

Henry Steiner

Prequel:1963...A huge tsunami moving westward over Japan to Korea and China, the post-war resurgence of North Asia was first signalled by the

- 1 **Tokyo 1964 Olympics** emblem. Bold and uncompromising, it foreshadowed the confidence with which Japan would export so many new brands in the 1970s: Honda, Sony, Canon, Toyota, Panasonic. In the 1980s, Korean names like Hyundai, Samsung, LG, Kia, Daewoo became familiar. China awoke to the power of branding its own products in the following decade and began sending abroad Athens, Haier, Legend, Kelon, Konka. The pattern remains: refine product design and marketing in the home market, build up sales, then export like mad.

Meanwhile... Blame it on colonialism, the tropical climate, the penchant for intellectual piracy or comfort with manufacturing to someone else's specs, but the branding tidal wave largely avoided southern China and Southeast Asia, which remained content to fiddle with minor existing brands while avoiding the challenges and rewards of building a discrete, aware clientele internationally.

Lost opportunities... Despite obvious Western attraction to the exotic fashion brands of Vivienne Tam and Shanghai Tang, cosmetics (like Two Girls) and medicines originated in Asian overseas Chinese communities failed to exploit the quaint chic of their products and the growing occidental interest in alternative therapies. Brands like White Flower, Tiger Balm, Kwan Loong seemed to lack the imagination to market beyond the Chinatowns of North America and Europe. (This charming package label is for the neglected **Triple Phoenix** face powder.)

- 2 This charming package label is for the neglected **Triple Phoenix** face powder.)

PC rears its head... Precursor of the inroads made by Western brands and corporations like Procter & Gamble and Unilever into Asia was the acquisition of Taiwan's Hawley & Hazel by Colgate in the '80s. Despite an Asian consumer admiration for the perceived vitality and strong teeth of Africans, the politically incorrect **Darkie** brand made Colgate uncomfortable. A letter was substituted, the face retouched and — *voilà* — the product could be shown without footnotes in annual reports. Note: in Chinese it's still called 'Black Man Toothpaste'.

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Attack of the Asian virus... In the 1980s, **The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation** (50 per cent more letters than the alphabet there) adopts HongkongBank as a brand name, along with a red hexagon and begins applying the logo to group companies and branches worldwide. Despite the name change to HSBC in the '90s, expansion continues, providing a rare case study of a thriving brand made in Asia.

