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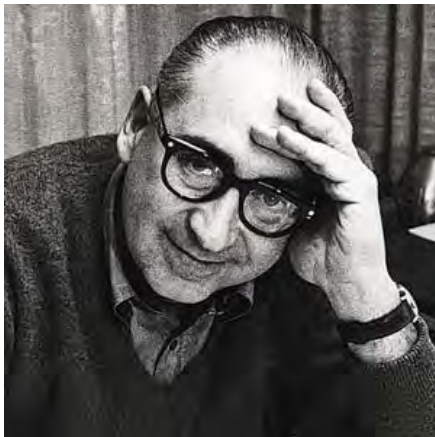
Stamps Designed by AIGA Medalists: Saul Bass

by Bruce L. Johnson

When Saul Bass received his AIGA medal in 1981, the press release announcing the award began:

Beneath theory and rhetoric, and well beyond technique and jargon, the reason for design is to speak to people in a language that is familiar, but also new, to entice people to understand an old thing in a new way, or grasp a new thing in an old way. There has never been a designer who can do this better than Saul Bass, who adds the 1981 AIGA Medal to his long and quite extraordinary list of honors and achievements. Saul Bass honors this award.¹

Saul Bass (1920-1996) was not only one of the great graphic designers of the mid-20th



Saul Bass, ca. 1957, reproduced in *Saul Bass: A Life in Film & Design*, page 40.

century, but the undisputed master of film title design thanks to his collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, and Martin Scorsese. He invented the idea of titling movies — either at the beginning or

end—with sequences that added something in a highly symbolic and evocative way and created print-graphic identification for films that not only title the film, but also serve to unify and drive entire marketing and advertising campaigns. He reinvented the movie title as an art form.

Until Bass designed the titles for Otto Preminger's controversial drug movie, *The Man with the Golden Arm*

(1955), movie titles were so dull that projectionists only pulled back the curtains to reveal the screen once they'd finished. But Preminger wanted his audience to see *The Man with the Golden Arm's* titles as an integral part of the film. By the end of his life, Bass had created more than 50 title sequences for motion pictures that included Mike Todd's *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956), Preminger's *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958) and *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960), *Exodus* (1960), *West Side Story* (1961), Stanley Kra-



Movie Poster for *The Man with the Golden Arm*, designed by Saul Bass.

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ia, is expected to open soon. Free parking is available on-site and across the street.

The Graphics Philately Association and the Wine on Stamps Study Unit of the ATA will hold a joint meeting on Saturday, 18 May. Please meet in Conference Room 201, the NTSS Hospitality Room in the Quality Inn (1273 Chili Avenue, Rochester, NY 14624, [585] 464-8800), from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Besides brief business meetings, attendees will be able to participate in a wine tasting organized by the Wine on Stamps Study Unit. If you plan to attend, please try to bring a bottle or two of wine from your home state for the occasion. This is the fourth NTSS joint meeting of the two study units, and, if past experience is any indication, a good time will be had by all!

A block of rooms has been reserved by the ATA at the Quality Inn; a limited number of rooms will be held until 1 May, so be sure to register early. Ask for the ATA rate of \$89 per night (plus tax). The Quality Inn is near the airport and a 15-minute drive from the Main Street Armory; a free shuttle service will be available. Additional information about the show bourse, exhibitions, awards banquet, tours, and other highlights can be found on the ATA website.

George O. Sinka (1930-2012)

We are saddened to note the death of George O. Sinka, a charter member of the GPA, who joined on 30 October 1975. Mr. Sinka passed away on 25 November 2012, outside Chicago, Illinois, at the age of 82. He is survived by his wife, Annemie, three children, and four grandchildren. George Sinka was born in Budapest, Hungary and came to the United States immediately after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. He had studied printing in Budapest and continued with the profession in Chicago. He was also involved in various printing and graphic arts associations in the Chicago area, and was past president of the Union League Club of Chicago and all of its charitable foundations. During the last eight years of his life, George volunteered many hours at a nearby rehabilitation hospital. He was an avid stamp collector with many areas of interest, which, according to his original GPA application, included "papermaking, printing, binding, books, paper and printing machines, [and] famous printers." Other philatelic interests included the countries of Hungary, Germany, Austria, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, several history topics, and music. The GPA officers and members extend their sincere condolences to the Sinka family.

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**Eight of the corporate logos
designed by Saul Bass**

mer's *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963), and several films for Alfred Hitchcock, including *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959), and *Psycho* (1960).

