring legacies, which are repeated across cities and towns across Australia, remind us that the complex intangible processes of design constantly require our attention if we are to be rewarded with its tangible and sustaining contribution to the places where we live our lives.

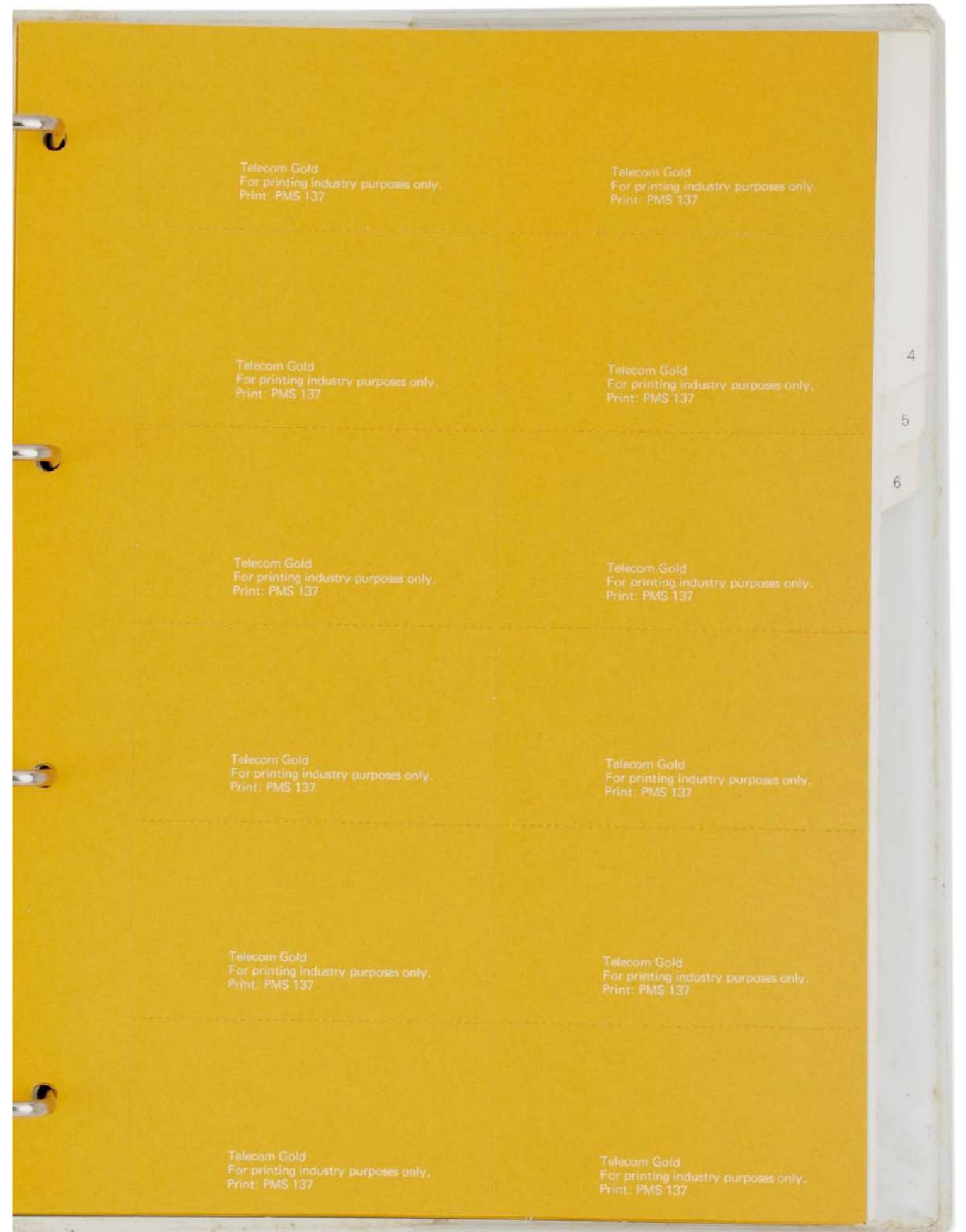
In his article 'Wicked Problems in Design Thinking' (1992), Richard Buchanan outlined the four orders of design to explain how extensively design affects contemporary life.<sup>2</sup> These are symbolic and visual communication, the design of material objects, the design of activities and organised services, and the design of complex systems. Buchanan reflects how design has developed historically across the twentieth century, moving from the simpler first and second orders to the more complex third and fourth orders, developing from a craft practice to a profession and a discipline. However, Buchanan is also at pains to point out that specific design professions should not be delimited to each area, and this is the case with Pieter Huveneers, who, while he was an accomplished communication and product designer, was offering a service as a design consultant within a decade of graduating. His breadth of experience with both private companies seeking to expand internationally and national public services in growing demand laid a foundation for the complex systems of a multinational company like Philips.

Tony Golsby-Smith describes this expanded practice in the following way:

The fourth order designer moves the boundary of the task out to encompass the issues of "Why are we doing this task?" and, in answering this question, "What does it tell us about our identity and value?" Similarly, the fourth order designer also will move the scope of the task out to encompass connected systems and activities; to achieve integration so that the product does not operate as a fragment in the world, but within useful and viable patterns. Finally, the fourth order designer widens the scope of this practical task to include the people involved in creating and using the product (i.e., the product decisions are not taken in isolation; nor are they driven primarily by the creative lone voice of the designer) but are developed in discussion with a sense of growing purpose and commitment.<sup>3</sup>

It was this strategic mindset that Pieter Huveneers brought to Australia, as he sought to discover and visually communicate the identities and values of long established national organisations through in-depth research into the internal operations of a company, as well as the evolving needs and desires of customers. His ability to listen to and communicate with a range of stakeholders enabled him to integrate the art of design and the culture of business. As always, there remains more research to be done to fully comprehend the contribution of Pieter Huveneers, but I am very grateful for the donation by Tanis Wilson and the efforts of the RMIT Design Archives to preserve and make accessible such a truly international design history.

Noel Waite, Guest Editor







## Huveneers: From Dutch Poster Artist to International Design Consultant

Noel Waite

### ABSTRACT

Between 1950 and 1964, Pieter Huveneers established himself as one of the leading graphic designers in Britain. His independent practice relentlessly sought novel ways to communicate essential services or national products to an expanding domestic and international market, and was marked by his unique accent, which was internationalist in outlook. He developed enduring relationships with leading designers of the day, such as Tom Eckersley, Abram Games, Lewit-Him and F.H.K. Henrion, and contributed to the growing field of corporate identity, as private companies and national public services sought new ways to communicate internally and externally.

His poster designs for British Railways, British Aluminium, the General Post Office and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents were frequently reproduced in leading graphic design journals for more than a decade and demonstrated the increased status and growing importance of the design profession within business and government services. Through teaching graphic and industrial design, he expanded his community of practice, establishing himself as a design consultant for Schweppes, Scott Furniture and Smiths Clocks. His diverse and prolific practice in Britain set the foundation for his subsequent consolidation of Philips' global corporate identity and his major contribution to the corporate landscape of Australia from 1970.

In a short interview with the Postal Museum in 2012, an 87-year-old Pieter Huveneers recalled his favourite design for the British Post Office as being the 1955 'Post Office Guide'. This featured an open Post Office Guide being perused by a bowler-hatted and moustachioed gentleman, whose eye and head line consisted of a question mark. The integration of these three simple elements succinctly 'supplies all the answers' to the needs of his client and their customers. When asked how he created such images, he modestly replied 'The image you want to create should be in line with the service offered'.<sup>1</sup>

However, by 1955, after five years in England and seven years since graduating from the Academy of Art & Design in Arnhem, the Netherlands, Huveneers had established himself as a leading graphic designer in the United Kingdom. This was recognised when he was elected a Fellow of Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in 1965, and his design ranked with Abram Games, Tom Eckersley, F.H.K. Henrion and Hans Schleger in its breadth and reputation with leading public and commercial services of the day. His decision to return to the Netherlands to take up a position as Creative Director at Philips in 1964, and his subsequent success as a corporate identity designer in Australia from 1968 overshadowed his design identity in Britain, but it certainly set the foundation for those later achievements.

In a 2005 interview, Pieter Huveneers acknowledged the value of his early Montessori education and its emphasis on individual creative discovery. He recalls being given a coloured mat to sit on as a three-year old, and likens this childhood experience to the collective thought of his design practice: 'You still plan what you do. You think it out, then you apply it. When you work for yourself, you are

still continuing the Montessori principle'.<sup>2</sup> He also learned from his elementary school neighbourhood environment, skipping school to sit with an old bicycle restorer, or observing local shop signage: 'You know where the baker is because it says "Bakery", and you try to remember the letters and so you see how society is really living'.<sup>3</sup> He frequently drew cards and also assisted a sign painter making oil sign boards, learning how to make signs made of several panels to fit the scale of a large wall. These experiences led him to enrol in the Art Academy in Arnhem, where classes were taught in Dutch, French German and English, to study Advertising and Propaganda Art. While this was an applied program, it provided a broad arts education including mathematics and geometry, history, anatomy and a considerable amount of figure drawing.

However, his studies were interrupted by the war, when he was sent to a labour camp in Heerenveen. He managed to escape and was sheltered on a farm, from where he worked with the resistance, eventually using his English language skills to act as interpreter for British and American paratroopers around Arnhem, before completing his interrupted studies between 1946 and 1948.

### Previous Page

Pieter Huveneers (front boy on floor) at Montessori school, Utrecht, unknown photographer. Courtesy Jos de Hoop.

### Opposite

General Post Office, Post Office Guide (1955), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.



Continued

**Left**  
'De Stichtsche Tuin'  
[The Beautiful Garden]  
(1946), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.



**Right**  
British Railways,  
'Harwich Hook of  
Holland' (1950), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.



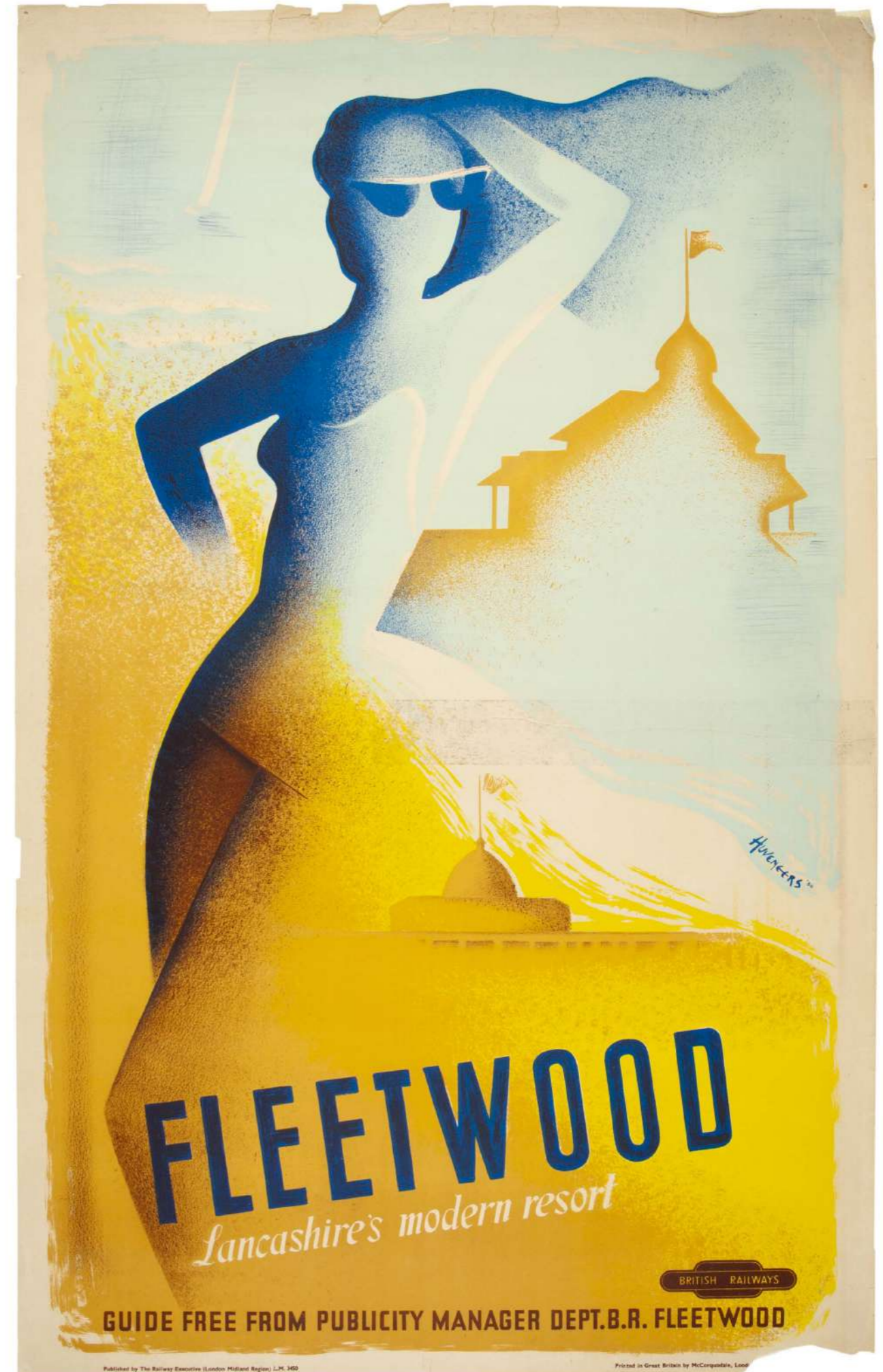
**Opposite**  
British Railways,  
'Fleetwood - Lancashire's  
Modern Resort'  
(1950), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

This contribution to the war effort enabled him to travel to England through the International Friendship League. In 1948 he gathered letters of recommendation, nearly all of which mentioned his posters for the flower festivals, including two letters from organisers of the Royal Dutch Industries Fair: 'We gladly declare that the gentleman has made various designs for us and has left us with the impression that he is an artist of goodwill and has shown through his work that he can be artistic for artistic purposes. We are furthermore aware that he has also created designs for others, including a poster for a flower exhibition that has particularly made a significant impact'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, an Arnhem wholesale cleaning company commended his innovative approach to advertising, which had increased sales, and an optician recommended his originality as a window display artist.<sup>5</sup> These testimonials also included a letter from the Chairman of the Exeter branch of the International Friendship League, and one from Graham Woodmansterne, who met Pieter Huveneers in Arnhem in 1947, when Pieter agreed to translate a lecture on India for him. Woodmansterne presciently wrote: 'Mr Huveneers appeals to me as a very earnest and industrious fellow, with ideas of his own and ambitions. I wish him every success in his career, which I am sure will be moulded by his international interests'.<sup>6</sup> Along with his references, he also brought the actual size finished art for his flower show posters, which had been stretched and dried to look like printed posters.

