Propaganda in three dimensions:
national projection and Modernism
on display, the wartime exhibitions
of F H K Henrion, 1942-44

Sandy Jones
BA (Hons) Museum and Heritage Studies
University of Brighton
2015

WORD COUNT: 9,997 words
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


Figure 2: Former Ministry of Information (MOI) Building, Senate House, Bloomsbury, London. Personal photograph by the author. November 2014.  

Figure 3: Exhibition stand outside Waterloo station. c.1943. Photographer: unknown. London Transport Archive.  

Figure 4: MOI Campaign Posters in the street, London. 1942. IWM D 12029. Photographer: MOI Photo division. iwm.org.uk.  

Figure 5: MOI mobile exhibition vehicle. 1943. D 13549. Photographer: MOI Photo Division. iwm.org.uk.  

Figure 6: Window display at Selfridges. 1943. D 12673. Photographer: MOI Photo Division. iwm.org.uk.  


Figure 14: Frank Newbould. Your Britain Fight for it Now. 1942. Poster. IWM PST 3640. iwm.org.uk.  

Figure 15: Abram Games. Your Britain Fight for it Now. 1942. Poster. V&A. ABCA. vam.ac.uk.


Figure 21: Mass Observation Archive. *Off the Ration report showing drawing of introductory panel.* 21 April 1942. Wartime Exhibitions, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/E. The Keep.


Figure 23: F H K Henrion. “...Your own Rabbit.” *Off the Ration installation view.* Client: MOI/MOA. Photographer: Unknown. Design Council Archives.

Figure 24: F H K Henrion. “One Rabbit.” Poster. 1942. Off the Ration. Client: MOI/MOA. moma.org


Figure 28: F H K Henrion. “Young America.” Poster. 1944. Client: OWI. collections.vam.ac.uk.


Figure 36. F H K Henrion. “Heritage.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.

Figure 37: F H K Henrion. “Opportunity.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.

Figure 38: F H K Henrion. “Service.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.


Figure 42: Still from Young America exhibition touring. Exhibition arriving at school. COI 20. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive, London.
Figure 43: Still from Young America exhibition touring. Exhibition installed in playground. COI 20. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive, London. 71

Figure 44: “British Children Paint USA.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. Client: OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives. 72
SYNOPSIS

During the 1930s, artists, designers and creative thinkers fled Nazi Germany, seeking sanctuary in London and New York. Frédéric Kay Henri Henrion was amongst a group of émigré designers who arrived in London in the late 1930s. Training initially as a textile and poster designer in Paris, he settled in London where he became part of a creative enclave that would become influential in developing new exhibition design practices and contribute to the professionalisation of design. Henrion would become a key agent in this network, building a career that would establish him as a designer, educator and one of the first practitioners of corporate identity design.

During World War Two, ‘propaganda exhibitions’ became a vital component of the communications framework of the Ministry of Information (MOI) and US Office of War Information (OWI). Exhibitions took place in public spaces, from electricity showrooms and village halls to department stores and cinemas on a range of topics ranging from how to cope in an air raid to growing vegetables. During the year ending June 1944, the MOI alone had mounted displays and exhibitions for a total audience exceeding 40 million.¹

This research examines why exhibitions were such an important mode of mass communications during the war and considers how Henrion mediated messages of propaganda and national identity in two of his exhibitions. Off the Ration (1942) for the Ministry of Agriculture and MOI, was presented at Charing Cross underground station and toured nationally. Later it was further developed for installation at Regent’s Park Zoo, where it became one of the MOI’s most popular exhibitions.² Part of the Dig for Victory campaign, its purpose was to persuade the public to cultivate vegetables and rear livestock for food. Multi-sensory, entertaining and educational, the exhibition successfully united location, content and design, drawing on the visual language of the English garden in a metropolitan setting. Young America (April 1944) was held in College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster and part of an initiative to educate young

¹ Ian McLaine, “Air Raids and Morale,” Ministry of Morale, (Surrey: Unwin Brothers Limited, 1979), Prime Minister to Minister of Information, 14 June 1943, PREM 4/66/2 254

people about the ‘American way of life’, it subsequently toured the country with the aim of portraying a nation leading the charge towards a progressive and democratic future reaching an audience of more than 37,000 people.³

In a pre-television age, wartime exhibitions were fit for purpose, communicating key state messages to the public through informative displays that were engaging and entertaining. Henrion, and the designers working on them drew inspiration from a range of different art and design influences, in this way contemporary design entered the public realm and consciousness.

This dissertation argues that the war years marked a flashpoint in exhibition design and an acceleration in practice that deserves recognition. The legacy of these exhibitions was a highly developed form of visual communication that would continue to prove useful after WW2 when the focus shifted from communicating public information to the promotion of world trade, the best of British design and economic renewal.

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of illustrations

Introduction 9

1. The exhibitionary network 14

2. Propaganda, strategies and tactics 20

3. *Off the Ration*, context and analysis 28

4. *Young America*, context and analysis 35

Conclusion 42

Bibliography 44

Illustrations 50

Appendices

A. Biography of F H K Henrion 74

B. Interview transcripts:
   - Tay Chong Huang, former designer HDA 78
   - Michael Wolff, co-founder, Wolff Olins 85

C. Mass Observation Report: *Off the Ration*, Charing Cross underground station, April 1942 93
INTRODUCTION

During World War Two (WW2) exhibitions became part of the British cultural landscape on an unprecedented scale, providing education, information and entertainment to the public in Britain and overseas. As architect, G S Kallmann wrote in 1943,

In no other field of art and architecture have the war years brought us so generous and so healthy a harvest as in exhibition design. Not only are there more exhibitions and larger crowds in the exhibitions than ever before, not only do they spread to the smallest country towns and villages, to stores and shops, canteens and British Restaurants, but their average quality is infinitely higher, their contemporary impact infinitely stronger than anyone could have ventured to hope.4

Operating in a world before television, when the only other visual communications widely accessible were film, magazines and newspapers, exhibitions became a key mechanism for reaching large sections of the population and capturing their imagination. What is surprising is that they did not take place in the traditional location of the museum and gallery, but were presented in the spaces of everyday life such as stations, village halls and works canteens, and the majority were produced by the Ministry of Information (MOI). It is remarkable to note that during the year ending June 1944, the MOI had mounted displays and exhibitions for a total audience exceeding 40 million5 and others such as OWI (US Office of War Information), the Royal Institute of British Architects’ London Regional Reconstruction Committee (LRRC)6, the War Artists Advisory Committee, ABCA (Army Bureau of Current Affairs) and the precursor to the Arts Council, CEMA (Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts) were also producing exhibitions.

But as Kallmann indicates, it was not just the scale of these exhibitions that was impressive; it was their high standard and ‘contemporary’ aspect, bringing modern design into the public realm. As Veronica Davies in her essay Steering a Progressive Course? argues, these wartime exhibitions were ‘the bridge between important but esoteric exhibitions in the Thirties, and the popular and populist Festival of Britain in

1951. So why do we know so little about wartime exhibitions and the designers who worked on them?

As Martha Ward observes in her work *What’s Important about the History of Modern Art Exhibitions?* there is a tendency in exhibition design history to focus on the international exhibitions, the ‘proto-history’ for the blockbuster show and those that are ‘event-orientated, concentrating on individual shows as nodal points in the social history of art.’

Most exhibition design history in the Twentieth century is focused on individuals and groups who showcased new approaches to art, design and display practices, for example, the exhibitions of the Deutsche Werkbund and the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier’s Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau at the Paris Exposition (1925), El Lissitksy’s Soviet pavilion at Pressa (1928), Frederick Kiesler’s *Art of this Century* in New York (1942) and Herbert Bayer’s exhibitions at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (1936-43). However, this emphasis on canons is problematic because there are important exhibitions that have been overlooked; as Ward asserts, ‘we mostly have a patchwork of studies that feature one or another of the purposes served by exhibitions.’

Perhaps it is the exhibitions that had an impact on the everyday lives of ordinary people that have been most neglected, and if we consider Charlotte Kronk’s assertion in her work *Spaces of Experience*, that ‘the cultural values of an age are inscribed in such spaces,’ then wartime exhibitions deserve our attention from a design history perspective and because they provided an essential link between the state and its people during a time of crisis.

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to draw attention to these ‘propaganda exhibitions’ and consider why they played such an important role during WW2. What led to an acceleration in their use and practice? Why were they called ‘propaganda exhibitions’? How did they benefit the public and did they influence behaviour? Who designed them and what inspired their visual orientation? And, what was their legacy following WW2?

---

7 Veronica Davies, ‘Steering a Progressive Course? Exhibitions in wartime and postwar Britain, Henry Moore Institute, 2008. 3.


In order to answer these questions, my research has focused on the work of one designer, Frédéric Henri Kay Henrion (1914-90) and two organisations he worked for during WW2, the MOI and OWI. My point of departure for this research was G S Kallmann’s *The Wartime Exhibition* written for *Architectural Review* in 1943 which provided a contemporary account of wartime exhibitions; this text led to a focus, wherever possible, on sources written during WW2.

I have selected two exhibitions in order to examine how Henrion used design to mediate State ‘propaganda’ messages, making them beneficial for the public in the context of their everyday lives. The first, *Off the Ration*, designed for the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the MOI, was presented at Charing Cross underground station in April 1942, part of the wider *Dig for Victory* campaign. Its aim was to galvanize a nation into immediate action, persuading them to grow more food in the face of critical food shortages due to the battle of the Atlantic and the need to use ships to transport troops and munitions. The second exhibition, *Young America* for the OWI took place in College Hall, Westminster at Easter 1944, just three months before the Normandy landings. Part of an initiative to educate young people about the ‘American way of life’, it toured the country with the aim of portraying a nation leading the charge towards a progressive and democratic future.

F H K Henrion, shown in Figure 1, is best known as a design educator, a key figure in the professionalization of design in Britain and one of the early practitioners of corporate identity. A German Jew, he was born in Nuremberg and relocated to Paris when the National Socialists seized power in 1933 where he studied textile design with Ted Levy, followed by poster and stage design at the École Paul Colin. Henrion was offered work with renowned poster designer A M Cassandre in 1936, but unable to take the position due to the rise of Nazism. When Henrion left Paris to exhibit posters at the Levant Fair in Palestine, Crown Agents for the British colonies offered him work in London. He arrived in 1936, aged just 22 years old, and soon became part of a network of artists.

---


and designers, including Ashley Havinden, Abram Games, Misha Black and Milner Gray, and other émigrés, Walter Landor, John Heartfield and Hans Schleger.

Henrion’s first exhibition in London was with Gray and Black, the landmark Mars Group (Modern Architecture Research Society) exhibition at New Burlington Galleries in 1938, which Gray later observed had a significant influence on the Modernist orientation of exhibition work at the MOI, writing that ‘the impulse from the Mars Group exhibition in 1938 was considerably developed in the work of the Exhibitions Branch at the MOI during the war.’ Following internment for six months in 1940, Henrion, was again employed by Gray, by then head of the MOI Exhibitions Division. During WW2 he also worked for the OWI, W S Crawford Advertising Agency, (British) Harper’s Bazaar and the ABCA. On working for such a diverse group he commented, ‘The more serious war work and frivolous fashion work at the same time was both inspiring and fruitful through its cross-fertilisation.’ These influences and practices are evident in my two case studies, as I will go on to discuss.

Henrion designed all the exhibitions for the MOA (Ministry of Agriculture) and others for the MOI: *Lifeline* (1941); *Poison Gas* (1941); *Fire Service* (1942); murals and display for the *Army Exhibition* (1943); *Dig for Victory* (1943); *Fuel* (1943); *Comfort of Guns* (1943). For the OWI Henrion designed *American Housing in War and Peace* (1943) and *8th Airforce* (1943/4). He also contributed to the anti-Fascist Allied International Artists exhibition, *For Liberty* (John Lewis, 1943) and *War on Culture* (1943) for the ABCA.

This dissertation is organised into three chapters: *Chapter 1, The Exhibitionary Network* examines the patrons, designers, organisation and locations of wartime exhibitions, and considers what influenced their visual style. *Chapter 2, Propaganda, strategies and tactics*, foregrounds the two case studies that follow, beginning with a survey of the term ‘propaganda’ before considering how Stephen Tallents’ ideas on national projection influenced display in the decade before WW2. Finally, I introduce my analytical framework drawn from Michel de Certeau’s concept of *strategies and tactics* and Misha Black’s complementary ideas in his paper *Propaganda in Three Dimensions*. In *Chapter 3, Off the Ration* and *Chapter 4, Young America*, I begin by contextualising each one

---


before moving on to analysis and consideration of my research questions. To provide structure to my display analysis I will draw on texts by Louise Ravelli and Mary-Anne Staniszewski. The conclusion summarizes my insights from each chapter and presents the idea that WW2 marked a flashpoint in exhibition design and an acceleration in practice that deserve a place in design history.
1. THE EXHIBITIONARY NETWORK

In his paper, Propaganda in Three Dimensions, Misha Black draws attention to the number of exhibitions that took place in Britain before the war, estimating some seventy major exhibitions were held during an average year, apart from the hundreds of still smaller exhibitions organised privately by commercial undertakings and propagandist bodies.\(^{15}\)

Therefore, we can assume that exhibitions were already an established mode of mass communications before WW2, further evidenced by the call to action published in Art & Industry in 1939,

The urgent need will very soon be apparent for instructive information to the British public to help them to readjust themselves to new conditions...the small portable exhibition in its various forms designed by artists who are best qualified to tell a story graphically and with economy would prove to be one useful remedy.\(^{16}\)

This statement acknowledges that exhibitions as the ideal format for mass communication and also recognises the need to employ designers who are highly skilled in visual communication. This chapter examines the key actors in what I have called the ‘exhibitionary network’: the patrons, designers and organisational framework, in order to determine what led to their visual orientation and an acceleration in practice.