To younger film directors, Saul Bass was a cinema legend with whom they longed to work. In 1987, he was persuaded to create the titles for James Brooks' *Broadcast News* and then for Penny Marshall's *Big* (1988). In 1990, Bass

found a new long-term collaborator in Martin Scorsese. After *Goodfellas* (1990) and *Cape Fear* (1991), Bass created a sequence of blossoming rose petals for Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* (1993) and a hauntingly macabre one of Robert De Niro falling through the sinister neons of the Las Vegas Strip for the director's *Casino* (1995) to symbolize his character's descent into hell.

Even before he made his cinematic debut in the mid-1950s, however, Bass was a celebrated graphic designer. Born in the Bronx in 1920 to an émigré furrier and his wife, he was a creative child who drew constantly. Bass studied at the Art Students League in New York and Brooklyn College under Gyorgy Kepes, a Hungarian graphic designer who had worked with László Moholy-Nagy in 1930s Berlin and fled with him to the U.S. After apprenticeships with Manhattan design firms, Bass worked as a freelance graphic designer or "commercial artist" as they were called.

Chafing at the creative constraints imposed on him in New York, he moved to Los Angeles in

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**Science & Industry
stamp designed by Saul
Bass, Scott #2031**

1946. After freelancing, he opened his own studio in 1950, working mostly in advertising until Preminger invited him to design the poster for his 1954 movie, *Carmen Jones*. Impressed by the result, Preminger asked Bass to create the film's title sequence too, and later to work on *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

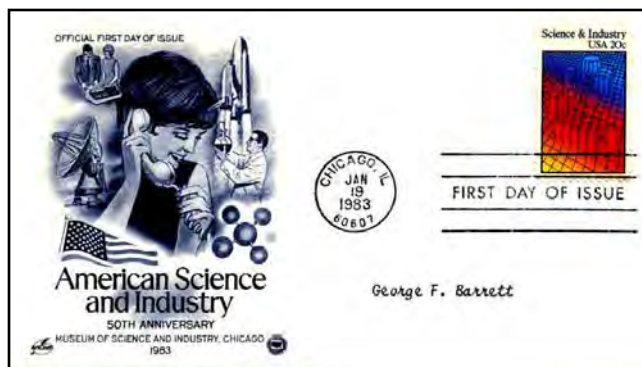
Bass's corporate work included devising highly successful corporate logos for United Airlines, AT&T, Minolta, the Bell Tele-

phone System, and Warner Communications, among many others. He also designed the poster for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

The USPS announced a new 20-cent commemorative issue on 1 December 1982 that would honor the teamwork of science and industry. Perhaps not coincidentally, The Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago was celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1983. Founded by merchant-philanthropist Julius Rosenwald in 1933, the museum is housed in the reconstructed Palace of Fine Arts that had been built for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, located in Jackson Park on Chicago's south side. When the stamp was issued on 19 January 1983 (Scott #2031), the Museum also became the first-day venue.

Saul Bass designed the stamp to symbolize the merger of industry and modern technology through superimposing industrial images on a computer-like grid. Combining the smokestack images of industry with the high-tech devices of modern science, however, presented Bass with a design challenge. His answer was to use a series of forms superimposed on a computer-like grid—the forms suggest industry, but when they and the grid are viewed simultaneously, “they present a three-dimensional view of a high-tech industrial complex.”² The modeler was Ronald C. Sharpe.

The stamp was printed in the offset/intaglio



First Day Cover cancelled at Chicago's Museum of Science & Industry on 19 January 1983

process, with fifty stamps per pane. Getting all the colors to register properly required “frequent changes” of the printing plates, which lead to difficulties in printing sufficient quantities of the stamp. Post offices were duly notified “that they could expect about one-half of the usual automatic supply furnished for a 50-stamp pane of single-design commemoratives.”³ The problems also resulted in many varieties, usually involving a shift of the black intaglio color; misperforated errors are also known.

Saul Bass died in Los Angeles of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1996. His New York Times obituary hailed him as “the minimalist auteur who put a jagged arm in motion in 1955 and created an entire film genre . . . and elevated it into an art.”

Notes

1. David R. Brown, “Saul Bass,” at www.aiga.org/medalist-saulbass, accessed on 11 April 2013.
2. “20¢ Science & Industry,” in Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbook, 1983. (Sidney, Ohio: Linn's Stamp News, 1984), page 10.
3. Ibid., page 11.

Sources

- Bass, Jennifer, and Pat Kirkham. *Saul Bass: A Life in Film & Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2011.
- Brown, David R., “Saul Bass,” at www.aiga.org/medalist-saulbass, accessed on 11 April 2013.
- Linn's U.S. Stamp Yearbook, 1983. Sidney, Ohio: Linn's Stamp News, 1984.