His first poster design was for British Railways and 'Harwich Hook of Holland' (1950) was appropriately for the overnight ferry which had brought him to England

in 1949, and certainly contributed to the bestowal of the sobriquet, 'The Dutch Artist'. It integrates an iconic Dutch windmill with a chain motif and upward-pointing anchor featuring both countries' national flags. It was to be the first of four 'Harwich Hook of Holland' posters he would design over the next 15 years, but this early poster also stands out from his later works due to its painterly background, and hand-drawn aesthetic. A further commission for British Railways in 1950, promoting 'Fleetwood - Lancashire's Modern Resort', is far more stylised and modern. The silhouette of the female sunbather dominates the composition, leaning into the centre of the poster, creating movement with the grainy sands of Marine Beach, and the iconic Mount Pavilion appearing under her right arm. The flowing outlines are combined with a subtle gradient which integrates people and place, while the asymmetric typography of 'Fleetwood' extends upward. This two-colour Double Royal (40 x 25 inches) lithographic poster seamlessly blends a compelling image of a prospective visitor and suggests Fleetwood may be a fine alternative to the French Riviera. Huveneers' distinctive signature flows through the sea, abutting the coastline. These posters appeared in railway stations and the Underground, on buildings and by the roadside to encourage people to use the integrated national transport system and promote domestic tourism.

The centrality of people can also be seen in his poster for the British Rail 'Holiday Guides, 1952' which, while it is required to list all five areas covered on a dark background extended from the man's suit, is still dominated by the head of a Guide reader, who also appears to be imagining himself





Continued



*thinking of a holiday?*

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SCANDINAVIA  
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AUSTRIA  
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HOLLAND

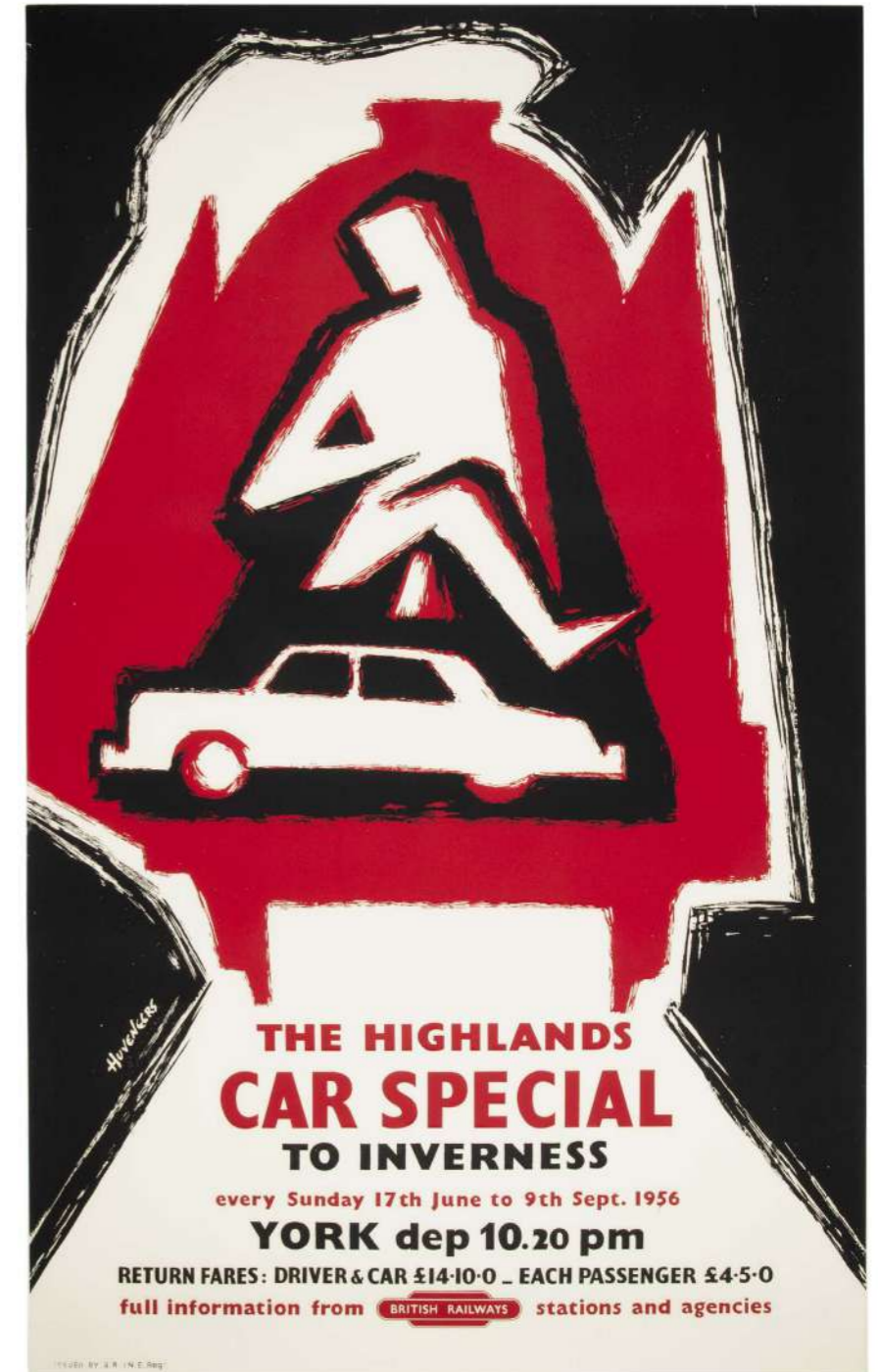
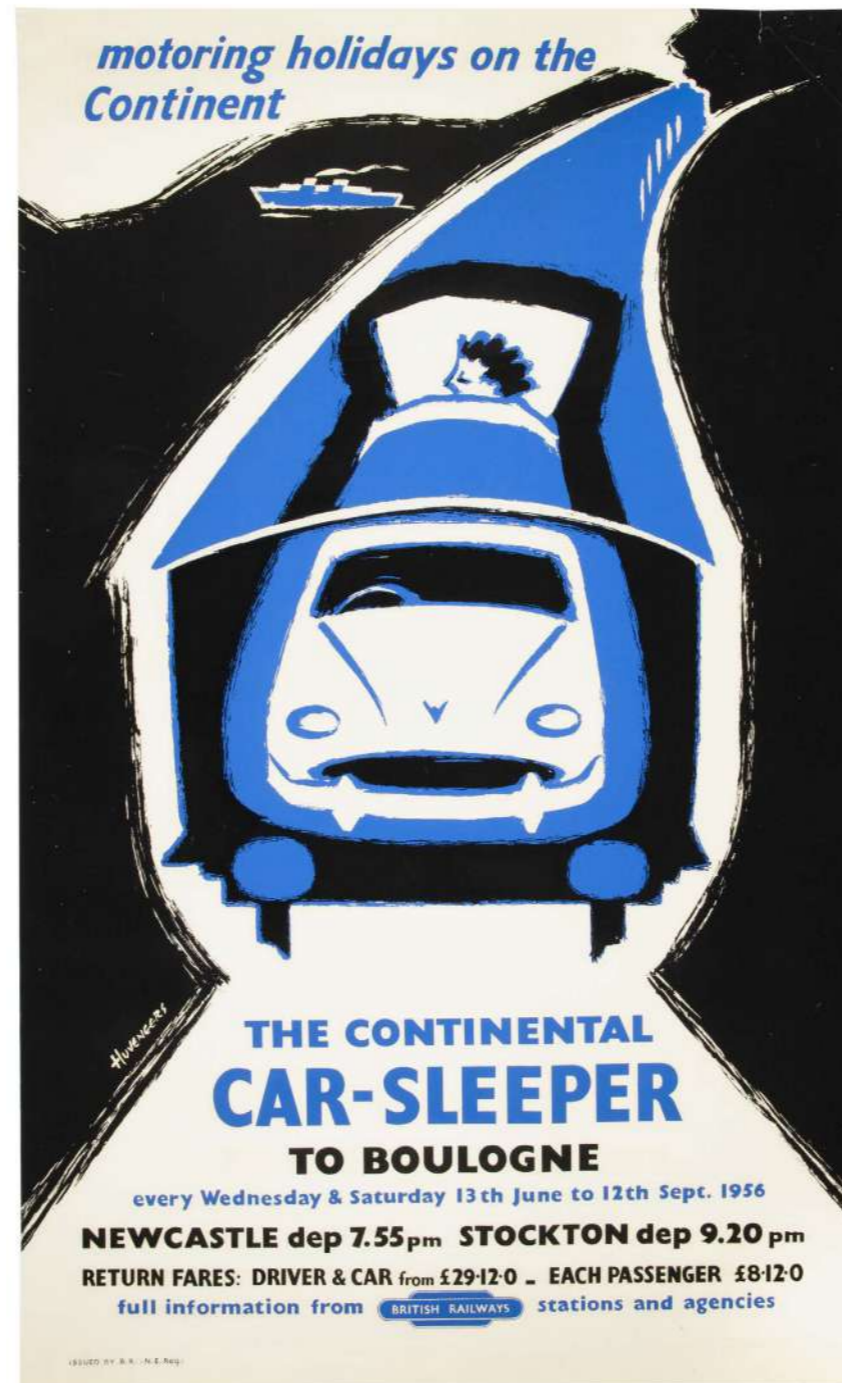
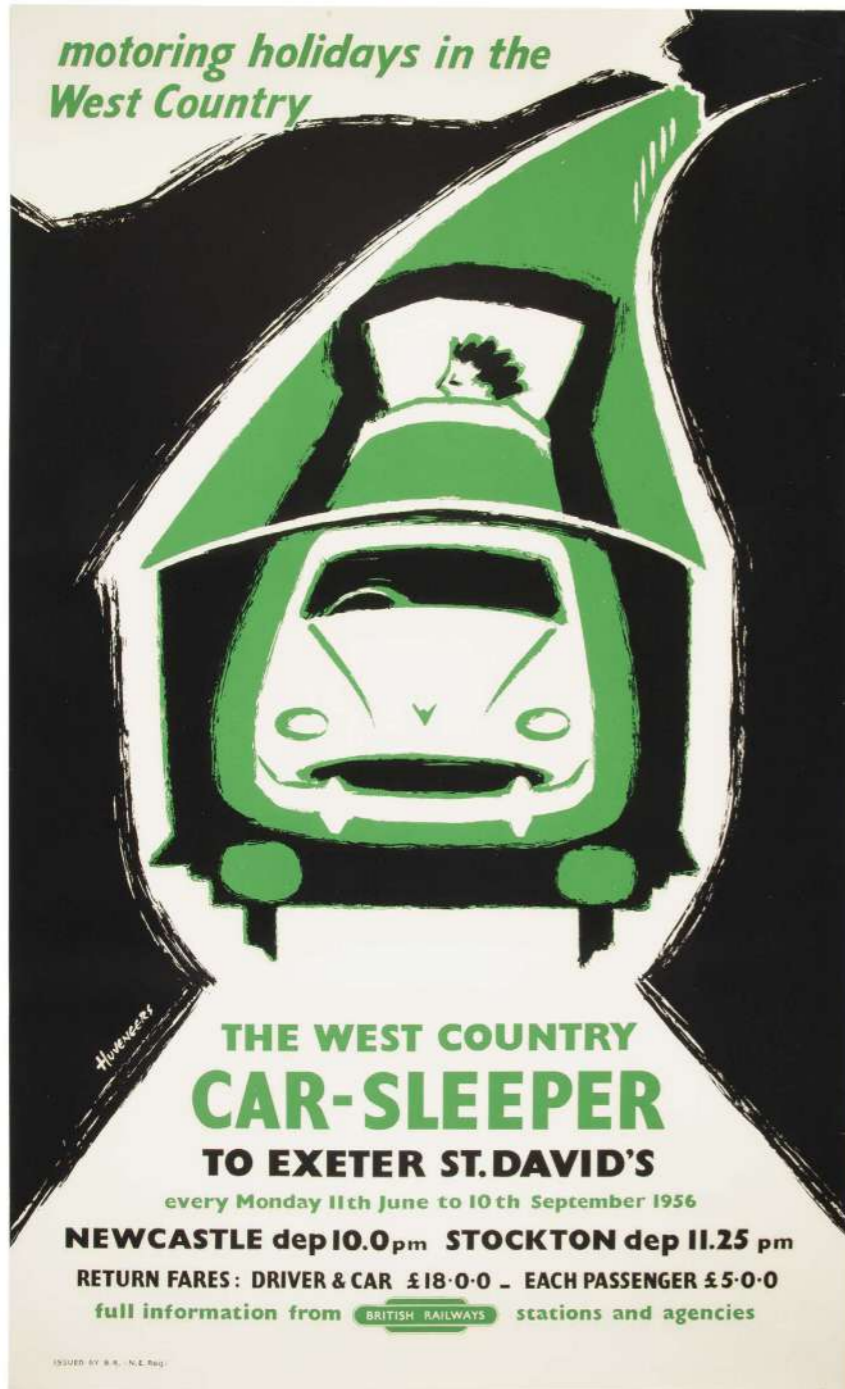
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Continued



Previous Pages

**Left**  
British Railways,  
'Holiday Guides' (1952),  
designer Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Right**  
British Railways,  
'Harwich Hook of Holland'  
(1954), designer Pieter  
Huveneers. RMIT Design  
Archives.

**Above Left**  
British Railways,  
'The West Country Car  
Sleeper to Exeter  
St. David's' (1956),  
designer Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Above Middle**  
British Railways,  
'The Continental Car  
Sleeper' (1956), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Above Right**  
British Railways,  
'The Highlands Car  
Special to Inverness'  
(1956), designer Pieter  
Huveneers. RMIT  
Design Archives.