Patron: the MOI

The MOI was established by the British government in September 1939 and located in Senate House, Bloomsbury, shown in Figure 2. Ian McLaine, in his work, Ministry of Morale, describes its five functions: ‘the release of official news; security censorship of the press, films and the BBC; the maintenance of morale; the conduct of publicity campaigns for other departments; and the dissemination of propaganda to enemy, neutral, allied and empire countries.’\(^{17}\) To begin with the MOI lacked direction and had three successive Ministers between 1939 and 1941. As McLaine comments, ‘it continually changed shape, now contracting, now expanding, convoluting itself and


\(^{16}\) Veronica Davis, “‘Steering a Progressive Course?’ Exhibitions in Wartime and Postwar Britain.” 3.

thoroughly confusing MPs, the press, the public and, not least, the officers of the
department themselves.” John Hargrave, an important figure in the social credit
movement, said at the time, ‘clearly, this MOI has no conception of its work as a modern
war weapon. Its whole job is to stop information and gag almost every form of effective
propaganda.’ When Brendan Bracken, publisher, politician and trusted friend of
Churchill was appointed in July 1941, he introduced stability and credibility, and
important links with the press.

The MOI used film, radio, posters, publications and exhibitions to communicate; as
McLaine observes ‘there was scarcely an aspect of the individual’s life on which the
state did not have something to say.’ Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 show the extent to which
the public were saturated with information: on the street, outside stations, exhibition
‘vehicles’ and shop windows. The scale and acceleration of exhibitions is also reflected
by the MOI budget. In 1942, £4 million was spent on publicity, approximately a third
more than in 1941 and £120,000 of this was spent on posters, art and exhibitions, the
equivalent of £4.6 million today.

The Exhibitions Division of the MOI was created in November 1940 at the initiative of
the then Director General Frank Pick and controller Sir Kenneth Clark. Milner Gray, was
appointed Head of Exhibitions and Misha Black became Principal Exhibition architect.
Henrion was amongst a team of over 12 artists, designers and architects employed.
As he commented, ‘the exhibition technique evolved fairly rapidly and successfully
during the war,’ describing the team as ‘a very creative nucleus where things were
discussed and appropriate technology developed.’ Exhibitions were produced using a

Stephen Tallents and the birth of a progressive media profession (Manchester: Manchester University
20 Scott Anthony, “The Limits of Public Relations,” 142
23 Inflation Calculator, www.bankofengland.co.uk.
26 F H K Henrion, IWM Session No 9592, 25 November 1986, Audio interview, Reel 2, iwm.org.uk.
‘photostat’ machine and large lettering was hand drawn.27 Henrion recalled that each project was briefed and very little changes were made to the design due to time constraints, and because ‘people believed in the project’ and shared a ‘commonality of purpose.’28

The MOI’s first ‘propaganda exhibition’ at Charing Cross, was London Pride (1940) which aimed to ‘celebrate the endurance and indomitability of Londoners in the face of the Blitz.’29 Figure 7 shows the Modernist design tendencies of the division, described by Kallmann as ‘the full orchestra of Corbusier-MARS effects’30 with its diagonal planes and large images.

**Patron: the OWI**

Established in 1942 by President Roosevelt, the OWI had domestic branches and 40 outposts overseas.31 Its short term goals were to stimulate a bond between the Allies, prevent friction between American troops and civilian populations, and to counteract Axis projections of America. Longer term, it aimed to construct a new and enduring image of America and prepare the ground for its role as ‘new world leader.’32 Like the MOI, the OWI staged public exhibitions during the war, and, as Figure 8 shows, some were highly provocative. The Nature of the Enemy (Rockefeller Plaza, May 1943) shows marching children wearing gas-masks, holding rifles above the caption ‘Militarization of children’; a second display in Figure 9 shows a model of a church captioned, ‘The desecration of religion.’33 In my view, this depicted the violation by the Nazis of Roosevelt’s ‘four freedoms’ from his 1942 speech: freedom of worship, freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom of speech.

---

29 Dr Henry Irving, “Exhibitions and the MOI - part 2,” www.moidigital.ac.uk.
The London OWI was established in July 1942\(^{34}\) by Archibald MacLeish and James Warburg. Henrion was employed as a ‘consulting designer’ and ultimately had a unit of 15, creating a new exhibition every two weeks in different languages, something he described as a ‘good discipline’ and a ‘tall order.’\(^{35}\)

**Visual orientation**

As *Art and Industry* commented in 1944, ‘the outstanding success of the Ministry of Information Division in this war has been due to the gradual infiltration of some of our leading artists and designers.’\(^{36}\) The creative enclave working at the MOI Exhibitions Division included Peter Ray, Abram Games and James Holland. Also working in London were émigrés John Heartfield, Hans Schleger, Otto Neurath and Walter Landor and others. G S Kallmann contends that influences on wartime exhibitions came from ‘Picasso and the Cubists, the Bauhaus, and especially Moholy Nagy, Le Corbusier, the Russian film, the Constructivists, Ben Nicholson, McKnight Kauffer.’\(^{37}\) Robin Kinross agrees adding that the influx of émigrés and influential figures from the Modernist movement who passed through London made a significant impact on design practice and ‘contributed to its specifically modern orientation.’\(^{38}\) Yet, even earlier, Frank Pick had developed a modern aesthetic in his design system for London Transport\(^{39}\) employing Man Ray and Edward McKnight Kauffer as poster artists and Modernist architect Charles Holden. In 1936, Pick began using Charing Cross underground as an exhibitions hall\(^{40}\) used by organisations who shared his vision including the BBC and the Empire Marketing Board, shown in Figures 10 and 11.

This multi-faceted form of Modernism is visible in Henrion’s exhibitions. In *Poison Gas* (1941) continental Modernism inspires his approach to the topic of chemical warfare,


\(^{39}\) By the 1920s underground stations and bus shelters were venues for changing exhibitions of modern poster art, as many as forty new works were produced each year. See *Art Posters 1908-1993* (Japan: Chubu-Nippon Broadcasting Co, 1994) in the London Transport Archive, 11.

\(^{40}\) Marion Yass, *This is Your War* (London: HMSO, 1983) 61.
shown in Figure 12, and in *Dig for Victory (1943)*, he adopts the visual language of the village fete, shown in Figure 13.

**Environment and organisation**

During the war the MOI used its regional information network to coordinate touring exhibitions throughout Britain. At the Regional Information Officers’ conference in December 1940, Sir Kenneth Clark presented his master plan for touring exhibitions and asked officers to provide feedback on suitable locations where people usually meet, such as, ‘stations, large shops, town halls, libraries, etc and in the case of certain exhibitions in the works canteens of factories on war production.’ The exhibitions were divided into two categories: *instructional*, e.g. how to deal with evacuation and casualties and *publicity for the war effort*, e.g. airforce achievements, resources of the Empire and the work of war artists. Wherever possible, regions were asked to link exhibitions with current campaigns, information films, public meetings, lectures and United Effort Weeks. Eight regions were identified throughout the UK, with three sites within each that could stage exhibitions covering a maximum area of 40’ x 20’. Themes were developed to address specific issues: ‘The Changing Face of Britain’, a comparison between life pre-war and wartime; ‘Food and Fitness’, preparing nutritional meals; ‘Through the Looking Glass’, cartoons, as we see ourselves and as others see us; ‘England Expects’, how food and war essentials were convoyed and ‘Back to the Land’, allotments and Dig for Victory. New exhibitions toured every two months and were despatched from London; regions were given two days to install, typically, ‘40 cardboard panels mounted with photographs, lettering, drawings, graphs etc.’ In addition, The Retail Display Circuit Scheme rotated small exhibitions to 86 retail sites with 12 sets of display materials circulating every three weeks.

---


Exhibitions were also prepared to travel to the United States, Latin America, Russia, China, Portugal, Sweden, the Middle East, French North Africa and Empire Countries.\footnote{G S Kallmann, “The Wartime Exhibition”, 103.}

Regions were also expected to prepare reports every three months that captured public opinion, visitor numbers and press cuttings; this data was used to inform future exhibitions.\footnote{“Mass Observation Library, “MOI 5/4/41 Exhibition programme 1941/42 (Part 1)” 2.} In addition, MO (Mass Observation) fieldwork provided a ‘rapid feedback system’\footnote{Dr Henry Irving, “Publishing and Propaganda,” Talk, Senate House, London, 15 November 2014.} on exhibitions, as part of their role to measure civilian morale. A MO report on \textit{Poison Gas} reveals the extent to which exhibitions provided entertainment, commenting that ‘the atmosphere of the showroom was reminiscent of a sideshow in a fun fair; the warden at the microphone shouting, changing records, beating time with his fist.’\footnote{Mass Observation Library, “Report on Government Exhibitions,” \textit{Typed reports and memos re exhibitions 1941}, Ref SxMOA1/2/43/5/A, The Keep,12.}

My research highlights that the exhibitionary network was efficient and well organised, designed to influence mass minds on deliberate and specific themes.
2. PROPAGANDA, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

This chapter will foreground the two case studies by introducing two key themes and my analytical framework. It will begin with an examination of the meaning of ‘propaganda’ and consideration of why exhibitions were referred to as ‘propaganda exhibitions’ by those who commissioned, designed and wrote about them. I will then briefly consider how British national identity was being defined in the interwar years, before looking at how Stephen Tallents’ ideas in The Projection of England (1932) became influential in exhibition design. Finally, I will introduce Michel de Certeau’s concept of strategies and tactics, in order to explore how Henrion’s exhibitions negotiated official strategies. In my view, Misha Black’s paper, Propaganda in Three Dimensions, presented in 1942 to the Architectural Association, complements and provide opportunities for expanding de Certeau’s concepts. Black asserts that,

The essential function of a propaganda exhibition is to implant or sustain a general idea in the mind of the visitor with the additional memory of one or two facts which can support the emotionally accepted idea, if the visitor’s intelligence should later challenge it.50

This idea of enabling the visitor, providing them with the motivation for participation and action implies that tactics can be multi-layered, re-interpreted and passed on.

Defining propaganda

There are many definitions for the word propaganda and its meaning shifts according to its historical and cultural context. Therefore, my aim is to locate it as far as possible within the period when the exhibitions took place.

There is evidence from British government reports during WW2 that this word was contested, reflecting a sensitivity to accusations of deception during British propaganda campaigns in World War One. In July 1941, Grant Mackenzie, personal assistant to Clement Atlee, proposed in The Organisation of British Propaganda, that propaganda’s main function should be strengthening morale at home, amongst the Allies and throughout the Empire; gaining the support of other nations, not currently Allies, and undermining the enemy.51 Three months later, Douglas Jay, at the Ministry of Supply

and Board of Trade, criticized the government’s propaganda effort, observing that the lack of planning had resulted in ‘something near chaos, and an effectiveness of propaganda equal to perhaps 10% of what should be yielded by the resources we do employ.’

Advocating a tougher line in *Propaganda as a Weapon of War*, he asserts ‘basically, the object of all propaganda is to build up certain states of mind among certain groups of people which will lead to their behaving in a certain desired fashion.’

This evokes a level of control later vilified in George Orwell’s *1984*. Michael Balfour, reflecting on his MOI career, is more inclusive in *Propaganda in War*,

more often than not, propaganda is undertaken in order to induce action on the part of others. It seeks to create the expectation that, if the persons addressed act in the way suggested, their actions will be effective.

Thus, he presents the idea that the audience are in some way beneficiaries of propaganda. Finally, Brendan Bracken sought to legitimize its meaning,

> [P]ropaganda..is a perfectly respectable name, attached to one of the most profoundly religious institutions in the world. It is really too respectable a veneer to put upon a thing like the Ministry of Information. I do not mind the use of the word ‘propaganda.’ In fact, I welcome it. There is nothing wrong with the name except that it connotes to certain minds something that they do not really understand.

In this statement its meaning becomes benign and respectable.

Within this context, it is also important to consider the views of those designing and writing about ‘propaganda exhibitions’. Kallmann commented that ‘ministerial exhibitions have developed as spectacularly as the propaganda machine of which they are part’

and Black states,

exhibitions are vehicles for propaganda and the position of every nail and sheet of plywood must be decided in relation to the propaganda story if the designer is really doing his job.

---

52 Douglas Jay, “Propaganda as a Weapon of War,” October 1941. Various reports and articles on propaganda (non M-O) 1939-44. Ref SxMOA1/2/43/2/F, The Keep. 22.


