Logos and Signage in
Los Angeles and
Some Other American Cities

Introduction

This Research Paper intends to study the design elements and aesthetic styles of business logos and signage displayed in the walls or in front of commercial buildings in shopping malls and major streets, in the Greater Los Angeles Area and some other cities across the United States such as Athens and Atlanta in Georgia. The data sources, i.e., digital photos, have been shot with a digital camera and processed in Adobe Photoshop program for better illustration of logo design and other relevant artistic elements. To be more specific, the following tools in Adobe Photoshop have been used for relevant purposes:

- For enhancing photographic quality: Polygonal Lasso and Feather tools have been used to make selections of excessively dark or light areas and to allow smooth blending of selected areas and unselected ones when adjustment of hues and brightness is applied; Image tools such as Levels…, Auto Levels, Auto Contrast, Curves, Color Balance, Brightness/Contrast…, and Hue/Saturation have been used to improve the quality of digital images;

- For creating orthographic views of logos with appropriate sizes out of their perspective views in the original digital photos: Edit tools such as Transform-Distort and Scale have been used.

Relevant photos have been selected, processed and used in this Research Paper, from approximately 400 original digital photos. Based on a comparative and categorical analysis of the selected photos, the following categories of logo design and displays have been identified:

- Logos based on Text: This category of logo design uses letters in the names of the institutions (either full names or abbreviations) as the principle design elements, with or without slight inclusions of graphical elements as integral parts of the letters;

- Logos based on a combination of text and graphics: This category of logo design uses letters in the names of the institutions (either full names or abbreviations) as well as graphics as design elements.

This classification is compatible with what is listed in many published books on logo design.

In terms of spatial geometry, logos and signage found in this Research Paper could be either

- Two-dimensional: The logos or signage are "flat;" they could be embossed but extend into two dimensions only;

- Three-dimensional: The logos or signage are not "flat;" they actually extend into three dimensions; for example, they could include a three-dimensional model of any object such as a candy container or a chocolate jar.

Part One:
Two-dimensional Logos & Signage

This part of the Research Paper will deal with company logos that are created and fabricated as "flat" art works; they are usually fabricated with sheet plastic or metal materials with uniform thicknesses; they make up the majority of signage found at commercial or public institutions.

Section One:
Logos Based on Text or Letters

This category of logo design uses letters in the names of the institutions (either full names or abbreviations) as the principle design elements, with or without slight inclusions of graphical elements well blended into the structures of the letters; in some cases, very simple decorative geometric shapes such as stars, stripes, dots, circles, squares and rectangles could be used to enhance design and display (*Figures 1A* through *1H*). Four sub-categories have been found: (1) logos with text only as shown in *Figure 1A*; (2) logos with simple geometric elements as shown in *Figure 1B*; (3) logos with letters of the names or abbreviations of the organizations formed into ligatures, as shown in *Figure 1C*; (4) logos with simple graphical elements (they are mostly simple geometric shapes such as arrows, dots, stars, but could be abstract images of humans, animal, or any objects, such as a smiling face, or in some cases, very concrete image such as the Earth), which are well integrated as parts of the letters of the names of the organizations, as shown in *Figure 1D* (under this sub-category, the graphical elements are NOT separate from the letters).

(Monterey Park)   (Ventura Boulevard, North Hollywood)

(Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles)   (UCLA, Westwood)

Figure 1A. These simple designs found in Greater Los Angeles Area are using letters in the names of business organizations as the only design element.

(Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood)

(Rosemead Boulevard, Temple City)

(Santa Monica Boulevard, Santa Monica)

(Lankershim Boulevard, North Hollywood)

(Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles)

(Universal Studio City Walk, North Hollywood)

(Universal City, North Hollywood)

(Martin Luther King Boulevard, South Gate)

Figure 1B: These simple designs found in Los Angeles are using letters in the names of business organizations as the main design element, with linear neon light tubes, wedge-shape stripes, circles, ellipses, clouds, stars, dots, and other geometric elements to enhance the visual effects and design composition or layout of the logos. Notice that images of the cook in MacDonald's and Ruby's Diner signs are independent from the official logos of the companies; for this reason, they are included in this category.