Continued

sunbathing on the beach. Similarly, Huveneers' second 'Harwich Hook of Holland' Double Royal poster from 1954 shows a giant sailor bestriding Europe and carrying the passenger's suitcase with his thumb pointing to the five destinations listed. The simpler two-colour British Railways posters for the Car-Sleeper and Car Special successfully highlight the seamless integration of car, train and a relaxing passenger to entice people to take advantage of these new overnight rail services, and the same image is deployed nationally and internationally. As Charles Rosner observed with regards the best poster design, 'It is the underlying human element which gives strength and conviction to these posters and their great simplicity in composition and directness of expression cannot help but act as an impetus on the "man in the street"'.<sup>7</sup>

The 1950 'Harwich Hook of Holland' poster caught the attention of British Aluminium, who asked Huveneers to join their team of designers. In a profile of the British Aluminium Company in the 1954 issue of *Gebrauchs Graphik*, Rudolf Conrad explained how the company focussed on prestige advertising directed towards management and technical staff, as well as the challenge of increased production of aluminium and having to recapture pre-war markets. The company adopted a policy of employing 'outstanding industrial artists', restricted to a small elite group with considerable freedom of graphic expression, who could provide 'sufficient contrast of styles to give variety [and who] will feel it worthwhile to devote continuous thought to the problem of marketing aluminium'. Conrad identified Abram Games, F.H.K. Henrion, Pat Keely, James Hart, Edward Bawden and Huveneers. All were 'encouraged to express specific subjects in his own style and the main responsibility of the Company staff is to ensure that the artist is adequately briefed'.<sup>8</sup>

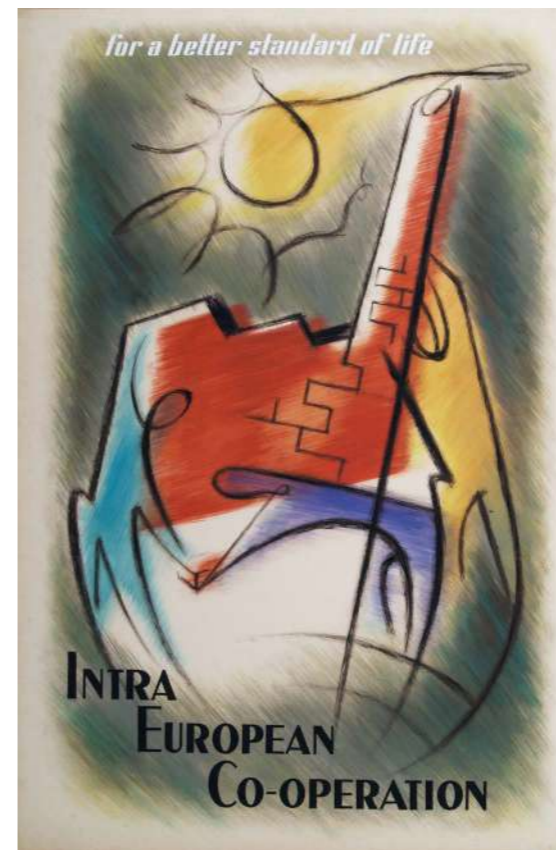
Writing in 'Posters for London Transport' (1952), Harold Hutchinson explained that posters were 'designed to stimulate the public and be a valuable part of the architecture of stations and a worthwhile contribution to the amenity of the public street',<sup>9</sup> and that all art-work was commissioned outside the organisation from established artists, as well as newcomers like Huveneers. Although Hutchinson was clear that 'Autolithography by the artist we do not encourage—we believe that the craftsman lithographer and the original artist should each complement the other'.<sup>10</sup> This opportunity to work with established lithographic printers is evident in the 'Fleetwood' poster, but Huveneers was clearly impressed with the opportunities of this public gallery for graphic design: 'So then you get the posters in England, they are 16-sheeters, things on the Underground, it is really an exhibition spot. All the people stand there on the platform and then you get where the train rolls in and there you have the wall behind for the posters and you put your name on the posters and sign them all. So that is how it happened and then it must have been different to me. It wasn't different but, to them, it was a different approach, so in no time I got recognition'.<sup>11</sup>

Huveneers' international outlook can best be seen in two early posters he designed for international competitions. The 'UNO' (United Nations Organisation) poster was his



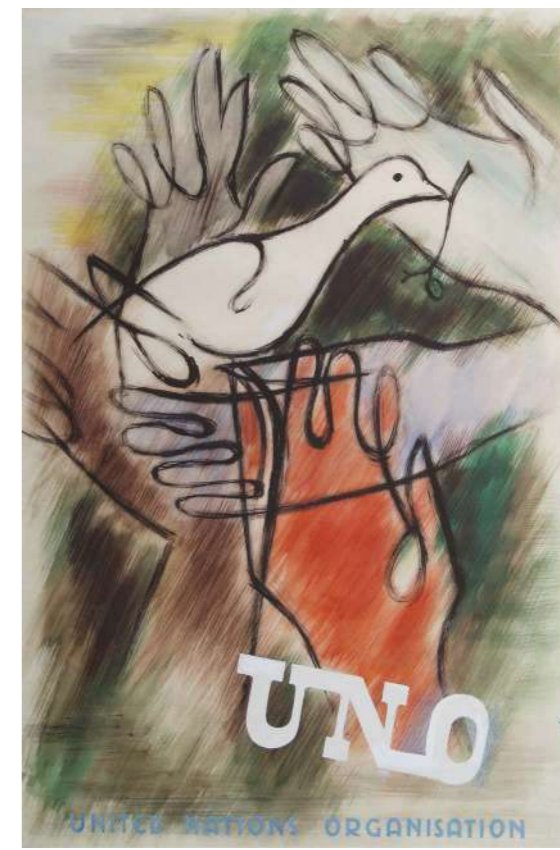
first design to be featured in the 1950/51 issue of *Modern Publicity*, featuring an illustrated dove and intertwined hands. The second was for the 1950 Intra-European Cooperation for a Better Standard of Life Poster Contest. Over 10,000 posters were submitted on the theme of cooperation and economic recovery, and judged by a panel of 12 graphic artists, each representing a different Marshall Plan country. The posters were designed to promote the idea of Western Europe cohesion and integration, with the removal of trade barriers and inter-governmental institutions to aid in trade. While the winning design, 'All Our Colours To The Mast' by Dutch designer Reijn Dirksen, depicted a 19th-century ship made up of the word 'EUROPE', with sails made of flags from each country, Huveneers' design featured a more expansive global world consisting of meridian lines, with three inter-connected workers supporting a factory. A similar spiralling line links people and nature in both of Huveneers' posters, and they display a distinctive integrated approach which drew the attention of the British design community.

Huveneers credited Henrion for selecting his 'Modes' poster for Paris fashion in an exhibition in Hampstead, as well as Tom Eckersley's selection of his Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) poster, 'Care' in the International Poster Exhibition, as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951. Huveneers' poster was one of twelve RoSPA posters featured, alongside designs by Robin Day, Pat Keely, Leonard Cusden, Reginald Mount and Abram Games. Games, Eckersley and Ashley Havinden were all



represented by six posters, Keely by five, and Schleger, Lewitt-Him, Henrion and Mount by four. The only five 'English' designers represented by reproductions in the catalogue were Lewitt-Him,<sup>12</sup> Eckersley, Henrion, Games and Havinden. Huveneers and Eckersley remained close friends from this time. All the posters demonstrated the key feature Charles Rosner described in his catalogue essay 'The Changing Background of the Poster': 'It was a breaking-up of subjects into components and a placing together again, creating a new complete image, of which the pictorial elements and the text were equal partners'.<sup>13</sup>

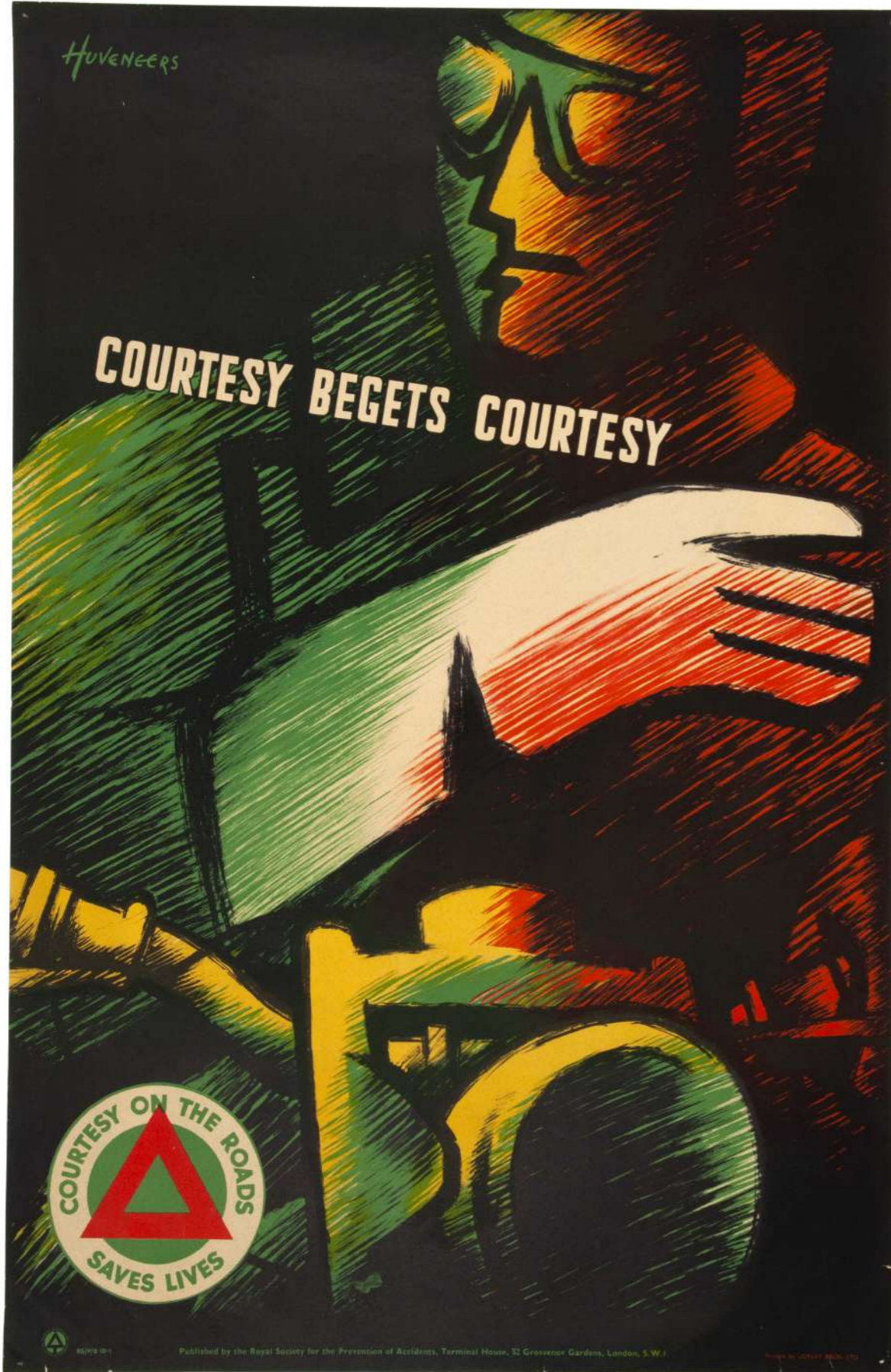
According to Paul Rennie, RoSPA challenged orthodox views of British Modernism in the way it used graphic design to provide a coherent framework for worker education in health and welfare. During the Second World War, it had been co-opted by Ernest Bevin, head of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, who was a friend of Frank Pick of London Transport, and understood the value of an integrated communication strategy. Tom Eckersley was a member of the Publicity Committee, along with Ashley Havinden, who used his experience as a creative director to put together a roster of designers. According to Paul Rennie, 'The list is notable for the inclusion of many young émigré talents who might reasonably be identified as "outsiders"'.<sup>14</sup> Huveneers was one of these talents, and he designed two posters for RoSPA's road courtesy campaign, 'Courtesy Begets Courtesy' and 'Care Before Reversing or Restarting.'



Both posters were reproduced in the *International Poster Annual 1952* and *Modern Publicity* (1951 and 1956 respectively), and 'Courtesy Begets Courtesy' featured in Tom Eckersley's 1954 Poster Design textbook, where he noted Huveneers' 'powerful treatment' of the close-up of a courteously waving motorcyclist, concluding the poster gets 'right down to the crux of the subject and impel[s] the mind to fly straight to the point'.<sup>15</sup> These both demonstrate a more considered integration of the public service message texts than his earlier posters, demonstrating Eckersley's advice that 'lettering can sometimes be used to suggest perspective, or to give an effect of space and distance'.<sup>16</sup> This is especially so with the vertiginous 'CARE' above a small child crouched behind an ominously large car tyre. This poster was also featured in *Gebrauchs Graphik* (1952), alongside another RoSPA poster 'Stand From Under', where a heavy red steel girder threatens anyone who fails to heed the warning far below.

Jeremy Aynsley has described *Gebrauchsgraphik* (*Gebrauchs Graphik* after the Second World War) as an important early graphic design journal, 'innovative in its focus on advertising design',<sup>17</sup> when it was first published in Germany in 1924. This new generic term of graphic functionalism encompassed design for publication, advertising and typographic design. Its editor, Professor H.K. Frenzel, was a founding member of the Association of German Commercial Graphic Designers (or *Bund Deutscher Gebrauchsgraphiker*), who worked tirelessly

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to improve German advertising and define and promote the work of designers for industry. *Gebrauchsgraphik* distinguished itself from avant-garde arts periodicals in that it 'carried an underlying assumption of a ready acceptance of capitalist application of design for improved economic performance.'<sup>18</sup> It also maintained an internationalist outlook through Frenzel's connections in the United States, and Europe, which included contributions to the *Penrose Annual* and *Modern Publicity*. His aim with the journal was stated in 1927 'to circumscribe a circle covering what can be regarded as good present day graphic art.'<sup>19</sup> Journals like *Gebrauchsgraphik* and *Graphis* (from Switzerland in 1944) not only raised the standard of advertising art, but built and confirmed graphic design reputations. They were also instrumental in setting an internationalist agenda for global trade in the post-war world, and providing access to a more diverse community of practice who sought to develop transnational dialogue.

The 1952 issue of *Gebrauchs Graphik* featured a four-page spread on 'P.H. Huveneers, England'. Ludwig Ebenhöf began his profile by noting that 'European commercial graphic art is beginning to become more and more internationalised'.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact Huveneers had only been working in Britain for two years, Ebenhöf concluded: 'Though he cannot deny in his works his personal note in origin, he, nevertheless, has adapted considerably his artistic form to present English commercial art, a fact easy to understand, as he is an experienced collaborator of many a leading British concern'.<sup>21</sup> The profile featured eight posters and a prospectus cover for engineering firm Babcock, which also appeared at the 1951 Festival of Britain. Three posters were designed for the General Post Office, two for RoSPA, and one each for British European Airways (BEA), British Aluminium and British Railways. Babcocks, BEA and British Aluminium were clearly international in outlook, and Huveneers chose to represent them as progressive global companies leading with technology, with very little resort to nationalist tropes.