57 Misha Black, “Propaganda in Three Dimensions,” 120.
He makes the role of the designer clear, to ensure that every element drives the message home; ‘propaganda exhibitions’ are positioned as a precise communication tool, rather than a form of manipulation. Larkham and Lilley observe that Black’s attitude was ‘educating the masses with civic propaganda seen as a force for good’ and as Henrion writes, ‘visual designers can do a great deal in communicating complex ideas in a simple way to the public’. This pedagogic aspect was also shared by documentary film maker, John Grierson, who believed that state propaganda was ‘part of democratic education which the educators forgot’, therefore, people are empowered to actively form their own judgements rather than fall victim to manipulation.

Given these multiple meanings, formations and interpretations, in my view ‘propaganda’ cannot be stabilized. It is in flux, negotiable and, in Foucauldian terms, can be viewed as discourse which allows opportunities for further exploration. Next, I will consider how national projection was used as a tool of influence.

Defining national projection

During the early twentieth century the meaning of ‘Britishness’ was changing. Cheryl Buckley observes in Designing Modern Britain,

the loss of export markets and economic collapse in the 1920s, the reshaping of empire and Britain’s relationship to it, and changing class and gender identities all contributed a realignment and fragmentation of what constituted ‘Britishness’. Buckley goes on to assert that this new idea of ‘Britishness’ became associated with ‘expansion’ as the Empire grew, yet co-existing with it was an ‘Englishness’ which was focused on the ‘private, spiritual and primitive’ and ‘located in the countryside rather than the city’. This representation of ‘Englishness’ was inspired by the historical revivals of the 1920s and an interest in the vernacular which contributed to a tendency

---


63 Cheryl Buckley, “‘Englishness’ and Identity: Design in the Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” 47.
towards an artisanal past and the countryside.\footnote{Cheryl Buckley, “Englishness’ and Identity: Design in the Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” 48} Jonathan Woodham draws attention to this emphasis on the rural in *Twentieth-Century Design*, observing that writers and commentators ‘believed that the true essence of England was to be found in the countryside, rather than the false, essentially 'un-English' values of urban life.’\footnote{Johnathan M Woodham, “Design and National Identity,” *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxon: Oxford University Press, 1997) 89.} This tension between the ‘countryside’ and ‘progress’ would continue to be present in representations of Britain.

Stephen Tallents, civil servant, was one of the first to write about national projection in *The Projection of England* (1932) proposing,

> if a nation would be truly known and understood in the world, it must set itself actively to master and employ the new, difficult and swiftly developing modes which science has provided for the projection of national personality.\footnote{Stephen Tallents, “The Projection of England,” 1932, *Published in Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain. Stephen Tallents and the birth of a progressive media profession*, Ed. Scott Anthony (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) 208.}

This new practice he claimed was ‘essential to maintaining healthy relationships with the Empire, improving the quality and value of the nation’s exports, and to securing a steady flow of essential imports such as food’\footnote{Scott Anthony, “The Projection of England and Documentary Cinema,” *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain. Stephen Tallents and the birth of a progressive media profession*, Ed. Scott Anthony (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) 64.} and could be achieved through ‘a continuous and sustained presentation of our industrial ability and our industrial ambitions, designed with the utmost artistry.’\footnote{Stephen Tallents, “The Projection of England,” 214.} Tallents was hugely influenced by his visit to Mies van der Rohe’s German Pavilion at the Barcelona Fair in 1929.

> So spoke at Barcelona the industrial ambition of Germany; and the voice was clearly the voice of one who had summoned the arts of architecture and painting and sculpture, of stage design and skilled lighting and fine lettering to the unified projection of a nation’s excellence.\footnote{Stephen Tallents, “The Projection of England,” 237.}

Tallents identified a series of subjects he thought would project an accurate version of British national identity which included London buses, Shakespeare, the monarchy, English Countryside and the English home. His choice may seem naive today, and elitist in his inclusion of ‘foxhunting’ and ‘servants’, something historian Paul Greenhalgh draws attention to in *Ephemeral Vistas*, writing that ‘the British masses were easily forgotten in a move to make the English the aristocracy of the world.’ However, many of these subjects have since become national signifiers; as Scott Anthony observes, Tallents’ ideas ‘begat a lasting heritage of imaginative information that has further been appropriated, embedded and playfully subverted by Britain’s wider popular culture,’ as the Olympic Games opening ceremony in London 2012 demonstrated.

**National projection in display: Britain**

In late 1933, the Council for Art and Industry (CAI) was established on the recommendation of the *Gorrell Report on Art and Industry (1932)*. Chaired by Frank Pick, its aims were to improve design education and unite art and industry. It would make a significant contribution towards the development of exhibition design when Tallent’s ideas began to gain traction, as Paul Greenhalgh claims,

> Into the 1930s, many of the items on Tallents’ list were included as exhibits in British sections in international events all over the world [...] The final triumph of ‘Lordly’ and ‘Hearts of Oak’ Englishness came in the Paris Exposition of 1937 and the New York Fair of 1939.

The inclusion of what Greenhalgh calls ‘Lordly’ and ‘Hearts of Oak’ Englishness at Paris within its theme, ‘British Weekend Leisure’ projected a nation locked in the past and was criticized for its inability to communicate a British modernity. Other nations, however, seized the opportunity to project powerful totalitarian states, as T J Demos asserts, Paris provided ‘the opportunity for members of participating countries - perhaps foremost the hosting French - to construct idealized representations of their national...’

---


identities.\textsuperscript{75} It is the vertiginous Soviet Hall with its statue of a proletarian couple confronting the Albert Speer designed neo-classical tower with its Nazi eagle holding a swastika, the Eiffel tower caught between them, that forms the most memorable image and ‘projected a phantasmic image of the social corpus of totalitarianism, of the People-as-One.'\textsuperscript{76} Following Paris, a CAI sub-committee concluded that there was now an urgent need to develop expertise in exhibition design.\textsuperscript{77} The subsequent involvement of Gray and Black in the Glasgow British Empire Exhibition (1938) and New York’s World Fair, plus the input the London outpost of the Reimann School points to a commitment to improvement.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, Britain’s pavilion in New York was praised in \textit{Architectural Review} who commented, it was ‘among the countries that staged a major display, with what has been called ‘national projection’ taking a more prominent place that the display of goods to trade buyers’.\textsuperscript{79} The pavilion aimed to show an American public ‘the picture of a progressive, true-to-life England’\textsuperscript{80} yet within its display, a glorious past persisted in the Magna Carta Hall and Court of Honour. As Penny Spark observes, this ‘marked a determination, on the part of Great Britain to keep one foot firmly in the past and to present a conservative identity to the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{81} However, I propose that there were signs of progress, evidenced in the Maritime Hall’s giant world map with 9,000 model ships, emphasizing the sophistication of Britain’s mercantile shipping\textsuperscript{82} and the ‘Public Welfare’ panorama within the ‘Changing Britain’ displays.

\textbf{National projection in display: America}

America themed its ‘World of Tomorrow Fair’ in New York (August, 1939) around the innovations of the 1930s: transportation, science and communications.\textsuperscript{83} As Jonathan Woodham comments, the iconography of the city and ‘everyday life’ provided


\textsuperscript{76} T J Demos, “Chapter 3. Dreams of Industry,” 168.

\textsuperscript{77} Yasuko Suga, “Modernism, Commercialism and Display Design in Britain,” 139/140.


\textsuperscript{80} David Reynolds, “Hearts and Minds,” \textit{Rich Relations}, 180

\textsuperscript{81} Penny Sparke, “Designing Identities,” \textit{Design and Modernity, 1900-1939} (Oxon: Routledge, 2004) 110


expression to American designers during the interwar period. However, it was an emphasis on ‘the symbolism of technological progress’ and democracy that dominated, brought to life through Raymond Loewy’s *Rocketport of the Future*; Henry Dreyfuss’ *Democracy* and Norman Bel Geddes’ *Futurama*. Yet, as Paul Greenhalgh observes, the ‘Pioneer spirit’ as a representation of ‘American-ness’ was still present in the ‘tableaux vivant’ and murals on the site. Whilst it was the vision of the future that became most celebrated, references to a heroic past remained.

**National projection during WW2 in Britain**

As I have shown, both nations developed strategies for projecting particular national characteristics to assert themselves as world powers in an increasingly unstable political landscape. This became even more important during WW2, as Lucy Noakes argues ‘the nation becomes an important form of identification in wartime; people appear to be far more likely to use their nationhood as a primary means of identity in wartime than in peacetime.’ In Britain, this notion of collective unity was widely popularized as ‘the people’s war,’ although historian Angus Calder has argued against this governing ‘myth’ of the ‘people’s war’, drawing attention to strikes and dissatisfaction. Yet the involvement of ‘the people’ I suggest was unprecedented, war threatened the stability of home, family and community. ‘The people’ needed reassurance and to feel a sense of belonging, therefore, the projection of a strong sense of national identity was vital.

The expression of national identity by designers in WW2 continued to reflect tendencies towards romanticising the past and envisioning a progressive future, as shown in two posters, captioned ‘Your Britain. Fight for it Now’. In Figure 14, Frank Newbould was inspired by John Constable’s paintings of Salisbury cathedral, evoking a peaceful and

---


pastoral idyll; Figure 15 shows Abram Games’ contrasting interpretation which depicts a Modernist reconstruction rising out of the ashes of devastation.

**Strategies, tactics and propaganda in three dimensions**

In his essay, *Making do: Uses and Tactics*, cultural theorist, Michel de Certeau posits the idea of *Strategies*, the way in which an organisation of power constructs an unequal relationship of dominance with an external audience, ‘the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an ‘environment.’ This model, he argues, is used to construct political, economic and scientific reason. *Tactics*, he proposes, are how people subvert mechanisms of authority in order to find their own modes of operation, achieving a ‘degree of plurality and creativity.’ The difference between *strategies and tactics*, he explains, ‘strategies are able to produce, tabulate and impose spaces, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces.’

In my analysis, therefore, it is the government who creates its *strategy* of ‘propaganda’ and Henrion is the *tactician*, who negotiates these ideas, embellishing them and making them relevant to the everyday. Building on this concept, de Certeau introduces the metaphor, *la perruque*, as the way in which employees conduct personal business on company time, when this is located outside of work it ‘takes the form of *bricolage*’ which is ‘an art of manipulating and enjoying.’ By applying these ideas to Henrion’s work it becomes clear that he is a bricoleur, experimenting with new practices within official constraints. By additionally incorporating Black’s view of ‘propaganda exhibitions’ as ‘the presentation of certain specific ideas which must lead to a clear course of action on the part of the viewer’ it extends the idea of the tactic. It is transferred to the viewer.

---

89 Michel de Certeau, “Introduction”, xix


91 Michel de Certeau, “Making Do: Uses and Tactics”, 30


93 Michel de Certeau, “Introduction”, xxi - check this

3. OFF THE RATION, CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Henrion’s exhibition, *Off the Ration*, presented at Charing Cross underground station in April 1942 for the MOA and the MOI. How did he negotiate ‘propaganda’ messages for the public in this display. What were the design tactics that he used and how did he incorporate ideas of nationhood in the display?

Context

The *Dig for Victory* campaign, of which *Off the Ration* formed part, is now a familiar aspect of our popular culture, a symbol of Britain pulling together during a crisis. Franklin Ginn argues that this interpretation has been romanticised and does not allow for alternative readings, drawing attention to the vandalism and theft on allotments, and resentment towards the rich who flouted rationing regulations. I would agree, adding that it has become what Noakes calls the ‘dominant myth of the blitz,’ the critical importance of the campaign forgotten.

Food was a driver of war and a weapon. As Lizzie Collingham asserts, ‘during the Second World War at last 20 million people died [...] from starvation, malnutrition and its associated diseases: a number to equal the 19.5 military deaths.’ This shocking statistic draws attention to why food was such an issue during WW2. In Germany, Hitler also acknowledged its importance, stating in 1942 that war was ‘a battle for food, a battle for the basis of life, for the raw materials the earth offers.’ Food could make the difference between victory and defeat.

---

95 Franklin Ginn, “Dig for Victory! New Histories of Wartime Gardening in Britain.” *Journal of Historical Geography.* 1 February 2012. 296. Online.


At the outbreak of war, Britain was producing less than one third of its food requirements with 37% of Britain’s imports supplied by the Empire. The MOA introduced radical measures to increase productivity of wheat and crops such as potatoes so that by 1944, over 6 million acres of pasture had been converted to arable land. The campaign was successful and allotments grew from 930,000 before the war to 1.7 million by 1943 and domestic vegetable production increased to over six million tons per annum. Another positive outcome was a growing awareness of nutrition, as a MO report concluded, ‘people’s knowledge of the principles of good feeding has increased, largely through the official propaganda explaining recipes, cooking, vitamins and the food groups.’

Analysis

The key strategy for Off the Ration was to communicate that there would not be enough food in winter and people had to ‘help themselves’ and ‘the nation’ in growing more vegetables and keeping animals for food, what Art and Industry referred to as a ‘pull your weight’ dialogue. A key audience was women, as active members of the Home Front. The exhibition was site-specific and also reconfigured for touring.

