

The Mao Era in Objects

Wristwatches: Shanghai Brand Logo Designs

What's in a logo?

What does the logo of the Shanghai brand wristwatch tell us about the times? See the photos here of the two types of logo designs and different faces of Shanghai brand watches produced in late 1950s and 1960s.



TITLE

Image 1 Shanghai Brand Wristwatch Face

DATE

late 1950s

CREATOR

Chen Jiachang 陈家昌

PUBLISHER

N/A

RIGHTS

Courtesy of Shen Yu

DESCRIPTION

The first wristwatch face, designed by Chen Jiachang 陈家昌, a technician at the Shanghai Watch Factory (*Shanghai shoubiaochang* 上海手表厂), was inspired by the image Shanghai Mansions (*Shanghai Dasha* 上海大厦), which had been known as the Broadway Mansions (*Bailaohui dasha* 百老汇大厦) from its completion in 1934 until 1951. Chen designed the Chinese characters for “Shanghai” into an ascending style that resembled the Art Deco building and included the brand name/place of production Shanghai in pinyin underneath. The building was the tallest in Shanghai and remained a symbol of the city for decades.

Source: Depicted in Shen Yu 沈瑜 and Sun Li 孙立, *A genealogy of industrial design in China: Light industry, Volume 1* (Gongye sheji zhongguo zhilu: gongyejuan yi 工业设计中国之路:工业卷一) (Dalian: Dalian ligong daxue chubanshe, 2017), 159.



TITLE

Image 2 Shanghai Brand Wristwatch Face

DATE

Late 1960s

CREATOR

Wang Yuan 汪瑗

PUBLISHER

N/A

RIGHTS

Courtesy of Shen Yu

DESCRIPTION

However, in the late 1960s, the Shanghai Watch Factory changed the design. Wang Yuan 汪瑗, also a technician, used two characters from Chairman Mao's handwriting to design the new logo for the Shanghai brand watch, which we can still find on the watch's dials, backs, and packages today. Brands cost money to build. Why might they have changed their logo?

Source: Depicted in Shen Yu 沈瑜 and Sun Li 孙立, *A genealogy of industrial design in China: Light industry, Volume 1 (gongye sheji zhongguo zhilu: gongyejuan 工业设计中国之路:工业卷(一))* (Dalian: Dalian ligong daxue chubanshe, 2017), 159.