Figure 1C. The logos of these two entertainment businesses close to the cross-section of Hollywood and Highland Boulevards in the City of Hollywood use simple geometric shapes and framing with simple decorative details as supplementary deign elements to their otherwise very simple text-based logo design.
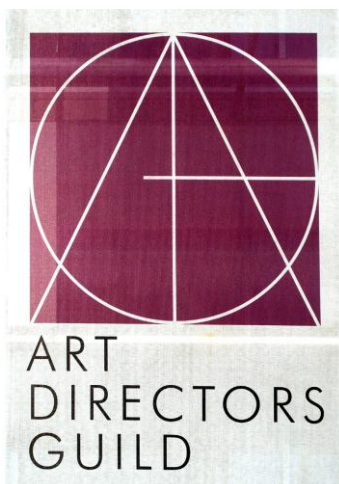
Figure 1D. The abbreviation letters of the Art Directors Guild, ADG, form the logo of the organization (left; found at Ventura Boulevard, North Hollywood). The four letters in the name of the Coca Cola company form its logo with the tips of the two letters C extending into others (right; found in downtown Atlanta, Georgia). These two examples could be considered as ligatures.

(Westfield Shopping Town, Century City)

(Vermont Boulevard, Los Angeles, and Universal Studio
City Walk, North Hollywood)

(Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles)

(Commonwealth Street, Alhambra)

(Los Angeles Science Center, Los Angeles)

Figure 1E. Logos found in the Greater Los Angeles Area with simple graphical elements such as arrow, smiling faces, dots representing human heads, stars and the Earth, which are well integrated as parts of the letters of the names of the organizations.

Figure 1G. This trademark signage is based on a combination of text and simple geometric shapes (ellipses).

Figure 1F. The logo of this snack and yogurt store in Chinatown, Los Angeles, close to the cross-section of North Broadway Boulevard and College Street, features images of apple and peanut integrated with the letters of the company's name.

Figure 1H. The logo of this fashion chain store is based on text only, and when combined with a wonderful background, it creates an elegant classic aesthetic effect.

Section Two:
Logos Based on a Combination of Text and
Realistic-Looking Images or Graphics

In terms of the relationship between the text and the graphical elements, for all logos combining texts and graphics as design elements discussed in this Section, and subsequent Sections Three, Four and Five of Part One of this Research Paper, three sub-categories have been found:

(1) Balance between the text and the graphics: Most of logos found in the category fall under this sub-category. Examples are shown in *Figures 2C*, *3A* and *3B*; the text and graphics usually have similar sizes and approximately equal visual weights; in addition, the text and the graphics are separate items;

(2) Dominance of the graphics separated from the text: *Figures 2A* and *2D* are examples of this sub-category; the graphics are of larger sizes than the text;

(3) Inclusion of the text inside the graphics: *Figures 2E* is an example of this sub-category; the texts are placed inside parts of the graphics.

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos using the names (or abbreviations) of the institutions, plus realistic-looking images or graphical elements in their design (*Figures 2A* through *2E*). The graphical elements could be photos, line art illustrations, or line art illustrations filled with colors.

Figure 2A. This logo, found at 11990 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, shows the image of a giant crane lifting a heavy piece of cake, which is depicted in a realist style to give a feeling of real thing.

Figure 2B. With a colorful and realistic depiction of a female face with radiating hair made of cars, and a bust with abstract color pattern, the graphics in this signage at the Universal Studio City Walkway look both real and surreal.

Figure 2D. The logo and signage of this restaurant in mid-Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, features three design elements, i.e., a giant photo of crabs, a stylized illustration of a crab and text, to create an impressive and eye-catching effect on passersby.

Figure 2C. The signage of this Italian Restaurant close to Georgia Square Mall in Athens, Georgia, features a chain of grapes with fresh colors.

Figure 2E. The signage of this British Public Bar at Santa Monica Boulevard close to the famous Third Street Promenade and the Santa Monica Beach features a King's head, with vivid and colorful illustration of the King's image which looks majestic.

Section Three:
Logos Based on a Combination of Text and
Cartoon Images or Graphics

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos using the names (or abbreviations) of the institutions, plus cartoon-looking images or graphical elements in their design (*Figures 3A* through *3O*). Based on the examples found so far, the graphical elements could be line art illustrations, or line art illustrations filled with colors. With digital technologies that allow the creation of photo-realistic cartoon images out of normal digital pictures, it is possible to design logos using both text and photo-realistic cartoons, although due to shortage of time and lack of knowledge, no such example has been collected yet for this Research Paper.