The exhibition poster shown in Figure 16, shows how Henrion uses the photomontage technique pioneered by John Heartfield to communicate that there would be live animals in the display. The eye is lead from the produce to the unexpected sight of a rabbit on top of a pig; this touch of humour suggests that this exhibition will be entertaining as well as didactic. The font links with that used throughout the exhibition; the graphic cross appears to be inspired by Jan Tschichold’s tendency to incorporate type into diagonal lines; the green and pink palette links to the produce and the pig. Henrion’s tactic to show animals in this way provides ‘stand out’ in the visually overcrowded environment of public spaces. He observes that ‘psychologically, it is
known that remembering and recognition depend partly on the strength of the initial impact, and partly on subsequent reinforcement.\textsuperscript{105} The rabbit and pig are used as visual motifs throughout the exhibition.

As a key hub in London’s transport system, Charing Cross was an important site for wartime exhibitions, Figure 17, shows passing troops at the exhibition. Henrion’s experience of designing posters for the universal audience of the ‘street’ enabled him to be more experimental. To this point, cultural theorist Mieke Bal states,

\begin{quote}
Thinking of the public in the plural helps to avoid generalizing assumptions, and encourages the development of strategies that facilitate a diverse interaction between viewers and the objects on display.\textsuperscript{106}
\end{quote}

His tactic of thinking in the ‘plural’ and adopting the ‘freer and more creative handling,’\textsuperscript{107} a temporary exhibition facilitates, helps him to negotiate the official strategy. He ‘pulls a trick,’\textsuperscript{108} seizing the moment to present an ‘interference’\textsuperscript{109} and disrupts the traditional modes of display, by incorporating live animals. The viewer is no longer a passive recipient of information, they are invited to make their own connections and ‘forget’ their learned habits of looking.\textsuperscript{110} As Black proposes, ‘what is important (and this is, of course, true of all propaganda) is that he should carry in his mind an idea which may later affect his actions’\textsuperscript{111} The animals become the emotionally accepted sign of the exhibition and of its strategy.

As an ‘outsider’, between countries and cultures, Henrion, I suggest, had a unique perspective on national identity. De Certeau, describing such an individual, writes ‘by an act of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation.’\textsuperscript{112} Henrion is in between, and notices distinctive nuances of people and nation. As Tay Huang Chong,

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{107} Herbert Bayer, Fundamentals of Exhibition Design (1937) www.peterriesett.blogspot.co.uk. 21.
\textsuperscript{111} Misha Black, “Propaganda in Three Dimensions,” 128.
\textsuperscript{112} Michel de Certeau, “Making Do: Uses and Tactics”, 30.
\end{quote}
former designer at HDA commented, ‘he was a great observer, able to adapt what other people offered, an assembler.’\footnote{Telephone interview with Tay Huang Chong, designer with F H K Henrion. 27 January 2015. See Appendix.} His tactic is to create an enclave of rural England in the mechanical environment of the station, by assembling the visual language, props and materials of the garden. Dutch design historian Frederique Huygens, herself an ‘outsider’, comments that ‘beside the image of Great Britain as the Workshop of the World, there exists an equally persistent picture handed down through the ages of England as the Garden.’\footnote{Frederique Huygens, “The Britishness of British Design,” 	extit{British Design. Image & Identity} (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 35.} It seems that Henrion, transformed the garden into a workshop of industrious gardeners.

The organisation of an exhibition, Louise Ravelli contends, creates meanings about ‘what is important, what story is being told, and the viewers’ roles within that space.’\footnote{Louise J Ravelli, “Extending the Frameworks,” 	extit{Museum Texts. Communication Frameworks}, (Oxon_ Routledge, 2006) 123.} Figure 18 shows the main sign, ‘Off the Ration. Grow More Food and Save Ships’ and its entrance with ‘brightly coloured’\footnote{Mass Observation Archive, “Off the Ration,” 21 April 1942, 	extit{Wartime Exhibitions}, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/ E, The Keep, 2.} stands. The way into the linear organisation of the narrative is clearly signposted, as shown in Figure 19, the pathway directed and the platform acts as a vector guiding the viewer through in a particular order. The help desk, attendants, participation of Land Girls and literature all signal that this exhibition is well organised and official.

As shown in Figure 20, Henrion clearly frames the strategy as a point of departure by using a ‘life-size’\footnote{Mass Observation Archive, “Off the Ration,” 21 April 1942, 	extit{Wartime Exhibitions}, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/ E, The Keep, 2.} three dimensional display extending out from the wall, this is drawn as part of the MO report shown in Figure 21. His tactic is to use the scenario of the family meal: mother, grandfather and three young children are sat around a table containing a large pie, salad and vegetables. The father is absent, the mother is at the centre of this family, the provider, this panel addresses her. ‘...Help yourself’ is the headline and the panel adjacent contains the text, its tone paternalistic,

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Telephone interview with Tay Huang Chong, designer with F H K Henrion. 27 January 2015. See Appendix.}
\item \footnote{Frederique Huygens, “The Britishness of British Design,” 	extit{British Design. Image & Identity} (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989) 35.}
\item \footnote{Louise J Ravelli, “Extending the Frameworks,” 	extit{Museum Texts. Communication Frameworks}, (Oxon_ Routledge, 2006) 123.}
\item \footnote{Mass Observation Archive, “Off the Ration,” 21 April 1942, 	extit{Wartime Exhibitions}, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/ E, The Keep, 2.}
\item \footnote{Mass Observation Archive, “Off the Ration,” 21 April 1942, 	extit{Wartime Exhibitions}, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/ E, The Keep, 2.}
\end{itemize}
Next winter will be Britain’s testing time. Our farmer’s need to concentrate on such vital foodstuffs as milk, sugar and wheat. You cannot expect them to give you all you need. You must provide whatever you can yourself. You will need it. Get everyone in the family to help.

This call to action speaks directly to the viewer; ‘you must provide whatever you can yourself’ is an appeal for active citizenship. Looking more closely, the visual cues point to a middle class family; the grandfather and boy wear ties, the plates are decorated. This could be seen as neglecting the working classes, or an alternative reading might be a portrayal of an aspirational family life achievable by acting on the strategy of the exhibition. As Tony Bennett puts it,

museums, galleries, and, more intermittently, exhibitions played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental to its conception as, among other things, a set of educative and civilizing agencies.\(^{118}\)

This notion of ‘civilizing’ is particularly relevant in the context of propaganda discourse. Henrion’s tactics plant ideas in the public’s minds: feeding the family, the responsible citizen, everyone can participate, giving them ammunition to pass the tactic on.

As Figure 22 shows, the central section is focused on instructions: how to plan crops, keep rabbits, dig and sow. Henrion’s tactic is to use the rabbit as the key motif of the exhibition; it is placed at its centre and given ‘salience’.\(^{119}\) Figure 23 shows how Henrion again uses photomontage for ‘posters’ either side of the live rabbit displays. The first poster, shown in Figure 24, with its repeat of small rabbits below indicates how many young each rabbit can produce, perhaps referencing the ‘kill’ motifs painted by the RAF on aeroplanes. The second poster in Figure 25 shows the influence of Surrealism, the rabbit’s stomach divided into food compartments. As poster designer Beverly Pick comments, exhibitions ‘should be designed on the principle of a good poster. They are, in fact, three dimensional posters.’\(^{120}\) By drawing on his experience as a poster designer Henrion simplifies complex instructions and delivers them with warmth and humour.

---


The model shown in Figure 26, ‘Your own vegetables all the year round’ presents the viewer with a cornucopia of what they can grow, forty-three card models of vegetables are categorized by season, each illustrated in the style of the seed packet with a handwritten gardener’s label attached. Placing the ‘vegetables’ behind glass as a ‘shop window’ denotes value. The illustrated cropping plan shown in Figure 27 delivers an extraordinary amount of information clearly and attractively, also produced as a pamphlet it was designed to be displayed at home. The subsequent panel with an image of a woman and her family digging is captioned ‘Women must help’ and the following panels show photographs of families and communities working in allotments and gardens. Henrion uses the tactic of binary opposition, to present the benefits of their labour on the panel captioned ‘Better an hour in the garden than a place in the queue’; the top image portrays a family in an idyllic garden scene, set against the image below of a food queue.

The final section of the exhibition is designed to reinforce the strategy in the introduction. The text towards the end becomes more forceful and the use of the Dig for Victory foot and spade image connects it to that campaign. ‘Act now! It’s vital and urgent’ the caption reads, aligning with the concluding remarks of a MO report on attitudes to food,

we shall have learnt a lesson we were forgetting at our peril before, namely that everybody in a democracy is interdependent and that the welfare of each and all is partly the responsibility of each and everybody else.121

This emphasises the active citizenry which is again reinforced by a panel showing ‘gardeners’ marching towards the viewer carrying spades, in what Mary-Anne Staniszewski calls a ‘mirror-like arrangement’, enabling the viewer to see themselves as an important part of a collective whole. The exhibition ends with information on ‘pig clubs, rabbit, poultry and allotment societies,’122 drawing attention to the social aspect of participation.

Henrion had a choice of how to communicate and put official strategies into practice, placing them tactically in the everyday by inviting public participation. By using the tactic of intervention and introducing live animals, the viewer is encouraged to interact with


them and pass on the tactic. His tactic of appropriating the visual language of the
garden is effective in creating an emotional connection between ‘the people’ and the
land, inciting participation in an idea of nation and collective unity.
4. YOUNG AMERICA, CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on Henrion’s exhibition *Young America*, presented in College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster on 11 April 1944 for the OWI and sponsored by Toc H.\(^{123}\)

From September, it toured nationally in a US Army truck, in association with The Kinsmen,\(^{124}\) and by March 1945, had visited 194 locations and been seen by more than 37,000 people.\(^{125}\) Aimed at young people, *The Times* described its objective as,

> ‘a straight, unvarnished account of child and adolescent life on the other side of the Atlantic, set against a background of industry, agriculture, business and other major elements in America’s economic social structure.’\(^{126}\)

However, through the analysis that follows I will draw a different conclusion, arguing that the OWI’s strategy was to present a vision of an idealised and Utopian way of life.

**Context**

New York’s World Fair had envisioned a future made possible by democracy and technology, yet during WW2 the OWI adjusted this portrayal to accommodate the more down-to-earth symbol of the ‘ordinary American’. As Winkler observes, the ‘OWI, in that composite picture, had finally hit on a vision of America that was not only noncontroversial but which reflected the ways that others represented the war as well.’\(^{127}\) By portraying a progressive, yet accessible version of America, the OWI aimed to persuade the world that it not only lead the charge against Nazism, but epitomized the idea of a modern democracy founded on universal values.

Britain’s view of America at the outset of WW2, however, had been largely shaped by Hollywood stereotypes. There was also widespread resentment at the lack of American

---

\(^{123}\) Toc H was a charitable foundation founded in 1915 by the Reverend Phillip Byard Clayton, army chaplain. This organisation set up servicemen’s clubs during WW2. www.toch-uk.org.uk.


assistance until Lend Lease was passed in March 1941. In order to prepare the ground for the anticipated arrival of American troops and promote a mutual understanding between the two nations, the MOI launched a campaign to educate the British about America in July 1941. Allan M Winkler usefully summarises as follows:

The men who headed the OWI knew that they had to combat a distorted image of America as a decadent, gangster-ridden society that had emerged from American film and other arts and then been embellished by Axis propaganda. In their directives and in the material they produced the nation appeared as a mighty, dedicated, wholesome country which somehow had the better interests of all mankind at heart.

This campaign was implemented through radio and press, with American Studies introduced into the school curriculum. The OWI also used photography to project a particular idea of America in their mass circulation of ‘sequential photo-stories’ circulated to their outposts on topics such as ‘An American town and its way of life.’

MoMA also contributed to this campaign. John Hay Whitney, MoMA President, described the museum as ‘a weapon of national defence’ and as Mary Anne Staniszewski asserts, ‘the Museum’s involvement with the US government - its production of propaganda and its deployment of culture as an instrument of politics - is an important aspect of the Museum’s history, as evidenced in its production of ‘propaganda exhibitions’, such as Edward Steichen’s hugely successful Road to Victory (1942) designed by former Bauhaus master, Herbert Bayer, described as ‘a dramatic presentation of this country’s mighty resources and the power of its people in their struggle toward victory.’ It was included in the museum’s ‘circulating exhibitions

130 Allan M Winkler, The Politics of Propaganda. The Office of War Information 1942-1945, 154
131 David Reynolds, “Introduction,” xiv
133 MoMA, “John Hay Whitney announces Museum of Modern Art will serve as a weapon of national defence,” 28 February 1941. moma.org
program’ and the first MoMA exhibition commissioned by the OWI for international touring, visiting 20 locations.\textsuperscript{136} Presented in London as \textit{America Marches with the United Nations} (1943), its documentary-style photography, associated with the Farm Services Administration, was also used in exhibitions such as in \textit{Airways to Peace} (MoMA, 1943).

\textbf{Analysis}

\textit{Young America} was presented at College Hall, Westminster in April 1944 and open from 11am - 9pm. It was supported by films and talks at Toc H headquarters and services given by the Dean of Westminster.\textsuperscript{137}

The exhibition poster shown in Figure 28, described by designer Austin Cooper as ‘a design that appears to me as a perfect example of ‘fitness for purpose,’\textsuperscript{138} depicts a young man’s head filled with the painterly red stripes of the American flag, looking out towards a star-filled sky, signifying a bright future. The use of lower case type for the title ‘young america’ conveys an informality not apparent in the exhibition display and the only elements that link the poster to the exhibition are the torn paper device and the way Henrion fills graphic shapes, e.g. the silhouette of the scholar, seen in Figure 35. I suggest, therefore, that Henrion was only allowed to fully express himself in the poster design.