In *GPO Design Posters*, Paul Rennie observed that 'After 1945, a new type of communication began to express values that were part of the post-war agenda of social democratic reconstruction'.<sup>22</sup> The foundations for these communications had been laid in the inter-war period at the General Post Office (GPO), initially to deal with the telephone operations, but increasingly focussed on publicity on all Post Office services. As GPO Public Relations Manager from 1933, Stephen Tallents adopted a strategy of using posters to carry information from the Post Office to the public. These were initially displayed on railway hoardings and in the London Underground, including the '16-sheet' poster sites admired by Huveneers on his arrival, as well as sent to schools as educational resources. From 1935, they were also displayed in Post Offices, and consisted of 'Prestige' and 'Selling' posters. 'Prestige' posters were designed to be eye-catching rather than persuasive, whereas 'Selling' posters persuaded customers to buy a product or use a service. Posters were variously produced in Quad Royal size (40 x 50 inches), Double Royal (40 x 25 inches), Quad Crown (30 x 40 inches), Double Crown (20 x 30 inches) and Crown Folio (10 x 15 inches).<sup>23</sup>

In an article on 'Post Office Printing' in the 1954 *Penrose Annual*, Misha Black reported that the British Post Office delivered 25 million letters and parcels per day, up to a



peak of 110 million at Christmas, and that one of its primary purposes was to 'persuade the public that it is so efficient and so alive to the needs (both physical and emotional) of the people it serves'.<sup>24</sup> Black went on to observe that 'The messages of most Post Office posters are not only simple but as well known by the public to whom they are addressed as other nursery rhymes in the cradle. 'Post early for Christmas', 'Please pack parcels very carefully', 'Books of stamps save time': only 'Send your overseas parcels by air mail' has even a flavour of the anxious and novel'.<sup>25</sup> These messages needed to be repeated on a regular basis to ensure the efficient operations of the Post Office, and so provided regular and frequent work for designers, which required 'a combination of skills based on modernist design formation and also an "outsider's" eye attuned to the quirky and seeing things differently'.<sup>26</sup> Huveneers clearly had such an eye for the quirks of English culture, or as he put it, his own design accent: 'I found all the work in England was really easier, because of coming from another country, you're unknown, you do not realise your own slight difference of approach to a problem. It's like language itself. You have a different language so whatever you say, even if you translate it into English or whatever other language, there is an accent and that accent in design also may have helped me to be chosen, more frequently to execute the campaign'.<sup>27</sup> Huveneers recalled, for example, that he was approached by Pepsi Cola to produce a 16-sheet poster, because they were seeking to attract a younger public, and this led to work with Schweppes. While Huveneers was certainly a young designer, his designs were also infused with a celebratory optimism, which was well suited to a country emerging from post-war austerity. He also sought a unique approach



Continued

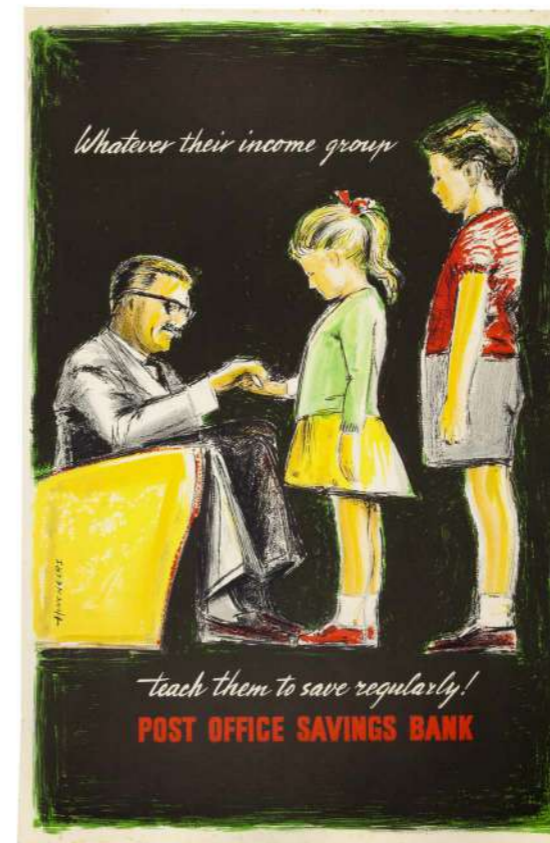


for each client and increasingly emphasised people's activities and experiences in his posters, rather than merely announcing the product or service.

Huveneers' initial designs for the Post Office in 1951 were informational, including internal communications such as 'Mis-sorting Delays Mail and Wastes Effort' and 'Telegrams are Urgent Messages - Treat Them as Such'. The extruded perspective of 'MIS' and the scattering of the letters of 'sorting' off a single baseline reinforce the message of the importance of sorting the mail, which is connected through the postal sorter's hand. A more abstract hand conveys the speed and urgency of telegrams, and both posters demonstrate Tom Eckersley's advice to poster designers: 'Because of their tremendous versatility and means of expression, hands have been used to advertise every kind of product and service in the world at some time or another. It is their flexibility and graphic simplicity that makes them the answer to a designer's prayer'.<sup>28</sup> A 1951 public-facing poster cleverly combines two directories into the shape of a Post Office building to communicate its sales message, but the diagonal typographic movement and thumb covers combine to suggest this prosaic index is essential reading.

By 1956, Huveneers was earning almost £3000 per year from his design (almost six times the average salary of the time), or as he put it: 'It wasn't just a shower it was a downpour and I was charging more than all the others because the only way to slow it down is to increase your fee'.<sup>29</sup>

*Modern Publicity* of that year featured seven of his posters, and his poster for British Rail appeared for the first time in *Graphis* and, again, in the *International Poster Annual* of that year. A series of four posters for the Post Office Savings Bank, which were reproduced in *Modern Publicity* in 1957 and 1958, focuses on the value of thrift through a subtle balance between children at play and more serious personal financial futures. 'Savings will Shape his Future' shows a small boy with a bucket, whose shadow is that of a businessman he might be, while 'Out to Build a Future for Himself' shows how playing in the sandpit might lead to a path to becoming a builder. A girl dresses up as a debutante, with a savings book in her gloved hand, while another girl climbs out of the frame, but has her savings as 'Something to Fall Back On'. These are in sharp contrast to two later posters (from 1959 and 1960), which actually feature an illustration and a photograph of Pieter Huveneers and his young family. With the growth of television advertising, photographic reproduction was increasingly favoured in posters by the end of the decade, but, from Huveneers' point of view, this came at the expense of 'the personal and more painterly touch'.<sup>30</sup> As well as these external promotional posters for the Post Office, Huveneers was also commissioned to design posters for internal use by the telephony department, although two posters designed in 1957 were unfavourably received and ended up being withdrawn. The Chairman of the Post Office Internal Relations Panel/Joint Production Council argued Huveneers was 'trying to illustrate an idealised notion of



**Opposite Left**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'Savings Will Shape His Future' (1954), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Opposite Right**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'Out To Build A Future For Himself' (c.1954), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Left**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'Whatever their Income Group, Teach Them to Save Regularly!' (1959), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Above Left**  
General Post Office, 'Speak Clearly-Always!' (1957), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Above Right**  
General Post Office, 'A Pleasing Tone-Always!' (1957), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

Continued



the impression made by a telephonist who speaks clearly', whereas female telephonists believed that the 'Speak Clearly' illustration gave 'such a strong impression of a vacuous mind' that 'it reflected adversely on their attitude to their jobs'.<sup>31</sup>

More successful were Huveneers' designs for the 'Post Early for Christmas' campaign, which was an annual competition he won several times. The posters were produced in different sizes and formats - both landscape and portrait - for display within Post Offices and on the side of delivery vans. There was also room at the bottom of the poster to include additional dates for cards, letters and packages, as well as the alternative slogan 'Travel Early, Shop Early, Post Early'. His 1956 series answered the age-old question: Why did the chicken cross the road? It showed a rooster with a package on its back and a letter in its beak speeding to the iconic red pillar box in the distance. The landscape poster for vans has the bird at full stretch and almost in flight. His 1957 series featured jaunty pillar boxes singing Christmas carols, ranging from a trio for the portrait poster to a quartet and quintet for the landscape and van poster, and were effective in encouraging people to post early.<sup>32</sup>

Huveneers' final series for the Post Office Savings Bank perhaps exemplifies his mischievous visual sense of humour and confirms Charles Rosner's claim a decade before: 'To relieve, even temporarily the onlooker's mood from his problems, by giving him a welcome change and good cheer seems to be one of the answers for the successful publicity artist of today'.<sup>33</sup> This series of four posters, 'Whatever Else You May Have ...' features a pelican, an ostrich a dinosaur and a giraffe, two posters featuring men, and two featuring women, and suggests something of the consumer optimism as Britain moved from post-war austerity. The giraffe poster along with 'Holiday Luggage Ahead' for British Rail Services (Parcels) both featured in *International Poster Annual 1966*, the year after Huveneers had departed Britain for his new position as international Creative Director for Philips in his home country of the Netherlands. It seems somehow appropriate that these two options, of a car racing left with a cigarette-smoking driver and a giraffe in the back to the Post Office, or a man with his bags packed, pointing right to the sea and a seagull with his bags pack were the last two reproductions of Huveneers' designs in, and for British public services. In 1964, he had had two job offers: one from the Canadian Ambassador in London to direct the communication of Canadian export industries, and the other from N.V. Philips directing communication through 164 countries. He chose the latter, citing 'Demands on design due to languages and climates, as well as the levels of development in differing countries attracted me and promised to be intriguing'.<sup>34</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Huveneers had expanded his practice into industrial design, designing a range of cane furniture for G.W. Scott & Sons which was sold through Harrods. From 1958-1965 he was retained as a consultant by Smiths Clocks and Watches to design a range of clocks, including their packaging, advertising and display, for which he also received royalties. One of his first designs was for a Television Light Clock in 1958, of which the Marketing



**Opposite**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'Whatever Else You May Have ... Have a Post Office Savings Bank Account As Well' (1963), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Top**  
Post Office Savings Bank, 'For a Secure Background' (1960), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Middle Right**  
General Post Office, 'Post Early' (1956), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Middle Left**  
General Post Office, 'Post Early' (1956), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

**Bottom**  
British Railways, 'Holiday Luggage In Good Hands' (c.1963), designer Pieter Huveneers. RMIT Design Archives.

Continued



**Right**  
Post Office Savings Bank,  
'Whatever Else You May  
Have ... Have a Post Office  
Savings Bank Account  
As Well,' (1963), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Opposite Left**  
Post Office Savings Bank,  
'Whatever Else You May  
Have ... Have a Post Office  
Savings Bank Account  
As Well,' (1964), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Opposite Top Right**  
Post Office Savings Bank,  
'Whatever Else You May  
Have ... Have a Post Office  
Savings Bank Account  
As Well,' (1964), designer  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.

**Opposite Top Left**  
British Railways,  
'Harwich Hook of  
Holland' (1963), designer,  
Pieter Huveneers.  
RMIT Design Archives.



Manager, L.J.H. Parker concluded in a note to Huveneers: 'the design you have prepared for the Television Light Clock is quite exceptional in my view, and introduces a completely new line of thought in clock design'.<sup>35</sup> He also designed displays at Ideal Home exhibitions and magazine advertising, gave a number of lectures on sales and marketing and the importance of design to staff, and trained industrial apprentices. In a 1963 testimonial, Rex Smith wrote: 'I always found him most helpful and consider his ability as a designer excellent. It was due to his fresh outlook which he applied to the design of our clocks, which I am sure has resulted subsequently to increased sales'.<sup>36</sup> Pieter Huveneers also began teaching part-time from 1950 because, in his own words, 'I like to be involved with people'.<sup>37</sup> He initially taught Advertising Design one night per week at the Willesden School of Arts & Crafts, which increased to four nights over the following nine years. In a testimonial written in 1962, the Principal, A.E. Jeffery wrote: 'As an artist who earned his living by free-lance work, he brought into his teaching a freshness and vitality and authority which the students greatly appreciated; so much so, in fact, that many felt themselves greatly stimulated'.<sup>38</sup> Huveneers also created advertisements in London for the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts and judged student awards at the invitation of Tom Eckersley, who described Huveneers as 'a graphic designer of distinction'.<sup>39</sup> He also met with students at the Central School of Art and

Design, describing how much he enjoyed discussions with them about 'design and how to communicate and reach the population which is not just British, but comes from all the British possessions or overseas visitors'.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that Huveneers recognised the need to take account of a more diverse and international audience brought about by increased trade within Europe and with Commonwealth nations, which was made possible by increased peace-time prosperity and mobility.

Huveneers also noted that these associations with this signal graphic design programs 'give you publicity as well, without you trying to get it, but it automatically is referred to in print'.<sup>41</sup> Drawing on his experience with Scott furniture and Smiths clocks, his final foray into teaching was at West Sussex College of Arts and Crafts in Worthing, where he added industrial design to graphic design and display design. This included car styling for Austin and Morris cars. Huveneers recalled 'Styling was used rather than design, and ... there were very few people trying to get into the styling of cars. It's a very difficult thing to do because you are dealing with double curvature, the side of a car, a wing or what and it curves in different planes, so how do the ratios vary and following a flowing line'.<sup>42</sup> This seamless transition from the flowing lines of his early posters to product and packaging design and car styling within a decade belies the prodigious work ethic that sustained Huveneers' practice during his time in London, as



he sought an ideal solution in line with the service offered. His transition from accomplished national poster artist to international *Gebrauchs Graphik* artist to design consultant was complete.