Figure 3A. The logo of this chain pizza restaurant features a cartoon figure of a little boy enjoying a slice of pizza.

Figure 3B. This Vietnamese restaurant in Chinatown, Los Angeles, features a cartoon boy enjoying noodle, with a refined style reminiscent of Japanese Manga.

Figure 3C. This seafood outlet at the Santa Monica Beach Pier features a personified shrimp created as a cartoon image.

Figure 3D. This signage of Disneyland above a store front close to the cross-section of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Boulevard in the City of Hollywood features two Disneyland cartoon characters, the Magic Mice.

Figure 3F. The logo of this cheese store in Athens, Georgia, nearby the University of Georgia, features a beautiful cartoon character.

Figure 3E. A personified cartoon image of a pepper dominates the logo of this restaurant near the entrance gate to the University of Georgia.

Figure 3H. The logo of this fast food restaurant close to the cross-section of Western Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles features a cartoon image of a personified chicken dressed up in Latin-American style hat and cloth.

Figure 3G. The logo of this fast food restaurant close to the cross-section of Magnolia Boulevard and Lankershim Boulevard in the City of North Hollywood, in the North Hollywood Art District (NOHO), California, features a personified cartoon character of a chicken.

Figure 3I. The logo of this Taiwanese-American restaurant close to the cross-section of Garvey Boulevard and Garfield Boulevard in the City of Monterey Park, California, features an interesting name playing with phonetics and an interesting cartoon image of an unique cook.

Figure 3J. The logos of these Mexican food restaurants along Avenida Cesar Chavez in the City of Monterey Park, California, all feature a cook's cartoon image wearing either a crown or a Latino style hat.

Figure 3K. Both of these logos feature a stylized cartoon image.

Figure 3L. The logo of this physician's office near the cross-section of Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Boulevard, City of Los Angeles, features a wonderful cartoon image of a smiling doctor holding a medical instrument.

Figure 3M. The logos of these two bakeries near the cross-section of Atlantic Boulevard and Cadiz Street in the City of Monterey Park, California, features a cartoon image of chefs presenting a loaf of bread (top) or a piece of cake (bottom).

Figure 3N. This logo features a cartoon image of a personified tooth suggesting a dentist's office.

Figure 3O. The signage of the Food Court in mid-Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, uses a semi-cartoon image of a cook as graphical element to attract more customers (left). The logo of the Korean store signage (right) features two cartoon images of girls.

Section Four:
Logos Based on a Combination of Text and Stylized Illustration of People and Objects as Graphical Elements

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos using the names (or abbreviations) of the institutions, plus stylized images or graphical elements in their design (*Figures 4A* through *4V*). The graphical elements could be line art illustrations, or line art illustrations filled with colors. As shown in *Figures 4A*, *4D*, and *4G*, neon tubes are often used on the outlines of the text or graphical elements, or to create the texts and graphics by their own. For most of the examples, the outlines of the graphical shapes are of free form and look "natural" based on the perceived image of people or object found in the real world, with little inclusions of straight lines and practically speaking, no symmetry in the overall shapes of the graphics.