The choice of such a traditional venue for an exhibition aimed at young people is curious. Matthew Payne, Keeper of the Muniments, at Westminster Abbey suggests that this may be linked to the ‘Churchill Club’, operating in Dean’s Yard during the war with an aim to introduce servicemen to British culture and frequented by British intelligentsia and artists.\textsuperscript{139} My research also uncovered that Archibald MacLeish, OWI London co-founder, opened the exhibition and was a member of a US delegation attending the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education who met to draft a constitution for a UN

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{136} Kristie La, “‘Enlightenment, Advertising, Education, Etc.’: Herbert Bayer and the Museum of Modern Art’s Road to Victory,” \textit{October Magazine} 150, Fall 2014, Web, 81.
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{139} Personal email from Matthew Payne, Keeper of the Muniments, Westminster Abbey, 17 February, 2015.
\end{flushleft}
Organization for Educational and Cultural Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{140} This would suggest that a secondary audience was dignitaries.

College Hall was entered by passing through a stone courtyard. The room’s ancient timber panelling and heraldic devices functioning as signifiers of a glorious British past. Ravelli proposes that when a vertical axis is used in display, it leads to a juxtaposition of ‘above’ and ‘below’, with the elements placed above as the ‘value of the Ideal, or generalized ‘promise’, and items below as having the value of the ‘Real, or down to earth’, this way of reading the space shown at its opening in Figure 29 leads to the conclusion that the United Nations flags, in their suspension from the ceiling, are the promise of a peaceful future, and the exhibition panels portraying the everyday life of young people in America, are aiming to represent the reality of the everyday. Yet this environment is separate from the more ‘quotidien aspects of life.’\textsuperscript{141} Representationally, this space can be viewed as America welcomed into the heart of the establishment and the sign of the cementation of a union. One strategy of the exhibition can be seen to be defined by its space: America’s acceptance by Britain as an equal partner; the other strategy defined by its narrative: a portrait of the everyday lives of young Americans.

In terms of concept design, Misha Black proposes that the first question a designer should ask is,
\begin{quote}
what is the psychological effect I wish to create, what is the story I wish to tell, what is the best way of getting it across to the section of the public which I have been commissioned to influence.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

Henrion’s tactic, therefore, is to organise the information for young people into stories, focusing on key themes: \textit{heritage}, \textit{opportunity}, \textit{responsibility}, \textit{initiative}, \textit{spirit}, \textit{service} and \textit{vision}, framing them within the modern photo-essay format used in newspapers and magazines such as \textit{Life}.

As shown in Figure 30 the narrative of the exhibition was organised as a directed linear circulation, with the information configured sequentially, beginning with \textit{heritage} and ending with \textit{vision}, each section display opens out like a journal. The table placement at

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{142} Misha Black, “Propaganda in Three Dimensions.” 121.
\end{footnotesize}
the centre helps to regulate the flow. The display is static, the viewer stops and looks, this is a more traditional pedagogic approach to knowledge,\textsuperscript{143} the only opportunity for interaction being the books on the table. Figure 31 shows the framing of the introductory panel standing in isolation, its text short and punchy, beginning ‘Home is the core of American society - where the children of many races grow up in the common HERITAGE of democracy.’ “Home’ and ‘Democracy’ are themes continually reinforced in this exhibition.

The strong photographic style frames the display and links the elements together to form a coherent whole. Some of the images chosen are consistent with Bayer's \textit{Road to Victory}, e.g. in Figure 32, \textit{Heritage}, there are cityscapes, traditional and modern buildings, and endless plains. in \textit{Responsibility}, shown in Figure 33, students are shown at work and in Figure 34, at play.

Henrion uses the tactic of interspersing the photography with bold graphics to add interest, drawing on the visual language of education to create motifs, such as a scroll and the mortar board shown in \textit{Initiative}, Figure 35. In this image, universities are portrayed as traditional institutions, with students wearing gowns, to highlight similarities between the two nations’ education system. His use of info-graphics, shown in Figures 36 and 37, are clearly influenced by Austrian Otto Neurath’s Isotype symbols, which he uses to simplify complex data.

In \textit{Service} shown in Figure 38, a heroic young boy is framed against a big sky, echoing the farmer in \textit{Road to Victory}, as shown in Figure 39, the text reads.

\begin{quote}
I pledge: my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, and my country.
\end{quote}

This propaganda wording, designed to evoke patriotism, has a similar tone of voice to the text by Carl Sandberg for \textit{Road to Victory}. The penultimate \textit{Service} panel shown in Figure 40 is a photomural of young people actively volunteering for war service. This technique described by Stanislewski as ‘a convention that had become a keystone of

\textsuperscript{143} Louise J Ravelli, “Extending the Frameworks,” 135.
the propagandistic exhibitions created for large public audiences during the 1920s and 1930s emphasises their commitment to nation.

The final image, Vision, shown in Figure 41 is of a GI and British soldier, comrades in arms, underneath Eisenhower’s words, ‘We of the United Nations must live and work together, regardless of race of nationality, creed or service, uniform or tank...' Eisenhower is clearly positioned as leader of this new world.

There is a marked contrast between environment and engagement when the exhibition tours. The Imperial War Museum film rushes of its visit to a school reveal the extent to which it became a spectacle. The film shows an army truck, shown in Figure 42, branded ‘Young America Exhibition’ driving along a country lane; a group of school children run towards it in greeting, surrounding Sergeant Cecil Elmore of the US Airforce and his colleague. The children help to unload the exhibition panels and it is installed within their school playground, Henrion’s panels in Figure 43 can be seen clearly centre left. Phenomenologically, this touring exhibition can be read as shaping human experience, through social interaction and stimulating the imagination, inviting the children to understand themselves through their difference to others. By placing the exhibition in the playground, America is located in the lived world of the everyday.

The exhibition was presented as part of an ‘American Day’ at schools including lectures, films and art, where children painted their interpretation of America, shown in Figure 44, they became part of the exhibition. It reveals how the iconography of the cowboy and Indian endured. This act of engagement and doing, Ravelli asserts, reflects an ideology that through this process is how young people learn.

From my analysis, it is clear that Henrion had less freedom to experiment with this exhibition than Off the Ration. Although his tactic for negotiating official strategies was

\[\text{144 Staniszewski, “Installation for Political Persuasion,” 221.}\]
\[\text{145 “Young America (rushes),” COI 20. 1944. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive, London.}\]
\[\text{147 David Reynolds, From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s, xxii.}\]
\[\text{148 Louise J Ravelli, “Extending the Frameworks,” 132.}\]
to create a series of stories and draw on the visual language of education to appeal to young people, the displays themselves do not provide much opportunity for interaction, until the exhibition tours.

In my view, this portrayal of young America, was not ‘unvarnished’; racial discrimination, poverty and social inequality were missing from this narrative. However, for young British people, this glimpse of an exciting life full of possibilities was in marked contrast to their own, but would have presented the idea that this was ‘real life’ in America. Therefore, I suggest, *Young America*, in its persuasive portrait of a progressive democracy, helped to prepare the ground for the Americanisation that became widespread in the 1950s.
CONCLUSION

I will now summarize the key insights from the previous chapters and reflect on my original research questions. The purpose of this dissertation has been to draw attention to ‘propaganda exhibitions’ and consider why they played such an important role during WW2. My research, which has included MO reports, contemporary accounts and film from that period has helped to contextualise Henrion’s two exhibitions.

It is clear that ‘propaganda exhibitions’ were a key tool in the government’s communication framework during WW2. Part of an efficient exhibitionary network, they communicated vital information and education to the public and provided a source of free entertainment in a pre-television age. Portable and quick to produce, they toured nationally reaching thousands of people in cities, towns and villages.

The team at the MOI Exhibitions Division, drawn from different disciplines and backgrounds, collaborated to develop new practices and techniques. Seeking inspiration from a range of creative sources, the exhibitions’ visual orientation varied greatly, reflecting an eclectic Modernism, which held the public’s interest and enabled the designers to experiment with different modes of communication. Following WW2, members of the same team would again work together on the Council of Industrial Design’s first exhibition, *Britain Can Make it* (1946) with the aim of signaling economic renewal, promotion of trade and good design, and later at the *Festival of Britain* (1951).

Henrion’s early career as a poster artist designing for the ‘street’ had trained him to distill complex strategies and place them tactically in the everyday lives of the public. He used a number of techniques: photomontage, models, live animals, posters and Isotype diagrams to communicate the messages, and appropriated from a number of sources including Surrealism, Constructivism, editorial design, retail display and the ‘new typography.’

Their description as ‘propaganda exhibitions’ raises complex issues of meaning; ranging from publicity and education, to persuasion and coercion. Considering propaganda as discourse is helpful, allowing for alternative readings. By introducing Michel de Certeau’s concept of *strategies and tactics* and Misha Black’s paper, *Propaganda in...*
Three Dimensions, it has been possible to examine official strategies and how Henrion used tactics to negotiate them and encourage the public to participate. The growth in allotments is evidence that these integrated campaigns were powerful tools of persuasion and influenced behaviour.

In both exhibitions, Henrion demonstrated his ability to understand and interpret national characteristics. In Off the Ration, Henrion appropriated the visual language of the English garden, transforming it into a site of industry and active citizenship to communicate the strategy to grow more food and make ‘more concrete a belief in the rightness of the cause for which the people are fighting, give renewed confidence in their power to achieve victory.’ His tactic of using live animals encouraged the public to engage with the idea of keeping them for food. In Young America, he projected the idea of a modern democracy through a series of photographic ‘stories’ combining MoMA style imagery with his tactic of education-inspired graphics and Isotype symbols. The meaning and engagement with the exhibition changed according to environment. College Hall was formal, representing an Anglo-American alliance; once inside the school the exhibition became an exciting spectacle involving the children. This idealised version of young life, I suggest, would become influential in its contribution to Americanisation in 1950s Britain.

My research has drawn attention to the importance of wartime exhibitions and their function of providing an essential bridge between state and public. The artistry and exuberance of their design during a time of austerity mark a flashpoint in exhibition design and an acceleration in practice that form an important part of design history. These wartime exhibitions provide an insight into the primary concerns of ‘the people’ experiencing everyday life during WW2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


  St Peter’s House Library, University of Brighton.


Huang, Tay Chong. Personal interview with the author. 27 January 2015. Telephone.


Inflation Calculator, www.bankofengland.co.uk


“United Nations; Step to Restoration.” *The Times*, 21 April 1944.


“Young America (rushes).” COI 20. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive. Visited 19 January 2015.

**Being Human Festival**

The Ministry of Information Project and *Being Human* Festival. 15 November 2014.

Senate House, London WC1. Publishing and Propaganda in WWII, talk 1 and Plotting Morale in WWII, talk 2. www.moi.digital.ac.uk

Figure 2: Former Ministry of Information (MOI) Building, Senate House, Bloomsbury, London. Personal photograph by the author. November 2014.
Figure 3: Exhibition stand outside Waterloo station. c.1943. Photographer: unknown. London Transport Archive.

Figure 4: MOI Campaign Posters in the street, London. 1942. IWM D 12029. Photographer: MOI Photo division. iwm.org.uk.
Figure 5: MOI mobile exhibition vehicle. 1943. D 13549. Photographer: MOI Photo Division. iwm.org.uk.

Figure 6: Window display at Selfridges. 1943. D 12673. Photographer: MOI Photo Division. iwm.org.uk.


Figure 14: Frank Newbould. *Your Britain Fight for it Now*. 1942. Poster. Art.IWM PST 3640

Figure 15: Abram Games. *Your Britain Fight for it Now*. 1942. Poster. V&A. ABCA. vam.ac.uk.


Figure 21: Mass Observation Archive. Off the Ration report showing drawing of introductory panel. 21 April 1942. Wartime Exhibitions, Ref SxMOA1/2/67/3/E. The Keep.

Figure 23: F H K Henrion. “...Your own Rabbit.” *Off the Ration installation view.* Client: MOI/MOA. Photographer: Unknown. Design Council Archives.
Figure 24: F H K Henrion. “One Rabbit.” Poster. 1942. Off the Ration. Client: MOI/ MOA. moma.org

Figure 25: F H K Henrion. “Rabbits can be fed on.” Poster. 1942. Off the Ration. Client: MOI/MOA.

Figure 28: F H K Henrion. “Young America.” Poster. 1944. Client: OWI. collections.vam.ac.uk.


Figure 36. F H K Henrion. “Heritage.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.

Figure 37: F H K Henrion. “Opportunity.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.
Figure 38. F H K Henrion. “Service.” *Young America Exhibition*. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.

Figure 40: F H K Henrion. “Service.” *Young America Exhibition*. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. Client: OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.

Figure 42: Still from *Young America exhibition* touring. Exhibition arriving at school. COI 20. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive, London.