Writing in 1986, Adrian Forty provides a valuable case study of London Transport, which demonstrated how important a unified corporate identity was for this organisation in the inter-war years in ‘making the identity of the company apparent to the employees, and advertising the company’s special characteristics to the public’.<sup>43</sup> London Transport’s success influenced both public services and private companies in the post-war period in Britain, and Huveneers was well placed to contribute to a remarkable range of these identities during his 15 years there. Pieter Huveneers’ independent practice was marked by his own unique accent, which was internationalist in outlook and relentlessly sought novel ways to communicate essential services or national products to an expanding domestic and international market. His witty designs communicated a youthful optimism which resonated with the developing post-war consumer confidence, and he continued to seek new opportunities to expand his design practice in new directions. His widening circle of activities and communities of practice were developed through enduring relationships with leading designers of the day, many of whom would contribute to the growing field of corporate identity. This growing peer recognition is evidenced by the publication of his work in leading design periodicals of the time, and also demonstrates the increased status and growing importance of the design profession within business and government. The transformation from poster artist to international design consultant was fuelled by a genuine interest in people and their response to his practice, as well as a sustained curiosity about design and its application in creative communication and business contexts. His extensive body of work in Britain demonstrates the growing importance and complexity of corporate identity design, as national concerns became international businesses with growing consumer markets. The expanding networks of his graphic and industrial arts, and his grasp of the inter-relationship between internal and external communication design provided an architectonic understanding of design as a coordinating activity. His simple confirmation that ‘I’ve always strongly believed identifying the job you do with your name on it’<sup>44</sup> is evidenced by his distinctive signature on every poster, but also suggests the exacting standards he set for himself. With his design identity established, Huveneers was well placed to turn his attention to the global corporate identity of Philips, and then the corporate landscape of Australia.

Preliminary list of periodicals reproducing Huveneers’ graphic design created in the United Kingdom:

*Modern Publicity* 1950–51 ‘UNO’: 37.

*Modern Publicity* 1951 ‘Courtesy Begets Courtesy’ 25.

*Gebrauchs Graphik* 5 (1952) ‘Babcock Steam’, ‘Mis-Sorting’: 28; ‘Harwich Hook of Holland’: 29; ‘Care’, ‘Now on Sale’, ‘Stand from Under’: 30; ‘BEA: Great Britain via London’, ‘British Aluminium ... For Tropical Roofing’, ‘Telegrams are Urgent Messages’: 31.

*International Poster Annual* 1952 ‘Care’: 48.

*Modern Publicity* 1952/53 ‘Mis-Sorting’, ‘Now on Sale’: 42.

*Modern Publicity* 1953 ‘Care’: 26; ‘Harwich Hook of Holland’: 34; ‘Stand from Under’: 55; ‘Woodmansterne Colour Slides & Films’: 105.

*International Poster Annual* 1953/4 ‘Now on Sale’: 60

*Modern Publicity* 1954 ‘4d is the Minimum Foreign Letter Postage Rate’: 50; ‘Packaging Exhibition Number’: 105

*Gebrauchs Graphik* 1954 ‘British Aluminium’: 27.

Eckersley, Tom. *Poster Design* 19 54 ‘UNO’: 39; ‘Courtesy Begets Courtesy’: 62.

*Modern Publicity* 1955 ‘Harwich Hook Of Holland’: 38; ‘Send Your Overseas Parcels by Air Mail’: 66.

*Graphis* July/Aug 1956 (vol. 12) ‘To the Provinces-Back In A Day’: 336.

*The Penrose Annual* 1956 ‘Send Your Overseas Parcels by Air Mail’: 57.

*Modern Publicity* 1956 ‘Savings Will Shape His Future’: 37; ‘GEC Switchgear’: 51; ‘Block Letters Throughout Please’: 61; ‘Pop in for A Pepsi’: 68; ‘British Aluminium’: 84; ‘GEC in the Forefront of Development’: 126.

*International Poster Annual* 1956 ‘Block Letter Throughout Please’: 46; ‘Out to Build a Future for Himself’: 55.

*Modern Publicity* 1957 ‘Good Sets Fit Mullard The Master Valve’: 27; ‘Motoring Holidays on the Continent’: 48; ‘Preparing for the Future’: 54; ‘Fleetwood-Lancashire’s Modern Resort’: 64.

*Modern Publicity* 1958 ‘Post Early’: 42; ‘British Aluminium ... For Tropical Roofing’: 49; ‘Something To Fall Back On’, ‘It is Safer in The POSB and You Get Interest Too’: 59; ‘British Aluminium’: 76.

*Design For Industry* June 1959 ‘British Aluminium’, ‘Preparing for the Future’: 38; ‘Harwich Hook of Holland’: 39.

*Modern Publicity* 1961 ‘Sitting Pretty’: 49.

*International Poster Annual* 1963/64 ‘Holiday Luggage in Good Hands’: 31.

*International Poster Annual* 1966 ‘Whatever Else You May Have’ [giraffe]: 46; ‘Holiday Luggage Ahead’: 49.

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- Anon. Interview with Pieter Huveneers, 2005, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection, 0011/2019.0004.1-21, 2
- Anon, Interview with Pieter Huveneers, 2005, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection, 0011.2019.0004.1-21, 5
- Testimonial from Koninklijke Nederlandsche Jaarbeurs Royal Dutch Fair, April 15, 1948. RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection, 0011.2019, Box 5, File 1 ‘1940s CVs’.
- RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection, 0011.2019, Box 5, File 1 ‘1940s CVs’.
- In fact, six years later Huveneers would design an identity, advertising and production system for Woodmansterne Colourslides, which was reproduced in the 1956 issue of *Modern Publicity*, along with six of his posters.
- Charles Rosner, ‘The Changing Background of the Poster’ *International Poster Exhibition London 1951*, (London: Council of Industrial Design, 1951), 6.
- Rudolf Conrad, ‘British Aluminium Company Limited’ *Gebrauchs Graphik* (1954): 27.
- Harold F. Hutchinson, ‘Posters for London Transport’ *International Poster Annual* 1952, 10.
- Hutchinson, ‘Posters for London Transport’, 11.
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- The Lewitt-Him graphic design partnership of Jan LeWitt (1907-1991) and George Him (1900-1981) was formed in Warsaw in 1933, moving to Britain in 1937 before their partnership dissolved in 1955.
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AUSTRALIAN POST OFFICE  
TELEGRAM

+

SRP 238= MSG 279= VLC22

LAW COURTS MELBOURNE VIC

HUVENEERS PTY LTD

A. C. LEWIS HOUSE

AUSTRALIAN POST OFFICE  
TELEGRAM

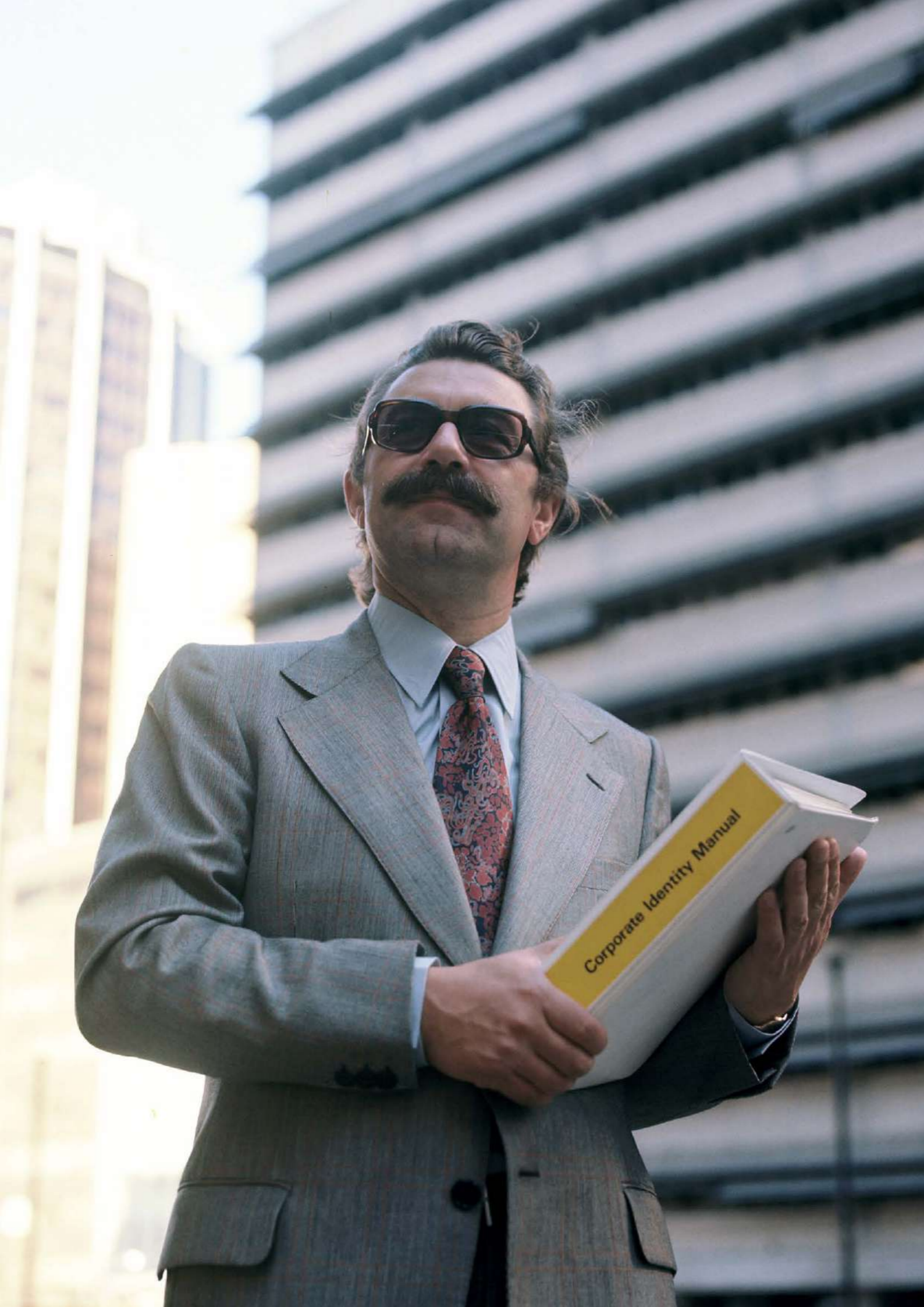
~~5TH FLOOR 159 KENT ST~~

~~SYDNEYNSW~~

17 MYRTLE ST  
CROWS NEST

NOTIFICATION HEREBY GIVE  
TO DESIGN A HOUSE STYLE  
ALLOTTED DETAILED LETTER

~~CHUVENEERS A - C 5TH 159~~



## Setting a Standard

Dominic Hofstede



PEER  
REVIEWED  
ESSAY

‘In short, it is not enough to have a unique and memorable trademark, a well-known name and a quality product. The way things are combined and presented to the public must be subject to a master plan that establishes the ground rules as to when, where and how. That master plan is the Corporate Identity System’<sup>1</sup>

*Sense Magazine*, Lippincott & Marguiles, 1958

### ABSTRACT

This article explores Pieter Huveneers’ contribution to the discipline of corporate identity design in Australia, focussing on his work for Australia Post and Telecom, entities formed in 1975 when the Australian Government de-merged the Postmaster-General’s Department. These large-scale identity programs exemplify Huveneers’ personal methodology which encompassed aspects of behavioural psychology, business strategy and systematic

design. He had arrived in Australia in 1968 fresh from a role as Creative Director with Dutch electronics firm Philips, having previously spent almost fifteen years working as an art director in London. Huveneers joined an influx of immigrant designers whose training and experiences profoundly influenced Australian graphic design throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, a key aspect of the profession’s evolution discussed here.

American designer J. Gordon Lippincott is generally credited with originating the term ‘corporate identity’ in the late 1950s. His firm Lippincott & Marguiles were among a group of specialists who prospered in the subsequent decades as the mantra of co-ordination and consistency resonated with corporate America. Other notable practitioners were Chermayeff & Geismar, Saul Bass and Paul Rand, and in Europe, F.H.K. Henrion and Total Design. In Australia, Dutch designer Pieter Huveneers was the most prominent exponent of the discipline. Throughout the 1970s–80s his firm developed identity programmes for some of the country’s most well-known companies. From beer brands to department stores, airlines to railways, Huveneers left an indelible mark on the Australian visual landscape.

Simplifying and standardising were critical to the successful implementation of these identities, and the primary element in achieving this ‘absolute consistency of impression’<sup>2</sup> was the corporate identity manual. We are fortunate that the RMIT Design Archives houses examples of manuals from Pieter Huveneers’ extensive body of work, including the volumes produced for Australia Post and Telecom, perhaps his most complex identity project.

### Background

In August 1972, when Huveneers submitted his firm’s tender for Australia’s largest corporate identity commission, it was a last-minute decision. A chance conversation with Hugh Dentry, Public Affairs Manager at his client ACI (Australian Consolidated Industries), had alerted him to the de-merging of the PMG (Post Master General) into two separate postal and telecommunications organisations.<sup>3</sup> Both would require new corporate identities. Tender documents were due on the very same day, and Huveneers rushed to compile what proved to be a successful tender. The covering letter highlighted ‘some twenty years of specialisation

in the preparation of Corporate Identification Systems’, referencing the designer’s extensive experience working in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Huveneers chose to include two House Style Manuals to substantiate his firm’s credentials. As a testament to how he perceived their value, his covering letter concluded with these words; ‘We would welcome the return of the items forming part of this submission’.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his fifteen years in London Huveneers had become one of Europe’s most sought after poster artists. Commissions arrived from prominent brands including BOAC, British Railways, General Electric Company, ICI and Pepsi Cola. Of particular note were the designs he produced for the British Post Office which were to echo in his later work for Australia Post.

In 1964 Sies Numann, the entrepreneurial head of PR for Philips, lured Huveneers back to the Netherlands to work for the iconic Dutch company. He was given the new role of Creative Director, and, in a business where the diverse identities of individual product ranges from lighting to shavers to radios dominated, his challenge was to bring coherence and consistency. Specifically, he was responsible ‘for the design standards of all facets of communications throughout the 164 countries in which Philips operated’.<sup>5</sup> The experience exposed Huveneers to the inner workings of an established, international corporation, and he gained valuable insight into the complexities of managing corporate identity on a global scale. At Philips, Huveneers prioritised systemisation and standardisation as a means of reducing costs and building brand equity. Design was key to this methodology. He also identified the critical tool in protecting this equity; ‘Until you have a manual, and when you have a standard, one standard, then everything else is out, and then it is eventually accepted’.<sup>6</sup>

### Previous pages

Law Courts Melbourne, Telegram to Pieter Huveneers confirming acceptance by the Australian Post Office of Tender to design a house style, 1972, RMIT Design Archives. (detail)  
©AustraliaPost2021

### Opposite

Pieter Huveneers, 1975. Unknown Photographer. Courtesy Tanis Wilson.

