

"American Trademarks" Traces the Origins of Our Logo Lust

By Ken Carbone Thu April 8, 2010



In the year 100,010, some evolved species will be digging through ancient digital rubble and find a strange visual iconography made of tiny colorful squares with rounded corners. They will diligently attempt to decipher what we meant by "I am T-Pain," "Doodle Jump," and "Zombie Farm." Finally, they will conclude that our native tongue was something called Apps.

Every day new apps are introduced for the iPhone, iPod, and now the iPad (not to mention Android apps). Each represents a new business and the touch-screen icons serve as their "logos." With over 100,000 apps to date and more on the way, this is a creative gold rush for graphic designers and fuels our insatiable lust for designing logos.



With over 1,000 examples in categories such as animals, circles, faces, or science, it's fun to browse and serves as a curious retrospective of American entrepreneurship.

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Philip Johnson famously said, "You cannot not know history." The next time you think you have a new idea history will prove that you don't. However, Eric Baker and Tyler Blik's book can inspire a new generation of designers to see that what was old can be new again.

A great logo won't make a spacecraft fly faster or better. The logo is for the public to love and must communicate the bold ambitions of these important programs. Governments should employ world-class designers to create world-class logos. If not, maybe they should give Hollywood a try. They know how to get people excited about the future.

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Ken Carbone is among America's most respected graphic designers, whose work is renowned for its clarity and intelligence. He has built an international reputation creating outstanding programs for world-class clients, including Tiffany & Co., W.L. Gore, Herman Miller, PBS, Christie's, Nonesuch Records, the W Hotel Group, and The Taubman Company. His clients also include celebrated cultural institutions such as the Musée du Louvre, The Museum of Modern Art, The Pierpont Morgan Library, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the High Museum of Art.

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