Figure 43: Still from *Young America exhibition* touring. Exhibition installed in playground. COI 20. Imperial War Museum Film and Video Archive, London.
Figure 44: “British Children Paint USA.” Young America Exhibition. College Hall, Dean’s Yard, Westminster. April 1944. Client: OWI. Photographer: Keystone. Design Council Archives.
APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHY

Frédéric Henri Kay Henrion MBE, OBE, RDI, FSIA
(1914-1990)

Frédéric Henri Kay Henrion is best known as a designer, educator and one of the first to develop the practice of corporate identity design in Britain.

Born Heinrich Fritz Kohn in Nuremberg on 18 April 1914 of Franco-German parents, Henrion left Germany in 1933 to escape the Nazis and relocated to Paris where he began his career, first training as a textile designer with Fred Levi where he had to produce four designs a day, then studying poster and stage design at Ecole Paul Colin where he was one of 80 international students. He became Colin’s assistant at a time when poster design in Paris was a dynamic and exciting medium championed by three outstanding designers, know as ‘the Cs’: Paul Colin, A M Cassandre and Jean Carlu. While still working for Paul Colin, Henrion was offered a post at Colin’s great rival, Cassandre, but was unable to accept because it coincided with the Nazi’s march into Rhineland in 1936 and Cassandre fled Paris for Italy. Finding himself without work, Henrion, through a family connection, was given the opportunity to display his posters at the Levant Fair in Palestine and was asked to design a stand for Air France. Again political circumstances intervened and the Air France work was cancelled, however, his work was spotted by Crown Agents for the British colonies who asked him to create advertising for citrus fruits in France, Belgium, Italy and France. It was through this work that Henrion came to London.

Through his old friend Walter Landor, he met Misha Black and Milner Grey at the Industrial Design Partnership where he worked on his first exhibition design project, the MARS (Modern Architectural Research Group) at the New Burlington Galleries, London, 11-29 January, 1938. Henrion continued to divide his time between London and Paris

\[150\] F H K Henrion, IWM Session No 9592, 25 November 1986. Audio interview. iwm.org.uk

\[151\] F H K Henrion, IWM Session No 9592, 25 November 1986. Audio interview. iwm.org.uk

\[152\] http://design.designmuseum.org/design/the-mars-group
at this time, working for clients in both locations but when the war began he remained in London.

When France was invaded, Britain was on high alert and adopted a policy of internment. Henrion was interned at the Isle of Man’s Onchan Camp\(^{153}\) for six months and was released when Helen Roeder of the Artists’ Refugee Council appealed on his behalf writing that ‘his experience and talent as a propaganda artist could be of great service to this country, to which his loyalty is beyond question.’\(^{154}\) On his release Milner Gray, then Head of the Ministry of Information (MOI) Exhibitions Division offered him work and within the space of a week, he found himself on an airfield entrusted with top secret information, commenting,

> I moved from the IOM (Isle of Man) to the MOI (Ministry of Information) which was rather funny. And I was completely bewildered because, from being behind barged wire one week, I was in an RAF airfield the next. It was such a sudden change, it practically undid me. From being distrusted to being trusted with secret information all within a week.\(^{155}\)

During World War Two (WW2) Henrion designed posters and exhibitions for the MOI, exhibitions included *Lifeline* (1941); *Off the Ration* (Charing Cross underground station, 1942 and adapted for Regents Park Zoo with Milner Gray and Bronak Katz, 1943); *Fire Service* (1942); *Poison Gas* (Shepherd’s Bush and Charing Cross, 1942);\(^{156}\) *Dig for Victory* (Charing Cross and touring, 1943); murals and display for the *Army Exhibition* (John Lewis, 1943); *Fuel* (1943); the *Comfort of Guns* (1943). For the OWI Henrion designed *American Housing in War and Peace* (RIBA, 1943); 8th Airforce (*Selfridges, 1943/4*); and *Young America* (1944). Henrion also contributed to the important anti-Fascist Allied International Artists exhibition, *For Liberty* (*John Lewis, 1943*) and the *War on Culture* exhibition (1943) for the ABTA. In addition, he also worked for W S Crawford advertising agency and (British) Harper’s Bazaar, the Dutch government in exile and the Chinese and Yugoslav Governments.


\(^{156}\) Report on Government Exhibitions," Propaganda/morale Box 5/A
Henrion was also an active member of Artists International Alliance (AIA), an anti-Fascist association set up in the early 1930s. Before the war, the views of this association were unpopular, but as the war progressed they became accepted and supported. This group staged exhibitions with, perhaps their most important exhibition, *For Liberty*, taking place in 1943 at the bombed premises of John Lewis. Henrion designed the logo, poster and entrance murals.

After WW2 Henrion worked as a consulting art director for Contact Books, Adprint, Max Parrish Books, Studio 51 and at Otto Neurath’s Isotype Institute publications. In 1948 he set up his own studio, Studio H and became part of the team of designers and architects who worked on the *Festival of Britain* in 1951, which brought together many of the same people who had worked on wartime exhibitions at the MOI. He designed two pavilions: *The Natural Scene* and *The Country*, where he would again successfully incorporate live animals into the display as he had done in *Off the Ration* in 1942. Through this work Henrion was awarded an MBE.

Henrion was a truly multidisciplinary designer who worked on advertising, posters, exhibitions, jewellery, products and packaging, including the iconic Tate & Lyle sugar packaging (1965) that is still around today. But it is for his corporate identity work that he is probably best remembered with design schemes including airline KLM (1961), Blue Circle (1966), the precursor to British Airways, BEA (1968), London Electricity Board (1972), The National Theatre ((1971) and Dutch retailer C&A (mid 1970s),

His design studio underwent a number of transformations and name changes, it was first Studio H, HDA, HDA International before becoming Henrion, Ludlow and Schmidt in 1981. Organised and practical, the corporate identity methodologies he pioneered together with Alan Parkin in *Co-ordination and Corporate Image* (1967) would become influential in establishing it as a profession and as a practice other design agencies would follow and adapt.

Henrion was a passionate educator playing a significant role in British design education over the years and held numerous prestigious positions within art schools in Britain and overseas. He was a Governor at Central School of Art and Crafts (1957-61), visiting lecturer at the RCA (1958-65), and Head of the faculty of Visual Communication at the London College of Printing (1976-79). He also played a prominent part in international
design organisations including International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA), the Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI) and Master of the Faculty of the Royal Designers for Industry in 1971–2.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Telephone interview with Tay Chong Huang on 27 January 2015
Consent form signed.

Tay Chong Huang, originally from Malaysia studied at the London College of Printing before beginning his design career at HDA in 1977. He left Henrion Ludlow and Schmidt in 1984, to go and work for brand identity consultancy, Wolff Olins, where he became a Design Director. Tay subsequently worked for Futurebrand and is now a corporate identity consultant working with international design agencies.

SJ: What were Henrion’s influences?

TCH: Well, I thought his influences were actually were very well recorded in the book, so I don’t really want to duplicate.

SJ: Just to clarify, which one do you mean?

TCH: The latest one by Adrian Shaughnessy, it’s very good. I would have thought Paul Colin and Cassandre, you could see he thought about them, when I was working there a lot. They would have been obviously very early influences. The other thing is that if you actually look at his work there are a lot of influences by artists as well, because some of his posters are quite Surreal and looking at his work then later when I had a peek at the Adrian Shaughnessy book, it confirmed it, the French. He spent a lot of time in Paris and he would have been influenced a lot by the French working artists at the time and Jean Cocteau, Magritte, Man Ray and you can see in his posters they have echoes of Man Ray’s work especially with photography, stuff like that and obviously his peer group when he worked in the UK, Abram Games, McKnight Kauffer, Paul Rand you know Tom Eckersley, even the connection with Colin Thorpe and a hint of those designers in his work. Which goes into your other question.

SJ: do you think Henrion had a particular visual language?

TCH: No, because there isn’t something you would say that is a ‘Henrion’.

SJ: He uses hands a lot

TCH: He uses his ‘hand’ in different styles so I don’t think he actually has a visual style if you look at Tom Eckersley, you can straight away see McKnight Kauffer. Because I think in the end Henrion was a designer that used visual language to suit the actual thing he was designing for, so he wasn’t a illustrator or an artist, with a distinguishable style, which in would have made him later on in the commercial sense, a commercial designer. If he had a particular style it wouldn’t have actually been relevant to the client, your style would dictate. So from that point of view he was able to transcend what he did. I don’t think he was a great illustrator. But what he was very good at was to be able to look at what was available, so he used photomontage and in the early days very few people did, that he adopted new technology but he was able to pick up new things that would help him illustrate a point so in terms of influences, to go back to his question, I think, he would see what other people could offer and he would then adapt those for
what was relevant in what he did, so you could look at his work and if you didn’t know that was Henrion you would say that was Paul Rand.

Look at the logo he did for Penguin, if you didn’t know that was Henrion, you would think that was done by Alan Fletcher or someone else.

SJ: When they did the early photomontage, how did they do it? I’ve seen stuff in the archives where things have been cut out and stick onto visuals, how did he do it?

TCH: The one which is a photomontage, the picture of the wounded soldier, it has a coarse half tone. It has the dots. So that was something he would have cut out. Before the Mac, that was how you did artwork any way, you touch it up, you work at a board. So he would paint and in those days this was pre leterset he would actually have to paint in the actual title so for Harper’s Magazine, it would be hand painted.

SJ: Was he good at typography? Or better at assembling elements?

TCH: I would say he was a great observer, able to adapt what other people offered, an assembler, he had an eye for laying out things, he used a range of visual styles, he was very good at observing, which is really what a good graphic designer is.

Actually that is a bit like Henrion was really, what you would call multi-disciplined from exhibitions to interiors to identity, and especially identity where it is always collaborative working with other designers being influenced by them. He would have been very used to collaborating, the war work when they were all thrown together.

SJ: You told me about Abram Games phoning regularly, who were his other friends?

TCH: Abram Games was the main one. They were very close and Marion would talk about him.

SJ: Misha Black and Milner Gray?

Yes, definitely they were friends.

TCH: In the 70s designers, apart from Abram Games, Willy de Majo, they were all from a different era. Like Saul Bass, Milton Glaser, Michael Peters, Henry Steiner. They were an independent bunch. You had Misha Black and Abram Games of his generation, Paul Rand.

The designers of the next generation that actually you know went out and did well like Terry Tyrrell, Martin Sampson worked for Henri.

SJ: He had a political aspect to his personality and his work, do you think it informed his work?

TCH: I don’t know actually. It was not something I spoke to him about. I tried to impress him with my intellect. I never thought about Henrion and politics. It never occurred to me that he was Socialist. I thought about it this morning. He lived in Hampstead but I wouldn’t have thought he was Socialist because I mean, I didn’t know he voted or Labour or voted Conservative or whether he was a Liberal.
SJ: I always thought that it was interesting that he worked for a conservative coalition government during the war

TC: My take on that is the reason why he did posters was he was against the idea of war and also because don’t forget was that he was very very British in the end. Up to a point he was an internationalist, I thought that Henrion was an internationalist because of his connections. Using his skills to fight.

He was a German but it was not something you would know. I think his dad was German, name Kohn.

SJ: Was that his original surname?

TCH: His name is Frederic Henri Kay Kohn. If you look at it he designed his name, Henri with an O N, Henrion.

SJ: I had no idea that that’s what he did.

TCH: I think it’s in the book.

SJ: I’ll look that up.

TCH: The people that knew him and worked with him called him Henri, so he basically designed his surname.

SJ: When did he do this?

TCH: Maybe he did it in Paris. You’re in Germany and you had a Jewish name, in Nuremberg.

SJ: the political side of him was clearly not visible?

TCH: I never thought of him as a conservative supporter. My feeling is that he hated the idea of war and I don’t blame him because it was horrendous. Three things stuck in my mind. The first was in the Falkland’s war and I remember the day that the Belgrano was sunk, it was in the headlines, The Sun and there were a group of three designers, two English designers we were chatting about it ‘Gotcha’ and we were in the studio and he came into the room and he told me off! He said to me it’s really wrong it’s not something you celebrate and that really got me. People died and one should not celebrate it and it really stuck.

His thing was he knew designers from all over the world, he would talk to designers in Japan, everywhere in the world and Germany. He was an international person. I don’t think he took sides necessarily.

The other thing he said to me was that international point of view, he said that when he interviewed me. What happened was that I was a graduate at the LCP and it was the year he came in as Head of Department at the LCP and Tom Eckersley died so Henrion took over as head of graphics, there was no head of LCP and in the graphics department everyone gushed, Henrion is coming in and the work was tasteful, elegant which was complete contrary and there were lecturers who had never worked in the commercial work but probably heard through second hand that he was arrogant and
short tempered and people found him very difficult to work with, which wasn’t true. Working with Wally, completely different quality. so the thing was that the lecturer who headed my course, recommended two other designers to him because he was looking for a junior designer, I was miffed although he didn’t take them on. I then knocked on his secretary’s door and Mrs Hughes said to me as you know Henrion doesn’t turn up until after lunch, so she took me and said look why don’t you go to the bar opposite on the third floor and she would come out and knock on the window and I would go to see him. I went down about 1.30-1.45 and stood at the bar and waited for Mrs Hughes to knock on the window, then she started knocking and when I went to see him I said I’d like to come and work with you and he spent half an hour just talking about where I came from and he said look, what would you like to do? I said I’d like a job because I wanted to stay in the country and he said to me, you should work in the UK and learn as much as you need to and then you should go back to Malaysia and help the country’s graphic design.