**Opposite**

Huveneers Pty Ltd,  
Design drawings for  
Australia Post and  
Telecom seals, 1975,  
RMIT Design Archives.  
©AustraliaPost2021  
©TelstraCorporation2021

Fatigued by the extensive administrative aspects of the position which kept him from hands-on designing, Huveneers looked to a distant horizon for fresh challenges and new opportunities. He was invited to Australia in 1968 by Sim Rubensohn, founder of the advertising agency Hansen Rubensohn (which later became McCann Erickson). Rubensohn had met the Dutchman through his client Philips, and he had left a strong impression.<sup>7</sup> He offered him a position as Head of Creative Planning, with an understanding that Huveneers would be free to establish his own independent design company in time. That moment arrived quickly, as Huveneers attracted corporate identity commissions from some of Australia's most well-known companies. In 1969 he established Huveneers Pty Ltd, and when he submitted his firm's tender for the PMG project in 1971 his impressive client list included Australian Consolidated Industries Ltd. (A.C.I.), Target Supermarkets and Departments Stores, The Myer Emporium Limited, China Airlines, Imperial Chemical Industries (I.C.I.) and Dulux Australia Limited.

The contents of the tender document offer some clues to Huveneers' attraction for corporate Australia. In an evolving Australian design profession still characterised by small-scale graphic design studios, Huveneers' comprehensive offering stood out. He wrote, 'We are industrial designers (product designs, interiors, exhibitions, packaging), and marketing consultants (name development, image research, new product development and positioning and merchandising). We consider the knowledge and experience in the designing of all related design aspects as essential ingredients to the understanding and preparation of a "Corporate Identification System"'.<sup>8</sup> This all-inclusive service must have provided a level of reassurance to clients new to the specific complexities of large-scale identities.

Huveneers initially faced the challenge of sourcing local designers sufficiently versed in the unique language of corporate identity. Unsurprisingly, he recruited a team comprised of numerous nationalities, including the Swiss designer Paul Buhlmann. He is listed alongside Huveneers and John Wade (Merchandising, Marketing and Research) as a company director in the tender document. Buhlmann's impressive CV lists prominent Swiss, Italian and American corporate identity programmes including AKZO and the Bunge Corporation. His work had also been published in numerous esteemed design publications including *Graphis*, *Publicité* and *Signet/Signal/Symbol*. The mix of Dutch and Swiss modernist ideals made for a potent combination.

The contract for the PMG demerger was awarded in 1972, but it would be another three years before the launch of the new identities for Australia Post and Telecom, and three more before manuals were distributed. Huveneers' ability to diplomatically navigate the myriad stakeholders inherent in such a politically-charged project was critical: 'The identification also had to be approved by the unions and in every case, the senior management would refer it to me to talk to the unions and arrange to see if they would give approval to avoid any strife'.<sup>9</sup>

**The Process**

Engagement at all levels of an organisation was a critical component of the designer's process, from initiation to implementation. As the identity finally launched in 1975, Huveneers reflected upon this process in an article titled 'Design in Business' for *Design Australia*. He broadly outlined just two phases, summarised below.

**Research and Presentation**

The initial immersive phase would see engagement with an organisation's executive level, gaining a clear understanding of the short-, and long-term strategic goals. Market research was conducted, and priorities in corporate policy identified to determine the image a company wished to portray. These strategic findings were then distilled into a visual presentation of the proposed identity system. At this point, recommendations on typography, uniforms, stationery and other key applications were made, with a focus on highlighting savings achieved through standardisation and rationalisation.

Huveneers understood that, for a design decision to be endorsed, a clear and irrefutable rationale was required, often based on financial metrics. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he openly embraced the language of business: 'A designer casually called in, often cannot talk and relate commercially; the commerce-oriented executive cannot transfer commercial needs into design elements. The fault often lies with the designer who is basically not interested in business'.<sup>10</sup>

**Implementation**

Following approval of the visual approach, a company manual, often delivered in multiple volumes, would be produced and distributed. Clear guidelines for each category of application were detailed with meticulous care and attention. Rationalising an entire system into a set of volumes was a skill on its own, particularly in a pre-digital age when all artwork was created by hand.

For such manuals to be successful, Huveneers understood that, in his absence, his clients would need to become his proxies, guardians of the identity's integrity. He achieved this level of advocacy by embedding them within his own team, training and then trusting these individuals 'to implement, discuss, negotiate, and uphold the proper continuation and exact implementation of the directives contained within the company manual'.<sup>11</sup>

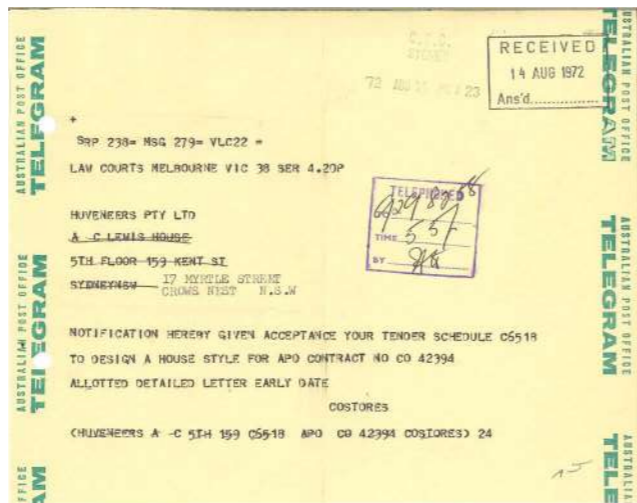
In today's digital paradigm, where technology has democratised design and identity systems are now implemented by in-house teams, 'collaboration' and 'integration' are part of the vernacular. Seen through the prism of the mid-1970s, Huveneers willingness to engage so openly with his clients was prescient, and pioneering.

**The Manuals**

In February 1977, Raffan & Pretzel of Gladsville, NSW, were contracted to produce the Australia Post manuals. Their letter of acceptance detailed an initial print run of 2100 units, composed of four volumes. Significantly, quality supervision was noted thus: 'The printing to be by offset process and to be of the highest class appropriate printing standard approved by P. Huveneers'.<sup>12</sup> As well as personally



Continued



**Top**  
 Law Courts Melbourne,  
 Telegram to Pieter  
 Huveneers confirming  
 acceptance by the Australian  
 Post Office of Tender to  
 design a house style, 1972,  
 RMIT Design Archives.  
 ©AustraliaPost2021

**Below**  
 Huveneers Pty Ltd,  
 stamps and first day  
 cover for the launch of  
 Australia Post and Telecom  
 corporate identities, 1975,  
 RMIT Design Archives.  
 ©AustraliaPost2021  
 ©TelstraCorporation2021

# Australia Post Cover 1975

Australian  
Postal  
Commission



Australian  
Telecommunications  
Commission



Stamps and Cover by Huveneers Pty Ltd



**Telecom  
Australia**



**Australia  
Post**

10

Australian  
Telecommunications  
Commission 1975

10

Australian  
Postal  
Commission 1975



**Australia  
Post**



**Telecom  
Australia**

10

Australian  
Postal  
Commission 1975

10

Australian  
Telecommunications  
Commission 1975





Continued



**Previous pages**

**Left**  
Huveneers Pty Ltd, mechanical finished artwork for logo page from Australia Post Corporate Identity Manual, c.1977, RMIT Design Archives, ©AustraliaPost2021

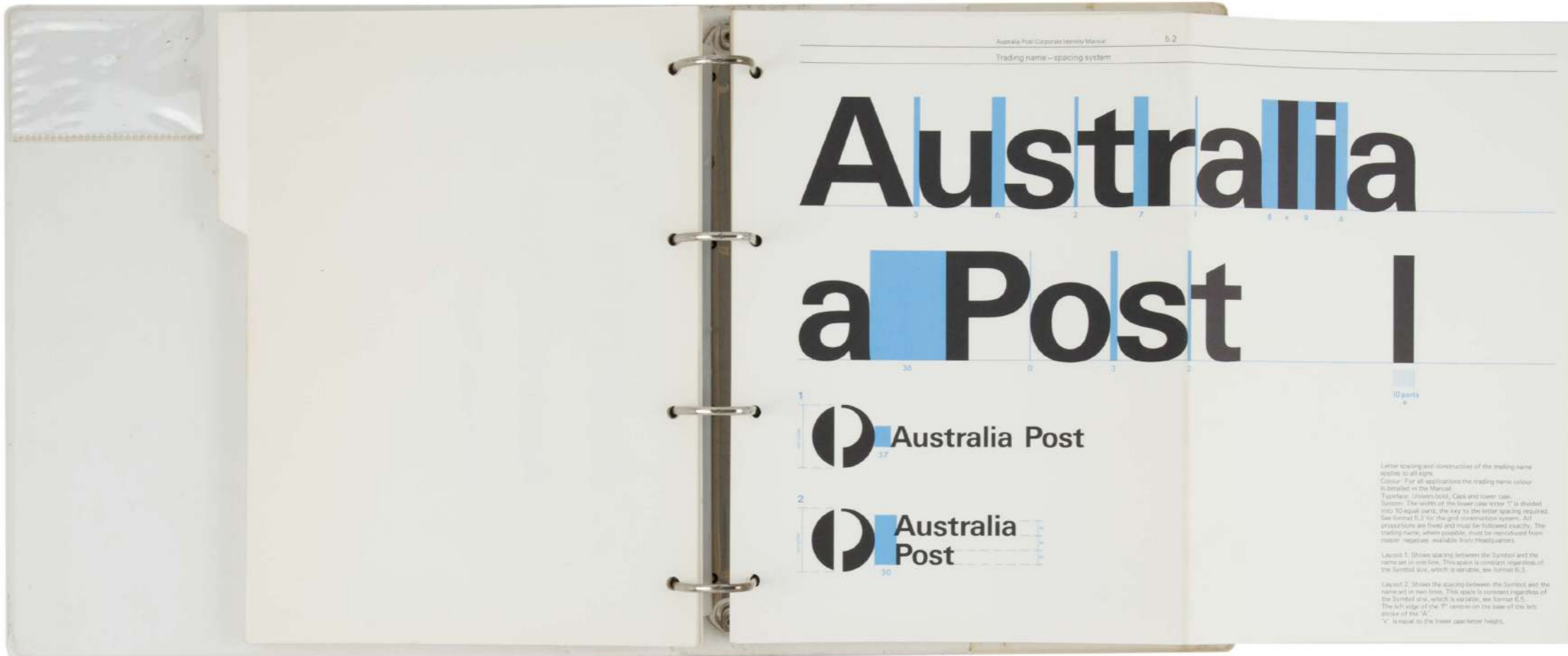
**Opposite above and following pages**

Huveneers Pty Ltd, page from Australia Post Corporate Identity Manual, c. 1977, RMIT Design Archives, ©AustraliaPost2021

**Opposite bottom**

Huveneers Pty Ltd, page from Telecom Corporate Identity Manual, c. 1975, RMIT Design Archives, ©TelstraCorporation2021







supervising the production, he went to extraordinary lengths to guarantee the delivery of the manuals to his expected level of quality. He requested that a senior production manager be in charge of the project, and that underneath this manager there would be specific quantities of supervisors for sorting and collating, guillotine operators and a staff member to 'do spot checking every half-hour in connection with all aspects of finishing'.<sup>13</sup>

The final manuals certainly reflect these very high production standards, printed on a combination of cast-coated Kromecote and Carrington ivory board in a range of weights, housed in functional four-ring binders. The four volumes were sectioned as follows;

- Volume 1: the primary system components
- Volume 2: stationery, documents publications and advertising
- Volume 3: signage and uniforms
- Volume 4: vehicles, post boxes and packaging

Focusing on the core elements of these volumes provides some understanding of Huveneers' overall approach to corporate identity programmes.

#### The Symbol

The central element in all Huveneers' corporate identities was a bold, recognisable and enduring symbol. He favoured the abstract over the literal, arguing that it would allow for future diversification in the activities of the company. Achieving a simple, reductive symbol was a primary objective, based on the following rationale: It could be reduced in size and retain clarity, make a stronger initial impact, and stand out in complicated settings.<sup>14</sup>

Both the Australia Post and Telecom symbols exemplify this philosophy, described in a special edition Postal newsletter as 'incorporating devices uniquely synonymous with their respective spheres of operations ... yet they are as modern as tomorrow'.<sup>15</sup> Huveneers saw the abstract 'P' in the Post symbol as universally understandable, noting that it 'allows for immediate recognition by all publics regardless of age and ethnic extraction'. Given their longevity, they proved to be sound financial investments. The current Australia Post identity still utilises the original symbol, and Telecom's identity remained unchanged until changing its name to Telstra in 1995.

#### Typography

Adrian Frutiger's seminal typeface Univers (1957) was specified for both identities. Developed initially as a student project by Frutiger, Univers (French for Universe) was commissioned by Deberny and Peignot as an ambitious, comprehensive typographic system. Univers offered the flexibility, functionality and neutrality Huveneers sought for his identities. The manuals detailed preferred weights and styles of the typeface and included specific spacing instructions for signage and other applications.

Helvetica would probably have been another option for the type specification. While favoured by many of Huveneers' contemporaries, a note to his team early in the design process seems to indicate a dislike for the ubiquitous typeface: 'We are to establish a typography style for all

communication activities of the APO. This type style should be available everywhere. Avoid Helvetica if possible'.<sup>16</sup>

#### Colour

Huveneers initially advised against the use of red for the Australia Post identity, recommending blue. He cited its association with the former PMG, the poor visibility of red at night, and its pigment's relative expense and poor durability.<sup>17</sup> Precisely why his recommendation for blue was ultimately rejected is not clear, but perhaps public opinion won him over. This passage from the launch issue of the internal Australia Post newsletter may provide a clue: 'The retention of Red in a brighter form and the incorporation of a White safety band was a decision resulting from an appraisal of Public and internal reaction to its suitability. The colour Red is synonymous with the Post Office'.<sup>18</sup>

Maintaining the integrity of this colour was achieved through perforated swatches printed in full bleed sheets housed within the manuals. These swatches were provided to printers as a guide for accurate colour matching.