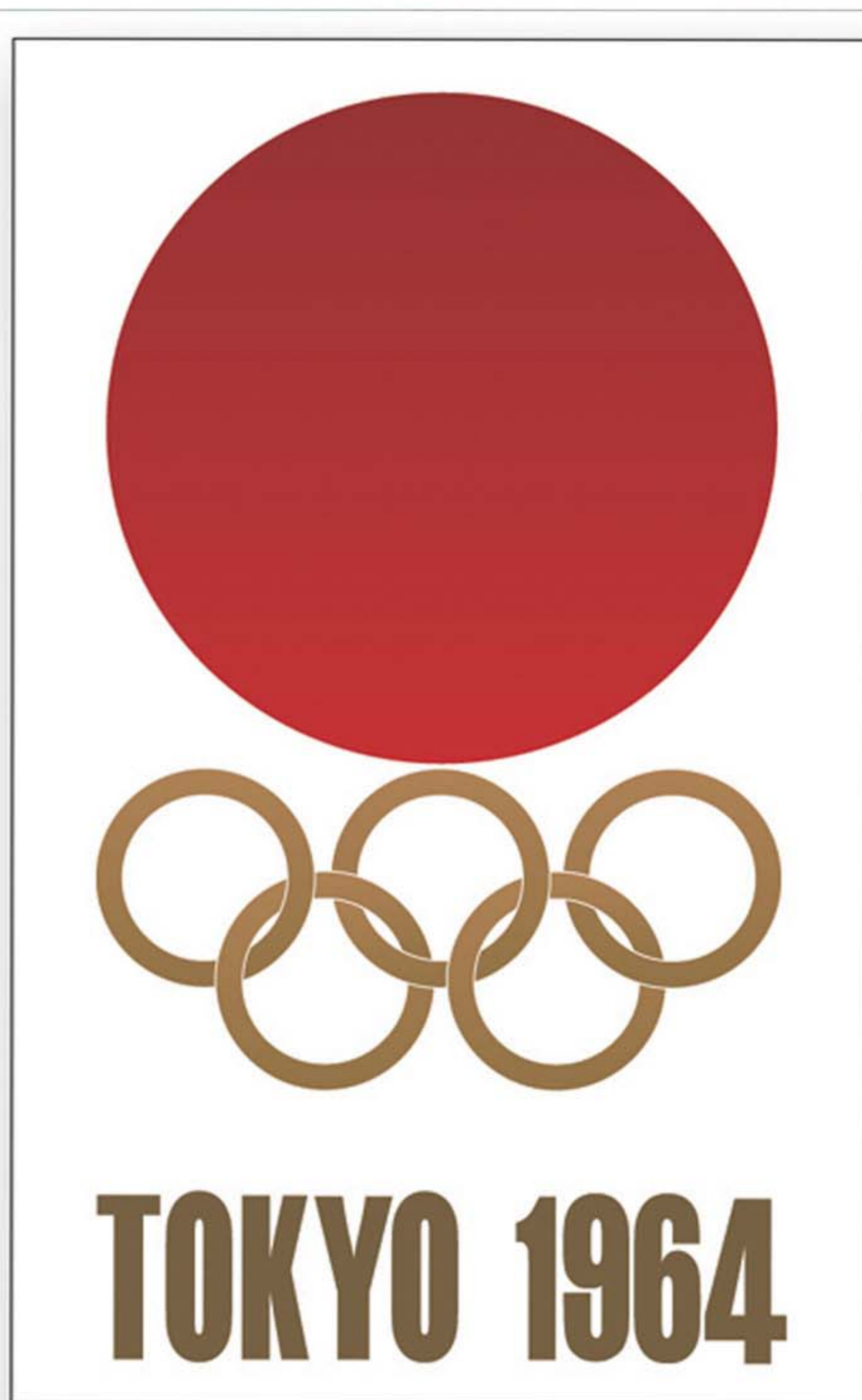
The next wave... Just into the new millennium, Japan created what seems to be the world's first virtual brand platform, begun with the idea of cross branding to reach domestic yuppie demographics. However, instead of beginning with a successful product and extending the brand into other areas (say, fashion, cigars or auction houses to perfume), they concocted a brand experience then applied to a variety of new products closely monitored for appropriateness by a group controlling the brand, which includes Panasonic and

- 5 Toyota. So not only are there now **Will** white goods, electronics and automobiles but chocolates, stationery and hotels branded with the aspirational identity. Next stop Asia? A Will car has been spotted in Hong Kong.

And the prize goes to... A global contest to design the **Beijing 2008 Olympics logo** received almost 2,000 entries, of which about 250 were international submissions. The winner, a group submission, was reworked by a committee of academics and painters. It has the distinction of being the only seal design entered. Loosely based on the character 'Jing' or 'capital' it shows a rubbery runner and is called 'Dancing Beijing'. With all the committees involved, the good news is it might have looked even more like a camel.

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Henry Steiner is the founder of Steiner & Co



1 Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games emblem...bold, confident and uncompromising