SJ: he thought you should go back and teach and pass on your knowledge. What went wrong?!

TCH: I didn’t quite like the politics in Malaysia.

He had a social purpose of giving back. He taught all over the world.

SJ: Did he go to America?

TCH: Yes I think he did, he was visiting lecturer in one of the colleges in America.

SJ: I wondered about the connection with America. Who he met...

TCH: He knew all of them through AGI because he was one of the founding fathers and he knew Walter Landor and ? Grossman and Herb Lubarlin, Milton Glaser. Herb Lebarin visited in Bond Steet and Saul Bass. I met him. Funnily enough Saul Bass was very like Klaus Schmidt.

SJ: Saul Bass wrote an obituary for Henrion, I can’t find it.

TCH: I know that there was a French cartoonist who did a little drawing, something to do with his obituary. Mel Kallman.

SJ: There were quite a few cartoons in his exhibitions.

TCH: I know that he was also friends with another cartoonist I can’t remember his name, in fact that cartoon is on page 108.

SJ: I’ll have a look at that, if you suddenly remember the name of the cartoonist let me know, I’ve been trying to track them down and there’s no reference to it.

TCH: In the book it is an illustration, an invitation held at the celebration of Henrion’s life. I remember the celebration at the RSA and was full up. You could hear the speakers and I was sitting in this room full of people. You couldn’t see. Then the door burst open and I looked up and it was Wally! Wally arrived late and he sat down, took his hat off and planted his bag, bang! And he sat right in front of me and I was at Wolff Olins at the time. It was very funny.
SJ: What was the third thing?

TCH: A month later. I went to see the guy running his studio, Greek guy and a senior designer there interviewed me but never looked at my work. He sat in a chair and he started interrupting and we would talk about other things, where I came from all that stuff. Him and Marion were almost like parents, like mum and dad. Really really nice. Really kind.

Towards the end of his life, Chris Ludlow used to run sessions where he’d get students together for a talk and invite designers from the industry to come and look at their portfolios and give them guidance at the CSD in Bloomsbury and this was when I was at WO and I went along on the panel and there was Henri and I hadn’t seen him for a while and he came up to me and he said and he had this funny way, he said ‘Tay it is such a privilege to share a platform with you.’ I said I think the privilege is on my side to share a platform, he was such as a kind man, just wonderful wonderful man and people say he’d mellowed over the years but I don’t think that, maybe he wasn’t so mellow when he was younger.

SJ: Perhaps the LCP lecturers said those things because they felt threatened?

TCH: He never treated me that way.

For example, Henry Steiner he is an Amercan but went to HK and every year he would send a card to Henri and Marion, a Chinese new year card. Henri showed me this Chinese new year card he would send - HS did HSBC logo many years ago - he was like the Walter Landor of HK and then one he visited and was shown round the studio. This was in 1978. Then we fast forward 14 years I met Henry when I was working in HK in 2009 so we reconnected and had a coffee and I said do you remember when you met Henri, he didn’t remember.

SJ: How did Henrion work? Did he follow a methodology?

TCH: I think he developed a methodology with Alan Parkin - a book which is on page 19, ‘Design Coordination and Corporate image’. That brought a methodology into the world of corporate identity which was what we did at WO.

SJ: Yes, I have that. He was in many ways responsible for professionalising design and almost legitimizing it as an industry, developing new ways, people took it a bit more seriously, methodology was away of saying it is being done properly, take it seriously

TCH: Misha Black started DRU and then you had companies that you probably remember like Negus and Negus at the time, then people who left Henri went to WO. Adrian (Harwood) for example.

SJ: Have you heard of the Reimann school?

TCH: No. He knew everybody, he was bringing in books from these people and he would show them the studio. He lent me a book one day done by Herb Lubarlin which I kept, and I’ve still got it. Such as nice book.

SJ: There are loads of books in his archive
TCH: The other thing is that he always did things that meant something that was fit for purpose and relevant. If you look at his war work at lot is about information, the one about eating rabbits and one rabbit has at least 12 young, it’s very easy to understand in its innate sense and its messages and words, you get it straight away.

If you look at his logo for the blood transfusion, that is very Henrion.

He wouldn’t have been able to do that if he hadn’t collaborated or directed or managed people.

When he did KLM he would take the logo of KLM and blur it and show it to the client, if it works going down the runway you have to be able to see it he said. He was practical, relevant, that was part of what he was about. Everything had to have a function.

SJ: Exhibition design itself is almost an expression of Modernism itself because it was fit for purpose, there wasn’t anything there that wasn’t needed, they were so powerful and strong, they were being seen by so many different people. What do you think made him particularly special?

TCH: He would look at things. Materials, if you imagine we use it for building and its a glass panel with returns, you can imagine that a - it is something we should develop - very strong - and they used that on buildings to make glass walls you see it on the new central St Martin’s school, he showed me how he had made it into his coffee table which he used in his studio. So he could appropriate an unconventional material and make it his own.

He was could put his hand to anything and if you look at his book you can see that, product, posters, exhibitions.

SJ: That’s unusual, we’re all so specialised now, that he was able to adapt, quite flexible.

TCH: Architecture, furniture, he was one of the first people to commission Richard Rogers. His friend Richard Rogers before he died he invited every person he ever worked with to his house for lunch and Richard Rogers was there and they were good friends. Richard Rogers and his wife when they wanted to move, when they started out they stayed with Henrion and Marion. And he designed an extension for the house. It’s glass at the back of Pond Street. Around the Georges Pompidou time so he was into lots of things and the other thing he said to me was, ‘you know you’re so lucky Tay because you will see the 21st century when I won’t be around’. He knew he would not make it into the new century.

SJ: I’ve heard him say that design is a lot about bringing the future into the present.

TCH: Well I think it’s exactly that, he wasn’t afraid of technology, he would have been fascinated by the computer and I think he would have taken to that, although he didn’t take to what Neville Brody did I remember, The Face he didn’t like. Because I think he loved typography and at the time thought that Neville Brody’s work was not a craft, the aspect of type was in a block, piece of type. With the computer you could stretch it and size it and that was quite a move and i think a lot of typographers found it difficult at the time.
SJ: what other aspects would you say were special?

TCH: I mean the teaching, not only teaching but the Icograda thing, he hosted and Marion I don’t know if she’s still involved, she’s carried it on. Henrion was very proud of hosting every year He was a great teacher and imparted a lot of skills and his knowledge amongst a lot of people. And, then the other thing which is interesting - at one time he was invited to join Pentagram as a partner it was Crosby and Fletcher. I don’t know. This was quite late on and they were graphic designers and didn’t have corporate identity, designers’ designers, but corporate identity wasn’t part of that. Henrion would have brought that special skill. Because Theo Crosby was almost an architect, Alan Fletcher and Forbes were designer, Kenneth Granger an industrial designer. So Henrion would have brought corporate identity into the mix.

I was quite lucky that I was there towards the end of his studio, because he sold his studio to Ludlow and Schmidt, in the early 80s. And then they bought his name back. The worst thing that he did was rename his company HDA International, Henrion Design Associates.
Interview with Michael Wolff: 22 November 2014, 11.00am
at Michael Wolff & Company, 9 Cumberland Gardens, London

Consent form signed.

Michael Wolff was co-founder of brand identity consultancy Wolff Olins and he is an independent design consultant.

SJ: When did you first meet Henrion?

MW: My picture of Henrion is probably partly true and partly invented by me. I can tell you when I first met him. I met him at his house at I think, 35 Pond Street, I can remember the address and I wanted to become a member of the Royal Society of Arts for pure self agrandissement purposes. Because I felt so insubstantial at the beginning of my career.

SJ: How old were you then?

MW: Much older than I should have been, probably in my 20s somewhere, yeah. I’d come out of architecture and had many jobs and been fired to the point that I began to realise I was unusual. The only purpose of being fired so often actually served, and I sort of thought that there is something about me that is intolerable to other people. Eventually intolerable to Wolff Olins. And I needed to substantiate myself in some way because I needed to, because if someone said ‘well what have you done?’, I’d say ‘Well, I’ve been fired ten times.’ And if you saw the work I was fired for, you’d get some idea of what I was like. Um, so to belong to anything would be helpful, so I was an LSIA, you could actually be before you were a member you could be licensured, which was itself aggrandizing, I didn’t give a damn about the letters after my name, it was at that point invaluable and I went from job to job. I went to see both Henrion and Misha Black and they were both charming to me.

SJ: Was this when Henrion was working a lot with Misha Black?

MW: I don’t know.

SJ: They worked together at the Design Research Unit and at the Ministry of Information.

MW: They all had these sort of strange jobs as design became born? Ministry of Camoflage or something.

SJ: Yes, I’ve read about that, it sounds fascinating.

MW: It is fascinating, but how they actually created the design business here and in America, these guys, these central European guys, because they did. You know, Walter Margolies, Walter Landor, all these guys, I’m trying to think of some others, Saul Bass I suppose, came a bit later.

SJ: He wrote an obituary of Henrion which I’m trying to find. I haven’t been able to find it but I’m on the case.

MW: Well I thought of him [Henrion] as a great man in that he created, I’m not sure if this is true, but I feel that he created some sort of stature of fees for designers. Because
I remember he got a royalty from Mr Cute? from Tate and Lyle and I remember thinking, 'My God that's pulling something off!'

SJ: When you met him with Misha Black, what was your first impression?

MW: They both had bow ties, I think, and interesting glasses, Henrion didn’t have glasses. But they had an appearance that also consolidated their eminence in a way. Um and Henrion had a secretary PA, I'm not quite sure what their relationship was, but she really supported him. I can't even remember her name and I think she was quite significant in helping him build his business. And they both had slightly foreign accents that was marvellous and what was he doing, of course, he did KLM and that was the first assignment, aside from IBM and Olivetti I suppose, for me, I'm sure there were others, Rosenthal I suppose, but Olivetti, IBM and KLM were for me the first examples of consistently controlled design being part of a commercial proposition. IBM much more seriously than KLM. 5.06. They just designed their tickets and painted their planes, I don't think Henrion or any of us influence the quality of quality of KLM's spirit or stance in the way that Eliot Noyes did for IBM. So I would put both Henrion and Misha Black, in a way, in a more superficial area of design, which most designers are in today, rather than someone like Eliot Noyes who was more like Jonny Ives, or someone like that. He was much more profound guy in his work.

In some way we have to thank Hitler for his persecution of the Jews, that he got these people out of Germany into some of these other countries.

SJ: That was going to be my next question, this emigre community that descended or passed through, what impact did they have?

MW: My parents were from Russia and and some of them stayed and some of them left.

SJ: The fact that you had this emigre community at that time, all working together, with Crawfords and people like Ashley Havinden

MW: Was he one as well?

SJ: He wasn’t an emigre. He was working for Crawford’s at the time.

MW: They gave me my first successful job. I worked for Sir William Crawford and Partners design company in Harley Street.

SJ: Henrion freelanced for Crawford’s during the war.

MW: I didn’t realise that. I cut my teeth at Crawford’s.

SJ: Do you think that emigre community contributed to a specific Modernist design that came out of London?

MW: I never really thought of it, it must have done, to some extent. It must have done.

SJ: Looking at the material, I think you can see in his posters.
MW: That is a fantastic posters. Can one still buy that? It is absolutely stunning. Of course these guys won the second world war, the Russians really. We couldn’t have done it without the Americans but it was the Russians that knocked them out of Russia otherwise God knows what would have happened.

SJ: Was it that melting pot of designers that changed everything?

MW. There was something about the whole bow tie thing. Wally had that. The sort of professional pretense. We were never doctors, we were never really professional people, not really. We were commercial artists with a justification system but we depended entirely on the quality of the businesses that we worked for. I suppose you could say that a doctor depends on the quality of the human being he is treating, but it’s not the same thing. You put yourself in the hands of a doctor with your life at stake, or at the hands of a lawyer with some real negotiation, it is true what a designer does can affect the performance of your business but not in such a profound way. So I kind of felt that the professional behaviour of designers was a bit bogus, to be honest. It was sort of part of the uniform as black is today.

SJ: In a sense that shift from commercial artist to professional designer was happening at that time.

MW: It meant money of course, it was a business decision rather than a long trajectory through surgeons and barbers and operations and homeopathy and whatever it’s called, medicines made from plants, and stuff like that, herbalism. These professions had much longer roots that design profession. I don’t think our roots are very substantial.

SJ: During the war he was doing these exhibitions, there was a saturation of propaganda during the war.

MW: What’s that stars and stripes one?

SJ: This was Young America, an exhibition he did for the OWI during the war. The purpose was to educate the British public and try to persuade them that the Americans were just like us, with strong values and so on. So he was projecting the national identity of America in this exhibition.

MW: It’s interesting the difference between striking an image that instantaneously delivers itself, as this one does, too and to getting into the body of information which never quite cuts it, because it’s the assumption of interest which is our most deadly foe, everyone’s going to be interested in what we do, but of course everyone is only interested in their own lives and barely notice anything, because why should they?