#### Stationery and Documents

Advocating a shift to international paper sizes was a key component of the rationalisation strategy. The manuals detailed DIN (Deutsche Industrie Normen) sizing, an international standard which resulted in savings in paper use and storage. Guidelines for the layout and writing of letters are indicative of the level of detail the manuals provide. In a time long before online form-filling, and in the case of a project as complex and comprehensive as the PMG demerger, such systemisation was critical: 'The PMG had over 200,000 different forms. We devised a system for reducing that quantity. The way you file them, that's important. Their carbonisation. Colour coding. Window faced envelopes or not. We advise on how a letter is typed. How you get, in the shortest possible time, the most accurate answer to questions. How you put your questions'.<sup>19</sup>

#### Conclusion

A letter to staff from B.C. Moritz, the Australia Post General Manager dated March 6, 1978, accompanied the manuals as they were distributed across the business. It included the following summary:

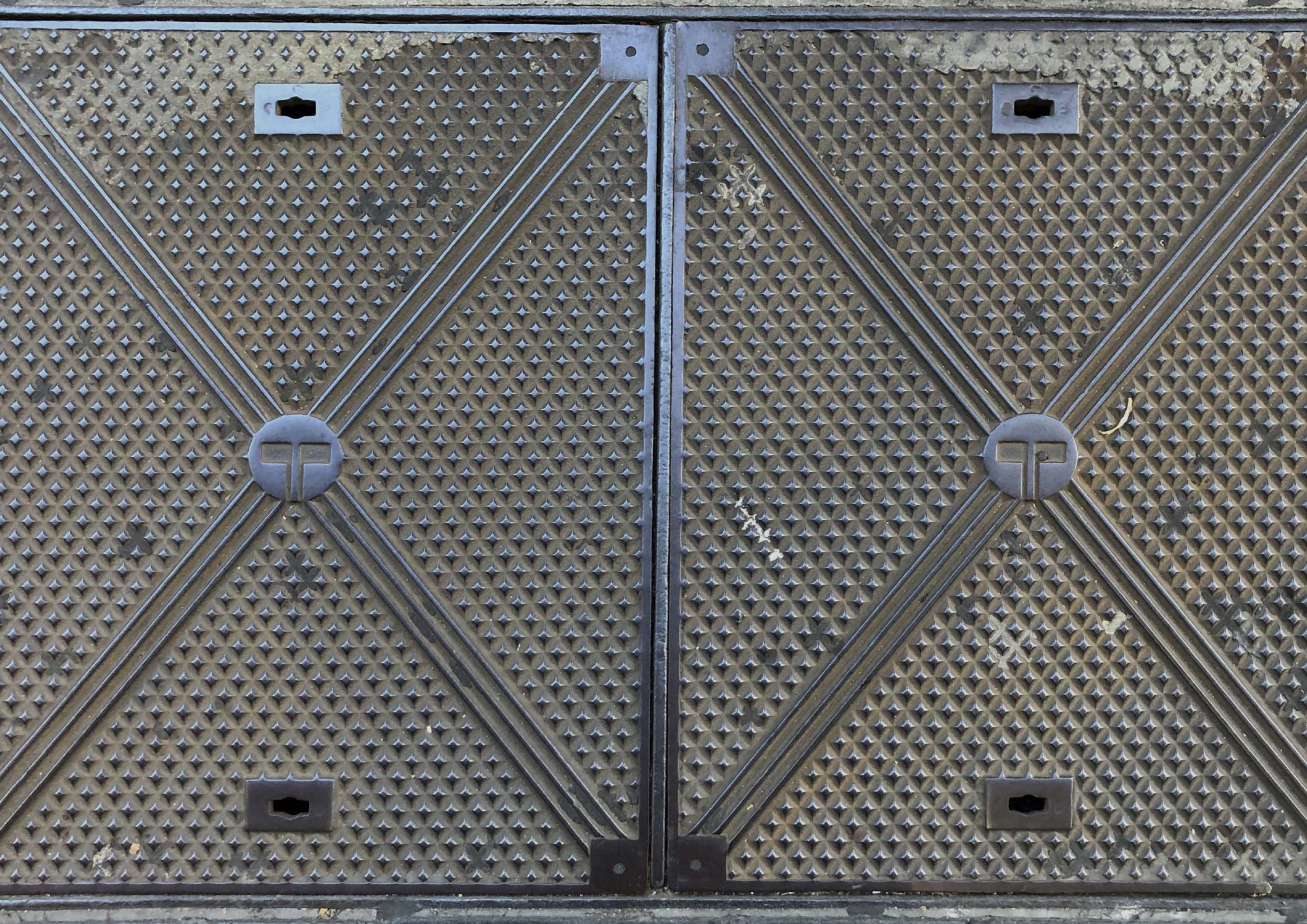
These volumes are a reference work and should not be defaced in any way. The attached document sets out the philosophy behind the corporate identity programme. It is important that the underlying reasoning be understood and that the programme be carried out faithfully.

Above all it must be remembered at all times that the Manual presents a system to be applied. It is not a collection of suggestions, but a set of blueprints which must be followed to maintain the full meaning of the programme.<sup>20</sup>

Moritz's words describe the manuals, and the identity programme, with an appropriate tone of reverence. They speak to the importance of establishing, and maintaining, a set of standards, championing the commitment and philosophies of Pieter Huveneers. To a contemporary identity practitioner, operating in a constantly fluid digital context, his aspirations for clarity, coherence and simplicity resonate more than ever.

## Endnotes

- 1 Quoted in Lippincott Mercer, *Sense: The Art and Science of Creating Lasting Brands*, (Gloucester: Rockport Publishers, 2004), 25.
- 2 Lippincott Mercer, *Sense: The Art and Science of Creating Lasting Brands*, (Gloucester: Rockport Publishers, 2004), 27.
- 3 Pieter Huveneers, 'Westpac: the man behind that name', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 16, 1982.
- 4 Tender submission to the Postmaster General for logo design, 1971, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 5 Biographical details, RMIT Design Archives. Pieter Huveneers Collection (not dated).
- 6 Unpublished manuscript of autobiography of Pieter Huveneers, Tape 3, 2006, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection
- 7 Pieter Huveneers, 'Westpac: The Man Behind that Name', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 16, 1982.
- 8 Tender submission to the Postmaster General for logo design, 1971, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 9 Unpublished manuscript of autobiography of Pieter Huveneers, Tape 6, 2006, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 10 Pieter Huveneers, 'Design in Business', *Design Australia*, (March 1975), 9.
- 11 Pieter Huveneers, 'Design in Business', *Design Australia*, (March 1975), 12.
- 12 Letter of acceptance to Raffan & Pretzel, 1977, RMIT Design Archives, Peter Huveneers Collection.
- 13 Pieter Huveneers, Letter to Mr M Pretzel, Raffan & Pretzel, February 28, 1977, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 14 Pieter Huveneers, Letter to Mr E F Lane, Australia Post, September 25, 1973, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 15 Pieter Huveneers, 'The New Commission's New Look', *Australia Post Office News*, Number 34, June 1975.
- 16 Document regarding Australia Post name change, March 7, 1973, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 17 Director of Public Relations, Letter to Mr. J.L. Brady, DADG Commissions Unit, c. 1975, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.
- 18 Pieter Huveneers, 'The New Commission's New Look', *Australia Post Office News*, Number 34, June 1975.
- 19 Pieter Huveneers, 'Westpac: The Man Behind that Name', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 16, 1982.
- 20 B.C. Moritz, memo titled 'Corporate Identity Programme', March 3, 1978, RMIT Design Archives, Pieter Huveneers Collection.





## Little Symbols: The Typographic Landscape of Pieter Huveneers

Stephen Banham

### ABSTRACT

This paper argues that one of the many legacies left by graphic designer Pieter Huveneers is the indelible mark his corporate identity work made on the streets of our cities. Far from being 'placeless' (as communication design is often considered to be) Huveneers' work forms a part of how we understand our urban experience.

Using his design for Telecom, Australia Post, Westpac, Myer and Target as a collective case study, this essay investigates the relationship between the city and graphic design, drawing on recent research on the typographic landscape.<sup>1</sup>



Pieter Huveneers is only now being justly acknowledged as a pre-eminent figure in Australian design and his considerable archive of works at the RMIT Design Archives offers us many insights. It uncovers the life and processes of an émigré graphic design practitioner spanning the latter half of the twentieth century – not just the mechanical production of final artwork for printing but also the emerging modes of corporate communication, particularly the then-fledgling forms of market research and the application of 'total design'.

Total design involves the wider practice of 'managing design'. Although Peter Behrens' identity scheme for AEG in 1907 is regularly cited as the first large-scale application of design management,<sup>2</sup> the latter rose in prominence with the growth of large and complex American corporations in the post-war period. Examples of these include Paul Rand's identity system for IBM (1960), Otl Aicher's work for Lufthansa (1962) and F.H.K. Henrion's development of the KLM identity systems (1961).<sup>3</sup>

Throughout his career Huveneers was at pains to express the depth of understanding demanded of the client to enable a 'total design' approach. One of the original proponents of 'total design' was the English product designer Stuart Pugh, who defined it as 'the systematic activity necessary, from the identification of the market/user need, to the selling of the successful product to satisfy that need – an activity that encompasses product, process, people and organisation.'<sup>4</sup> Huveneers was also careful to point out the difference within the realm of graphic design between 'corporate image' and 'corporate identity', the former being the sum of impressions a company has made upon the public, while the latter he defined as the visual appearance of a company to denote particular positive characteristics. Quoted in Geoffrey Caban's seminal study *A Fine Line* (1983) Huveneers remarked:

We do design systems, not just little symbols which we stick on things. We cover as much of the commercial side as the design side and we become completely involved with the operation of the company, not just the graphics. We are constantly in touch with the top management of a company. To get the feel of a company we might also talk to workmen, foreman or other personnel. We ask for complete access – unless we have this we can't get under the skin of the company. We try to become totally involved with the objectives of a company – where they want to be in ten years time.<sup>5</sup>

As *The Herald* reported in an interview in 1981, Huveneers described his design process as an immersive and experiential journey almost akin to method-acting:

One aim of the programs is to ensure the desired image of the company is conveyed to consumers, the press, staff, general public, shareholders and government. But Huveneers is forced to 'live' each company for which he designs a new identity package... 'You must have full access to everything. I would always insist on that', Dutch born Mr. Huveneers said, stabbing his index finger at the table. 'There must be nothing barred. You must be allowed to walk in anywhere and go and sit in certain meetings so that you can fully, in a short time, live that company.'<sup>6</sup>

Within the continuum of Australian graphic design history, one of the many legacies Huveneers has left us is this systematically structured mode of 'totalised' practice. Embracing the concepts underpinning 'total design', his practice produced an array of corporate identity programs which served as case studies (such as Australia Post and Telecom following the division of the Postmaster General in 1975) for the popular uptake of such processes by subsequent Australian graphic designers such as Ken Cato and Garry Emery a decade later.

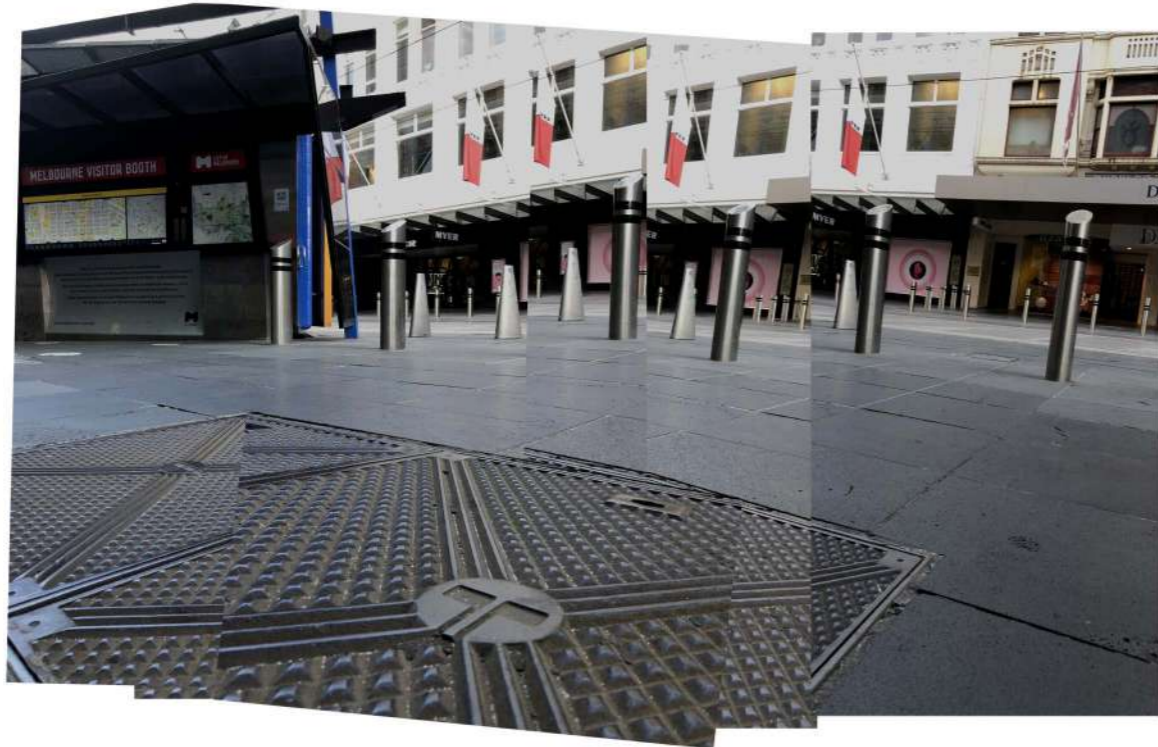
Huveneers arrived in Australia considerably influenced by English and continental design precedents, including the powerfully objective graphic language of the Swiss International School. This was to contribute to a gradual momentum of modernity within the local graphic design industry several decades later. As design historian Denise Whitehouse notes '... emerging designers like Brian Sadgrove, Max Robinson and Ken Cato faced with the demands of new corporate, commercial and institutional clients, found practical guidance in the Swiss School's definition of design as a problem-solving practice grounded in a scientific approach to visual organisation and a deep understanding of the conceptual nature of visual language.'<sup>7</sup> Although revolutionary at the time of its inception, the notion of 'total design' had, by the 1980s, become the conventional paradigm in 'modern corporate communications'.

Although Huveneers emphasised the totalised understanding of a client's business, its ultimate manifestation in the public eye is the single

**Preceding Pages**  
Telecom Phone Pit  
(detail).

**Opposite**  
The south-western corner  
of Swanston and Collins  
Street, historically known  
as 'Wales Corner'.  
March 2020.  
Photograph by author.

Continued



**Above**  
The broad façade of Myer in Melbourne's Bourke Street Mall, foregrounded by Huveneers' Telecom identity design. March 2020. Photograph by author.