2 Triple Phoenix face powder...charming yet neglected, it failed to exploit its quaint chic to build a bigger market

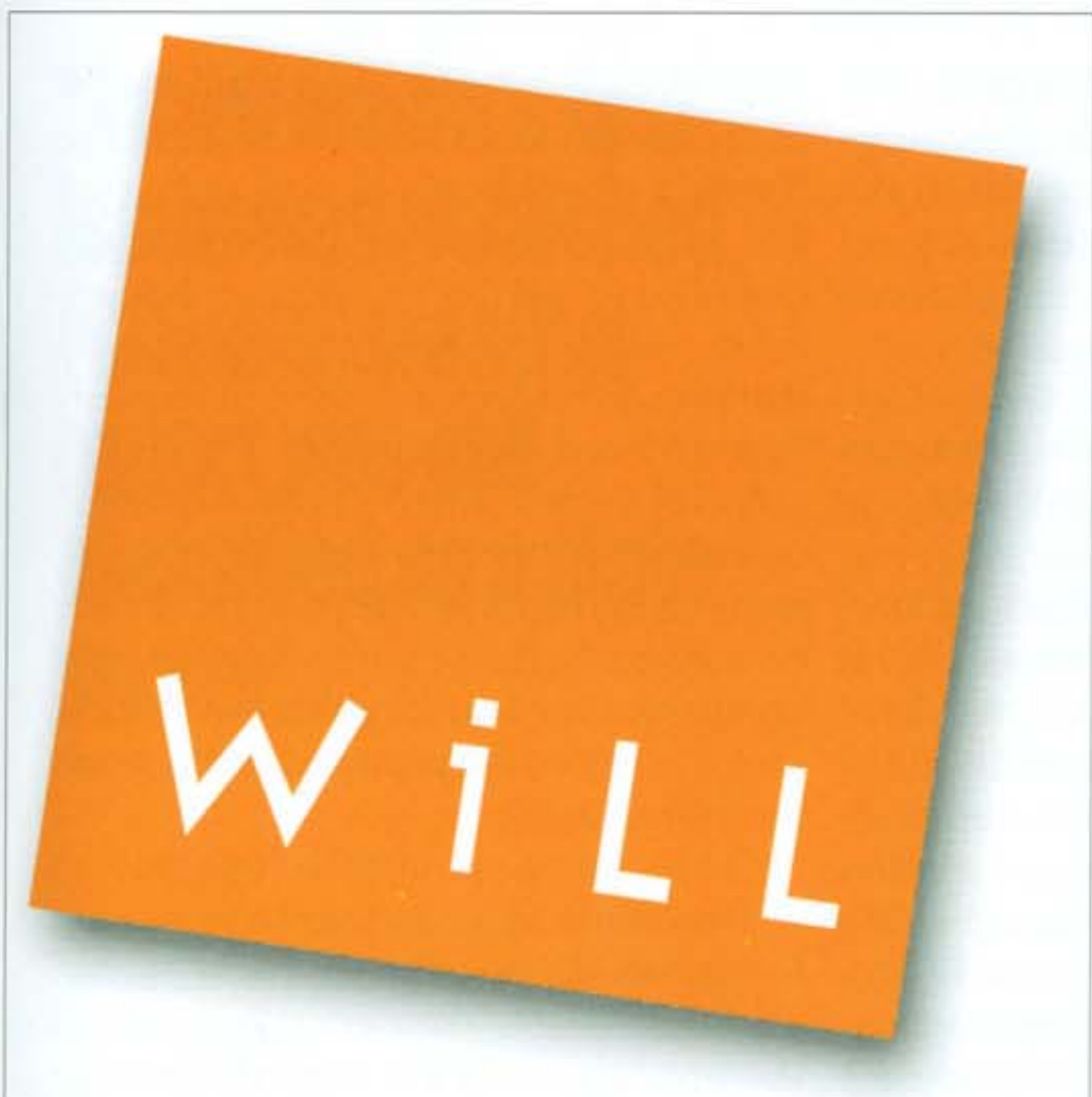


- 1 Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games
Designer: Yusaku Kamekura
- 2 Triple Phoenix face powder
Designer: Unknown
- 3 Darlie
*Client: Colgate
Designer: Unknown*
- 4 Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank-
ing Corporation
Designer: Henry Steiner
- 5 Will
Designer: Unknown
- 6 Beijing 2008 Olympic Games
Designer: Gao Chunning

3 Darkie...a letter was substituted, the face was retouched and the more politically-correct Darlie was born, easing Colgate's discomfort with the original name



4 HSBC...a rare case study of a thriving brand made in Asia



5 Will...Japan's first virtual brand platform—next stop, Asia?



6 Beijing 2008 Olympic Games...designed by a group, redesigned by a committee