SJ: If there was that amount of stuff, and it was everywhere, sometimes you don’t see the wood for the trees.

MW: Yes, you think, ‘what are you getting at and what do you want to make me do, leave me alone, I want my hot water bottle!’ Yeah, it is very difficult to have to say to people what you write is not what people read, because people read what people read, I think I hear what I read, I don’t think I even read it, so the complexity of how we respond to things we’ve nowhere near got the bottom to it yet. It is concocted and looking at this, I have so many resonances with what that symbol means, even though it is a Chinese symbol and the idea of this whole ideology being torn apart by nations is rather absurd
in a way but it is so powerful. He knew he was playing with power, some of the time. Some of the time he lost it and just did the job, and I think that's true for all of us. Sometimes we just do the job, and sometimes we are handling emotional moments of great significance or relatively great significance, it's funny isn't it?

SJ: It was critical what they were doing, their exhibitions went all over the world.

MW: Of course the government wants people to think a certain way and most people are simply wanting to be safe.

SJ: It is interesting to think about how the MOI was trying to redefine what it was to be British, so that people had something to rally behind.

MW: It must have been quite tough for emigres.

SJ: He was interned for six months on the Isle of Man. He went from being imprisoned to being given access to top secret information. What tools do you use to create an identity for a country at a critical moment, how do you do it?

MW: How can you be in the mind of the people you want to influence? It’s tough enough now, working for a company. Especially today as companies becoming more what I call centripetal, and less centrifugal and more self interested and anti social in many cases. Hiring people, paying them less and less. Glorifying their shareholders. 19.25 I’m writing a little bit about corporate feudalism where shareholders are like courtiers and you sort of thing, there’s a very good Ted talk, called the Pitchforks are Coming, I can’t remember the name of the guy, I’ll send it to you. But he’s a plutocrat, self confessed. He was the first non family member investing in Amazon, and he’s saying is what we’ve got is unsustainable. We’re moving towards fewer and fewer people owning more and more assets of the world and it’s like just before the French Revolution. We’re tolerating and blind to a great degree of poverty and I don’t really care about it as long as they don’t get infectious diseases that we can catch, I’m exaggerating, but not a lot.

SJ: My impression is that there was a social purpose and I wondered whether they were able to get any of their ideas into their work?

MW: It had a bit of that in it, a bit of a wagging finger, I know how you should live better than you. I doubt it, I think they had to go to terrible meetings. I like the blue, let’s go for that one.

SJ: Henrion says that he had less meddling at this time, working with the MOI, because there was no time.

MW: We all have moments at some point. I was with Norman Fowler, very short window, before an election before Margaret Thatcher, he couldn’t stand her, threw him out. He then got John More, who was Minister of Health, he got ill, but I was on the verge of being able to put beauty into the health service as Norman Fowler got it. I was going to sell them the idea of each hospital having a different wild flower as a symbol, with the whole NHS being made of wild flowers and changing the name of the NHS to the health service, and English Health, Welsh Health, Scottish health, he got it, he absolutely got it and turning medical hospitals into hotels with medical treatment. He completely got it. But it was a moment and it passed and how we’ve got some stupid twee letters looking rather bleak and you either get conflagration of these moments or you don’t.
MW: He was very courageous with his cancer too, I remember him turning up to an exhibition thinking my god he’s so thin.

SJ: This is all the Dig for Victory stuff. Quite playful and quite ‘retail’

MW: These guys were very very practical, as well, that’s why they were more than commercial artists, they were designers, they had this practical application, er thought, driving what they did, they knew they wanted results, they were responsible to their clients in that way.

SJ: Exhibition design requires many different skills.

MW: it is sort of frowned on today.

SJ: To be a good exhibition designer, what do you need as a designer?

Drama, a sense of place, how to communicate without eroding the sense of place, you know for example, if you’re going to St Paul’s Cathedral, you don’t want to see worship God posters, because the building itself is doing something and you being there at all is doing something: you’re not going to put posters up in a Cathedral really. I think It’s a question of drama, a question of understanding the context, a question of understanding the message, a question of understanding where people are anyway, there’s no point in telling people to care about peace when they are at war and they obviously care about peace. A sense of what is appropriate I suppose. 25.18

Especially when you’ve got your client saying these are 2p cheaper than everyone else, but nobody cares. This is not a question of price, or this one is just a question of price. And then of course, you don’t know if you’re right and wrong as a designer, that’s quite a difficult issue so you have this huge research industry trying to tell you what’s right and what’s wrong, but then you think they can’t be sure either, they can get in wrong too. So it’s very chancy the whole thing.

SJ: What do you think about his contemporaries?

Hans Schleger did MacFisheries which was so wonderful, it was beautiful.

SJ: I wondered to what extent the Americans influenced him?

MW: A huge influence, so many times you hear Wally Olins being credited, and I knew him very well, he was fundamentally a historian. I remember him saying to me once, the past always repeats itself which I fundamentally disbelieve. If you like, that was the basic disagreement between us. Wally was never really interested in the future, he had an analytical retrospective mind, and it stood him in very good stead, because most people are sloppy about history, even their own company’s history. He really understood how things got to be the way they are, better than most people in the design business ever did. But his belief in how things could be. When I went to California and did the EST training and all that. They couldn’t stand it. Oh my god. shock horror. The idea that we could do more in the way that we lived rather than repeat what we had learnt. But yes, he was always credited with being the creator of branding which of course was nonsense because it was of course the Romans. But in terms of contemporary branding as a business, Wolff Olins was not that unique, how they did it may have been very
different from other people but Landor were certainly there before we were. And so was Henrion, and so was Misha Black and so were quite a lot of them really, Schleger. When I think of some of the quirky things, I’m often talking to students and I say I’ve never seen anything better than His Master’s Voice, amazing name and an astonishing symbol and we never worked for a client that was as stubborn in what they did as Joe Lyons was, they even made their own uniforms, an incredible business, a family business. Amazing when you think about it.

SJ: What about Eliot Noyes and the stuff going on in the States?

MW: Raymond Loewy, amazing really. Studio Bakker, those trains.

SJ: My understanding is that the professionalisation of design was accelerating in America.

MW: The whole advertising business, without America it would never had happened.

SJ: The structure of businesses, how they created hierarchies of job roles came over to Britain.

MW: American leadership was astonishing. In some ways still is, it’s not quite the same. England has been unbelievably creative. Which is hard to quite credit why, but there it is. Alan Parker, Alan Fletcher, actors, writers. It’s easy to denigrate America really because of the politics, and the rest of it, it’s still an amazing nation.

SJ: I do sense that in Henrion’s work that he had friends who went to America, had an interest in the way they were doing things over there

MW: A lot of them, I always felt Henrion and Misha Black kind of leant a little bit on professional status. Initials after them names, Professor, Misha Black being knighted, John Sorrell being knighted. They believed in the usefulness of this. I was talking to someone the other day, you find class, if you look in British corporate history and look at big companies you will find that most of them had Sir someone or Lord someone on their boards. If you look in Russian society today, they have criminality as a sort of contextual flavour, of course very few criminals, but if you look in the same way in the history of this bank for example, you will find that this original shareholder bought a third of the company fifteen years before, we have lords and ladies, they have criminals. Americans have great industrialists: Rockefeller, never Lord Rockefeller. But Rockefellers, families is the American thing I think.

SJ: He always used to talk about bringing the future into the present, what do you think he meant by that? Do you think he wanted to show how things could be?

MW: I have no idea. I don’t think he did that. You can’t see that. The biggest example of his publicly accessible work was probably KLM. You can’t see anything about KLM as an airline that is like Apple or like Southwest Airlines, There’s nothing about KLM beyond what it looked like, so I think it was maybe something he believed, but that’s all.

SJ: Within the war work there was a clear objective to communicate to the masses and get the message out there.
MW: Yes, and defeat Nazism. You couldn’t say defeat Nazism more powerfully than that. Whether it had been done before it had been defeated.

The thing that is missing in here is the amount of Germans, there were certainly a lot of Germans trying to stop the Nazis too, I imagine.

SJ: Is there an obvious visual language?

MW: No, I don’t think there is funnily enough. I think he had a sense of drama. A lot of these have got drama and I think he was probably a master of having an idea. That’s beautiful. So I think he knew what an idea was but I think quite often he had to succumb to information.

SJ: Either minimal or using display to get the message across in his exhibitions.

MW: I think that at one point in WO where I tried to bring some some people from DDB into WO because I think agency writers and art directors had a better idea of how to reach people than designers did and we brought people from DDB, paid them more than anybody, because it’s such a highly paid industry, and it didn’t really work out and in a way it’s a shame that we’ve got this schism which in some ways has declined from the greatness it had in the 60s and design which has progressed from its sort of naivety in those early days so that in a way, there’s more sophistication I think in the advertising business but it’s corrupted by commerce and the design business is still capable of things like this catalogue. This could never have come out of an advertising agency, they haven’t got the skill, the time or the joy. This is where you find design suddenly happening in companies, when whoever is running the company has a passion.

Or like Terence Conran in his heyday, when they have it they have it or they get stuck with a look they think is it, it’s like a prison sentence really.

SJ: Do you think being an emigre gave him a unique perspective of what it was like to be British?

MW: Possibly, you can see from outside as opposed to being deeply inside it from where you can’t see it. I often think that when I see a cardinal and think, ‘do you realise you are dressed up like Father Christmas?’ and they think. ‘no I’m dressed up like a superior member of this organisation I don’t look like father Christmas at all, what are you talking about?’

If you haven’t long been in this country. You’re still defending yourself, a little bit ingratiating yourself with the new culture, wanting to make friends and be well thought of and treated well, I think it must have been very difficult. I’m enormously admiring of people where they go into a country and the language isn’t their own or their culture isn’t their own. I just don’t know how they do it.

SJ: How was he able to communicate these messages to such as mass audience, did that distance help?

MW: What enormous confidence over the top of lack of confidence because that’s how confidence comes. Confidence is really a feat of no confidence.
He was enormously helpful and encouraging. I think he was encouraging to a lot of people.

SJ: Do you think design can rally people?

MW: I think it can, a sense of belonging to something. The Romans and the Nazis probably proved that better than anyone else. No, it’s true. You talk about IBM-ers. It also has the power to UK-IP. What a fortunate name they’ve got.

SJ: Do you there was ever a British modernism?

MW: Probably, Eileen Gray and her furniture and Heal’s and to a certain extent Terence, although he’s very eclectic and there’s a lot of France in Terence. I think there was, I think it was not so much British modernism, it was British middle class-ism.

The 1950s was completely drowned out by the 60s. It was a slightly stern thing in the 50s. I thought the Festival of Britain was a bit stern. Slight touch of the old wagging finger in the architecture. Dennis Lennon and people like that. We know best how things should look and don’t bring this budgerigar into this flat.
APPENDIX C: MASS OBSERVATION REPORT

E. University of Sussex Library. The Keep. 1.
"That's a leghorn... I wonder if they feed them what I have to feed mine?" and laughed.

"Got a wicked look in his eye, ain't he?" Jute black hen.

On the left side of the entrance is a board model of a family of 5 seated at dinner of pie, salad and potatoes —

"The ministry of agriculture tells you to help yourself to extra food."

"This exhibition shows you how you can add to your own and the nation's food supply."

At the back are brightly coloured stands with photographs and slogans urging the rabbit — "Save your own vegetables and save all waste." In the centre back are rabbit hutch前线 with word cutting, one each for Dutch bucks and a Flemish doe, and another for 6 small rabbits. These are photographs illustrating points as "One rabbit has at least 12 young a year — 45 lbs of meat," and "Rabbis can be fed on — waste."

The remaining stands give information about allotments with slogans "Your own vegetables all the year round, and 'Better an hour in the garden than an hour in the lecture.' A glass case contains..."
Little card models of vegetables and information as to the times of sowing other vegetables on the stands show people at work on allotments and in back gardens, and hints on "how to sow" and "how to dig."

At the end is a map of Greater London with coloured dots marking pig clubs, rabbit, poultry and allotment societies, and the information that the displays were designed by F.A.K. Harris.

The big bin in the centre contains 4 medium sized black bags, when NV was present they were all empty. "I don't know, they're usually eating..."

Most interest was taken in the live exhibits, a volunteer was discussing the habits of the rabbits, etc., in an informed manner, women exclaimed over the cuteness and smallness of the baby rabbits.

The audience were always answering questions, so there was usually a group listening intently to the answers. One question was from F553 to a male volunteer wearing a green contrast with the red letter "DRC - F553. "Can you give me a rough idea of how much it would cost to set myself up with 4 pots? We thought of giving off a bit of the lawn..."

The volunteer encouraged the idea and said it wouldn't be likely to get pulled in these times. He tried to persuade the Next with more or less the next objections and insisting that they did not need a pond or running water - "just a small bowl of water on the ground so they can stick their heads in - otherwise they get sore eyes."

F553 looked very doubtful at the suggestion.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Justin Banks and Gabriel Banks for their invaluable support and encouragement throughout. I would also like to thank Lesley Whitworth and Sue Breakall for their generous help in locating photographs and information from the F H K Henrion archive at the Design Council Archives, Brighton.