**Below Left**  
Crest design for the Bank of New South Wales (1931–1974)



**Below Middle**  
The Westpac logo (1974–2003)



**Below Right**  
The Westpac logo (2003–)

**Opposite Top**  
The impressive yet somewhat concealed façade of Target department store in Bourke Street, Melbourne. March 2020. Photograph by author.



**Opposite Bottom Left**  
Step-daughter of Pieter Huveneers, Lucy Wilson, performing *Underwhere* in 2008. Courtesy of Lucy Wilson.



**Opposite Bottom Right**  
The original Commonwealth of Australia Postmaster-General's Departmental mark prior to Huveneers' revision, City of Melbourne Art & Heritage Collection.



reductive design mark itself – the logo. It is precisely this distilled and tightly-focussed 'pointy-end' of a total design program that enables it to scratch itself into the collective psyche of the public through its constant use. Its omnipresence, indeed ubiquity, throughout our built environment ultimately lends itself an enduring quality.

Due to the nature of these publicly familiar marks, the work of Huveneers offers a peculiar opportunity to be viewed through the fragments left outside the archive, namely the physical traces of his design work in the street. His work on corporate identities including Telecom, Australia Post, Westpac, TAA, Myer, Target and ICI define his impact as an intrinsically public one. In Huveneers' case, the question at the centre of legacy – 'what is left decades after?' – may lie in the set of 'publicly-owned' logos,<sup>8</sup> those marks he so playfully, almost dismissively, described as 'little symbols'. It is with a hint of irony that these marks – consolidations of a larger 'total' consideration – endure long after the underlying company strategies, often buried deep in archival correspondence, have long since faded from memory.

So just how 'present' are the traces of Huveneers upon the streets of Melbourne? For the purposes of containing a workable area of investigation, my field of observation was restricted to two city blocks of central Melbourne. This covered an area between Collins Street and Bourke Street, framed by Elizabeth Street to the west and Swanston Street to the east.

What became apparent when walking these blocks was not only the ease of finding traces of Huveneers, but also how dense their distribution was within this framed streetscape. In many instances it was possible to document several of his corporate identities within the one photograph.

I begin with the most southern site, the south-western corner of Collins and Swanston Streets, with a building known as 'Wales Corner'.<sup>9</sup> The presence of Huveneers on this site is not accidental. The 16-storey 'curtain of glass' headquarters had been built in 1966 for the Bank of New South Wales, which then changed its name to Westpac Banking Corporation in October 1982 following its acquisition of the Commercial Bank of Australia.<sup>10</sup> The work is a masterstroke of simplicity

and informational compression. Although the name Westpac is a portmanteau of 'Western' and 'Pacific', the design of the now ubiquitous 1982 Westpac logo wisely retains the 'W' which had been the logo of the Bank of New South Wales, popularly known as 'the Wales'. Nearly four decades later, the expansively-orientated bright red elements of the Westpac logo can be read as both typographic and iconographic, bridging a linguistic divide and opening the communication up to an international audience. As Huveneers reflected in an 1982 interview with the *Brisbane Courier-Mail* newspaper:

The styling of Westpac is good, and there's been a great acceptance now. The retention of the W was of course an essential part. The W has a very high recall in the market area, the West Pacific area. A third of the world's population live there adjacent to Australia.<sup>11</sup>

Photographing this logo-festooned (arguably over-branded) Westpac Bank on 'Wales Corner' today, you have to stand on another of Huveneers' works – the Telecom logo (1975) solidly cast into an iron pit-cover. In contrast to the story of the Westpac logo, the Telecom identity emerged from division rather than amalgamation. With the splitting up of the Postmaster General's Department on 1 July 1975 (known as vesting day) came the formation of two distinct bodies dealing with nationwide communication – the Australian Postal Commission (trading as Australia Post and aiming to be entirely self-funding) and the Australian Telecommunications Commission (trading as Telecom Australia, now Telstra).<sup>12</sup>

The Telecom logo celebrates Huveneers' capacity for the power of visual abbreviation. Primarily typographic in nature, the central letter T for Telecom was designed to symbolise the semaphore system embracing the world, represented by a circle. The Telecom symbol is by far the most common and frequent of Huveneers' work within the Melbourne (and presumably national) streetscape. This is primarily due to its nature as a symbol of long-term infrastructure, reinforced by the enduring materials with which it is cast – iron and concrete pit-covers and the like. This is particularly impressive given that Telecom was partially privatised in July 1997 and re-branded as Telstra by Melbourne design firm Flett Henderson and Arnold (FHA).

The way in which a corporate logo can become a site of urban culture was demonstrated in 2008 when a Telstra phone pit was used as a setting for a theatre performance. Entitled *Underwhere*, the production was a collaboration between a small independent arts company and Telstra. The main performer, Lucy Wilson (a stepdaughter of Huveneers), was initially inspired to produce the play when she kept noticing her stepfather's Telecom logo on countless manhole lids. She performs the play standing in one of the Telecom/Telstra phone pits.<sup>13</sup>

Moving a block north to Bourke Street, you discover another Telecom phone pit lying in the shadow of the looming Myer department store façade. Huveneers designed the typographic identity for the iconic Melbourne Emporium in the late 1970s, famously advising the owners to drop the 's' from Myers, making it simply 'Myer'.<sup>14</sup> This particular project highlights the importance Huveneers placed on naming as part of brand representation. As Oliver Harvey wrote in a 1982 interview with Huveneers, 'One of the several things to be considered is the name of the company. A study is designed to confirm the value of the name for attracting goodwill in today's market'. To which Huveneers added

... it should be approached with a clear understanding on the part of the company of what corporate communication can contribute, and a designer must understand what the commercial processes can contribute to deliver the right identification to truly represent the nature and character of the industry now and for the next 10 to 15 years.<sup>15</sup>

Standing in front of the Myer façade adorned with Huveneers' identity some 40 years later, you are struck by the enduring longevity of Huveneers' identity work for the Myer Emporium, particularly given the massive shifts and disruptions in department store trading in the interim. Within a few easterly paces, and partially screened by Melbourne's plane trees, is another of Huveneers' works writ upon a monumental façade – the Target department store logo. Arguably less complex in its design form than Telecom or Australia Post, this massive bright red mark is displayed at both eye height for passers-by and upon the top section of this considerable frontage. A trajectory from Huveneers' previous work

for Myer can be seen in this commission – Myer had purchased the right to use the name Target from its North American owners in 1971, opening up a diversified offer to the customer. Baillieu Myer, the group director of retail diversification at the time, described the decision: 'Target in America, the concept, the quality, value in the broader sense – I felt that they were the one that we should model ourselves on'.<sup>16</sup> From a design perspective, Huveneers' role was to refine and apply the Target branding throughout the Australian stores. Huveneers companioned the mark with the typeface Franklin Gothic, an American sans serif popular and widely available to typesetting houses at the time. Although it lacks the design originality of Australia Post and Telecom, both home-grown commissions that allowed Huveneers to design from the ground up, the 'adaptation' of the American Target brand to an Australian context still shows the ability of Huveneers to thoughtfully orchestrate the nationwide unrolling of a consumer brand.

Whilst observing and documenting the 'embedding' of Huveneers' design legacy into the Melbourne streetscape, it becomes apparent that the second most frequent mark (running a close second to Telecom) is the logo for its counterpart, Australia Post.

Unlike the more ubiquitous but quieter Telecom logo (countless numbers of which are cast onto man-hole covers underfoot), the Australia Post mark is made for immediate and distant recognition, orientated to the viewer and floated within a bright, 'fire-engine' red background.

Designed to be clearly and reliably identifiable in the public gaze, the Australia Post logo on pillar boxes positioned on nearly every city block is a monument to graphic simplicity. This is in stark contrast to the original Postmaster General's mark which features the Greek mythological figure of Hermes standing inside a tall oblong shape topped by an Australian Kangaroo and Emu crest. Other insignia used by the PMG Department, such as their uniform buttons, simply feature a royal crown. Within this context, the starkly graphic revisions by Huveneers in 1975 following the division of the PMG suggests a de-coupling of Australia from the crown through its modern reconfiguration as a pragmatic, consumer-facing set of organisations.

Continued



Right  
Australia Post pillar box,  
Melbourne. March 2008.  
Photograph by author.

Within a bold background of bright red, Huveneers cleverly positions the internationally recognised postal-horn device, a potent symbol of communication history, to form a letter P for Post. The circular element surrounding this represents movement, direction and global connection of people and communities. That the logo is still being used several decades after its design is testimony to its clarity and effectiveness.<sup>17</sup> Although there have been updates to the orbiting typographic system within the brand,<sup>18</sup> the core identity has remained the same, close to half a century later.

Seen through the lens of Baudelaire's 'flâneur', the streets of the city itself becomes a living archive of Huveneers, a testimony to his contribution to design. Scattered across each city block of Melbourne is an array of immediately-familiar corporate identities – or as a journalist noted of the designer during a 1981 interview '... the rest of Australia sees the work of Pieter Huveneers around them every day'.<sup>19</sup> Built into the very fabric of the city, these marks proudly stand etched into stone, cast into metal or fabricated into illuminated acrylic signage. Many (like Telecom) sit silent, muted by redundancy, whilst others continue with their original purpose of identifying a contemporary entity (Australia Post, Myer etc).

Far beyond the formal design archive, the 'public' marks left by Pieter Huveneers leave us a trail, a way of mapping our city. Particularly in the case of his marks for organisations no longer operating, they have outgrown their initial role as corporate communications only to transform into markers of memory and place – a form of urban orientation. They can be viewed and understood as a set of stories and representations rather than complete abstractions – the identities for Telecom, Australia Post, Myer and Westpac are readily identifiable marks within our typographic landscape. The renowned designer Garry Emery once noted this important relationship between mark and place.

Identity, or point of difference, is also essential for successful place making. Urban legibility – or the way the city can be read or interpreted by people needing to orient themselves in order to find their way around – is important in all public spaces.<sup>20</sup>

Huveneers' role within the mapping of a city is to be the dropper of breadcrumbs, leaving distinctive marks that help us navigate our city streets. Aligning our own experience and recollection of place enables these necessary connections, or as Hall points out, 'like memory, geography is associative'.<sup>21</sup>

Huveneers' corporate identity work becomes an ingredient in what has been described as a 'typographic landscape':

... what we call typographic landscape is the landscape formed by a subset of graphic elements in the urban environment: characters that form words, dates and other messages composed of letters and numbers. Typography is here understood in a broad sense, including reference to alphabetic and para-alphabetic characters obtained from processes that would otherwise be better described as lettering (painting, engraving, casting etc.) and not only from automatic or mechanical processes that characterize typography in a more restricted sense.<sup>22</sup>

This idea of the typographic landscape has also been discussed by Nicolette Grey, Alan Bertram, Jock Kinmeir, Phil Baines and Catherine Dixon, all of whom have articulated that the 'visual, aesthetic and cultural identity of the city is made up of, amongst other things, its graphic elements'.<sup>23</sup> Huveneers' identity markers of institutions and corporations have also become identity markers of place in Australia. And, like many other forms of design, they offer a particular capacity to exist comfortably and silently beyond the formal archive or gallery, bleeding deeply into the public realm and collective psyche. Their historical presence persists into the contemporary experience of the city, and in doing so acknowledges a broader continuum, challenging the unhealthy fixation within graphic design culture with 'the now'. The enduring lifespan of these marks long beyond their corporate lifespan serves to reinforce the key strengths of Pieter Huveneers' work – rigorous, well-considered and researched conceptual underpinnings executed with simplicity and precision. These firm foundations ensure that, even 40 years later, it is ultimately the 'little symbols' that remain, both in our streets and in our collective sense as Melburnians.

## Endnotes

- 1 Stephen Banham, 'The Legible City: Stories of Place Told Through a Typographic Lens'. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), RMIT University, 2019
- 2 Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames and Hudson), 21.
- 3 Adrian Shaughnessy, *FHK Henrion: The Complete Designer*. (Unit Editions, 2013), 92.
- 4 Stuart Pugh, *Total Design: Integrated Methods for Successful Product Engineering*. (London: Addison-Wesley, 1991), 5.
- 5 Geoffrey Caban, *A Fine Line: A History of Australian Commercial Art*. (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), 38.
- 6 Michael Venus, 'The symbol of success', *The Herald*, 14 Feb 1981.
- 7 Denise Whitehouse, 'A Matter of Influence: the Swiss School and the Growth of the Graphic Design Profession in Australia', Design History Australia Research Network. <http://dharn.org.au/a-matter-of-influence-the-swiss-school-and-the-growth-of-the-graphic-design-profession-in-australia/>
- 8 'Publicly owned' is used in a sense of a collective belonging and familiarity rather than a technical/legal ownership.
- 9 The multi-storey building at the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets, known as Wales Corner, was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed in 1964–66 for the Bank of New South Wales.
- 10 <https://www.westpac.com.au/about-westpac/westpac-group/company-overview/our-history> accessed 28 Feb 2021
- 11 Oliver Harvey, 'The man who markets images'. *The Courier Mail Brisbane*, 17 July 1982, 21.
- 12 Marcella Hunter, *Australia Post. Delivering more than ever*. (Sydney: Focus Publishing, 2000), 8.
- 13 Sue Moss, *Real Time Issue #78 April–May 2007*, 36. <https://www.realtime.org.au/out-of-the-underworld/> accessed 1 June 2021
- 14 Stella Barber, *Your Store Myer: The Story of Australia's Leading Department Store*. (Melbourne: Focus Publishing, 2008), 112.
- 15 Oliver Harvey. 'The man who markets images'. *The Courier Mail Brisbane*, 17 July 1982, 21.
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- 17 Stephen Banham, *Characters: Cultural Stories Revealed Through Typography*. (Melbourne: Thames and Hudson Australia, 2011), 68.
- 18 The supportive typography of the Australia Post brand has changed from *Helvetica* (Meidinger) to *Univers* (Frutiger) to *AP Letter* (Sharma) to *AP Type* (Chan).
- 19 Michael Venus, 'The symbol of success', *The Herald*, 14 Feb 1981.
- 20 Garry Emery and Suzie Attiwill, *Outside Inside Out: Inside Outside In*. (Melbourne: Images Publishing, 2002).
- 21 Stephen Hall, Introduction to *You are Here. Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination*, (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 15.
- 22 A. Farias, P. Gatto, P. Gouveia, 'Letters and Cities: Reading the Urban Environment with the Help of Perception Theories', *Visual Communication* Vol 8 (3), (Sage Publications, 2009), 338.
- 23 A. Farias, P. Gatto, P. Gouveia, 'Letters and Cities', 336.

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