Figure 4A. This signage found in the Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall features a beautiful neon silhouette of the head of a young lady, with a sentence that reads "Through These Portals Pass the Most Beautiful Girls in the World."
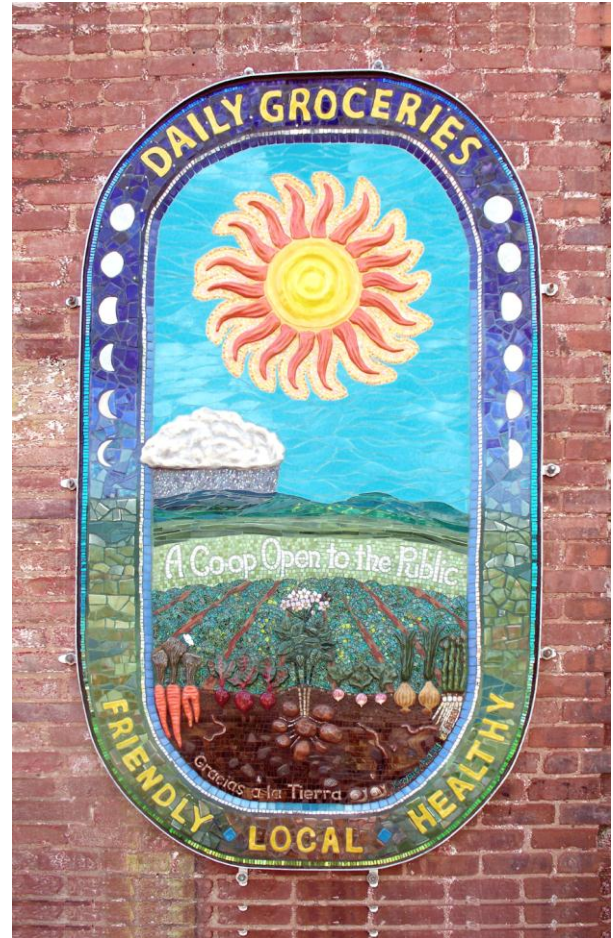

Figure 4B. This ceramic mosaic sign is found in the wall of a commercial building housing many food stores near the cross-sedction of Prince Avenue and Milledge Avenue, in the city of Athens, Georgia.

Figure 4C. The logo of this store found near the cross-section of Magnolia Boulevard and Vineland Avenue, North Hollywood, features a stylized image of two feet.

Figure 4D. The Chinese fast food chain restaurant's logo features the image of a panda.

Figure 4E. The logo of this Chinese seafood restaurant near the cross-section of College Street and North Hill Street in Chinatown, Los Angeles, features a couple of stylized illustration of fishes.

Figure 4F. The logo of this chain restaurant at 6219 Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Woodland Hills, features a stylized illustration of food bowl and text.

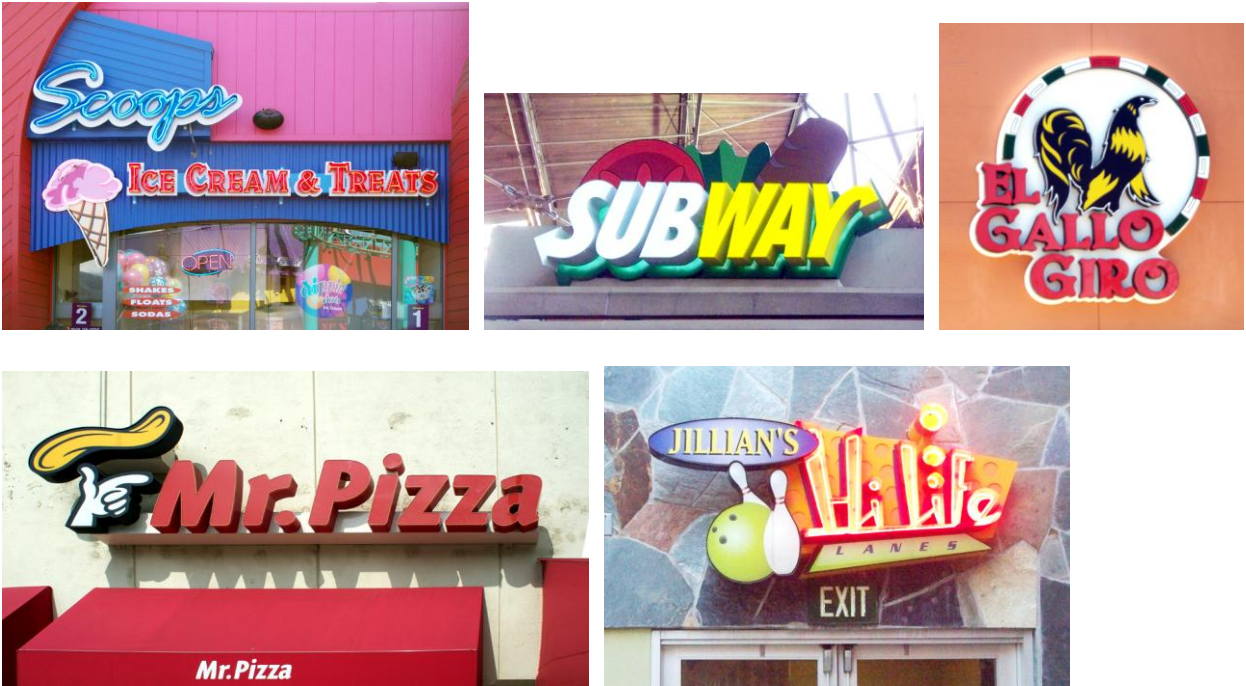(1019 West Martin Luther King, Jr, Los Angeles, California) (Westfield Shopping town, Century City)

(Westfield Shopping town, Century City)

Figure 4G. The logos of these chain stores all feature stylized illustrations of food products or people as graphical elements.

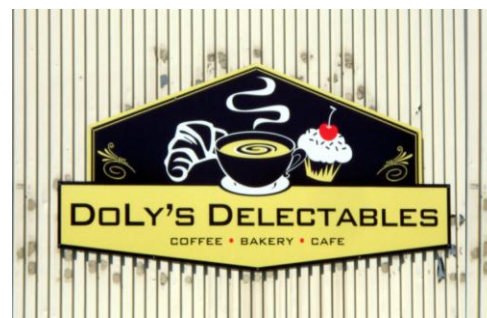(Westfield Shopping Town, Century City)

Figure 4H. Continued.

Figure 4I. The logos of both Chinese (top) and Japanese fast food restaurants features stylized illustrations of a food container as graphical elements.

(3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica, California)

(3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica, California) (Avenida Cesar Chavez, Los Angeles, California)

Figure 4J. The stylized images of people, soup and seafood are featured in the logos of these restaurants and café in the Greater Los Angeles Area.

Figure 4K. The stylized illustration of fire in the logo of this Korean buffet near the across-section of Normandy Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, suggests a B.B.Q. restaurant.

Figure 4M. This logo is found near the 5th Street, Long Beach Station of the Metro Blue Line and features a stylized image of a plate and a spoon.

Figure 4L. This logo close to the 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica is made of ceramic mosaic and features stylized images of radiating sun and ocean waves.

Figure 4O. The image of fresh vegetables in this logo found at the Universal Studio City Walk gives an impressive representation of the produce offered at the store.

Figure 4N. This logo, found at the Universal Studio City Walk, features a stylized illustration of a fish as graphic element.

Figure 4P. The stylized image of ice is featured in the logo found close to Santa Monica Beach.

Figure 4Q. The logos of these fast food outlets all feature a stylized image (sun, bell and house roof) as graphic elements.

Figure 4R. The logo signage of this Mexican grill restaurant close to Georgia Square Mall along the Atlanta Highway in the City of Athens features stylized images of a slice of lime and others as graphic elements.

Figure 4S. The logo of this business, found at 1019 West Martin Luther King, Jr, Los Angeles, California, features stylized images of a crown that corresponds to he name of the business and of water bubbles that symbolizes the nature of the business.

Figure 4T. The logo of these two entertainment businesses, found at the Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall (left) and near the cross-section of Magnolia Boulevard and Vineland Street in North Hollywood (right) respectively, feature the stylized images of movie reels and film stripes as graphic elements.

Figure 4V. The logo of this entertainment business, found at the Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall, features stylized images of a piano and a dog.

Figure 4U. The logo of this business, found close to the 5th Street Station of the Blue Line in Long Beach, California, features stylized shapes of skyscrapers as graphical elements.

Figure 4W. The logo of this chain fast food outlet features a stylized image of a boat, the symbol of Hong Kong.

Figure 4X. The logo of this business features a stylized image of a hand with a spiral pattern in the palm that possibly suggests movement or sports.

Figure 4Y. The logo of this store features stylized images of the products sold, and some elements such as stars and ribbons help to create a festive atmosphere.

Figure 4Z. The logo of this gifts and toy store features stylized images of magnet, lighting and waves that create an effect of spirited excitement.

Section Five:
Logos Based on a Combination of Text and
Symbolic or Abstract Images or Graphics

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos using the names (or abbreviations) of the institutions, plus symbolic or abstract images or graphical elements in their design (*Figures 5A* through *5W*). The graphical elements could be line art illustrations, or line art illustrations filled with colors. Figure 5A compares the major differences between this category and the category of logos with illustrated and stylized graphics discussed in Section Five of this Research Paper.
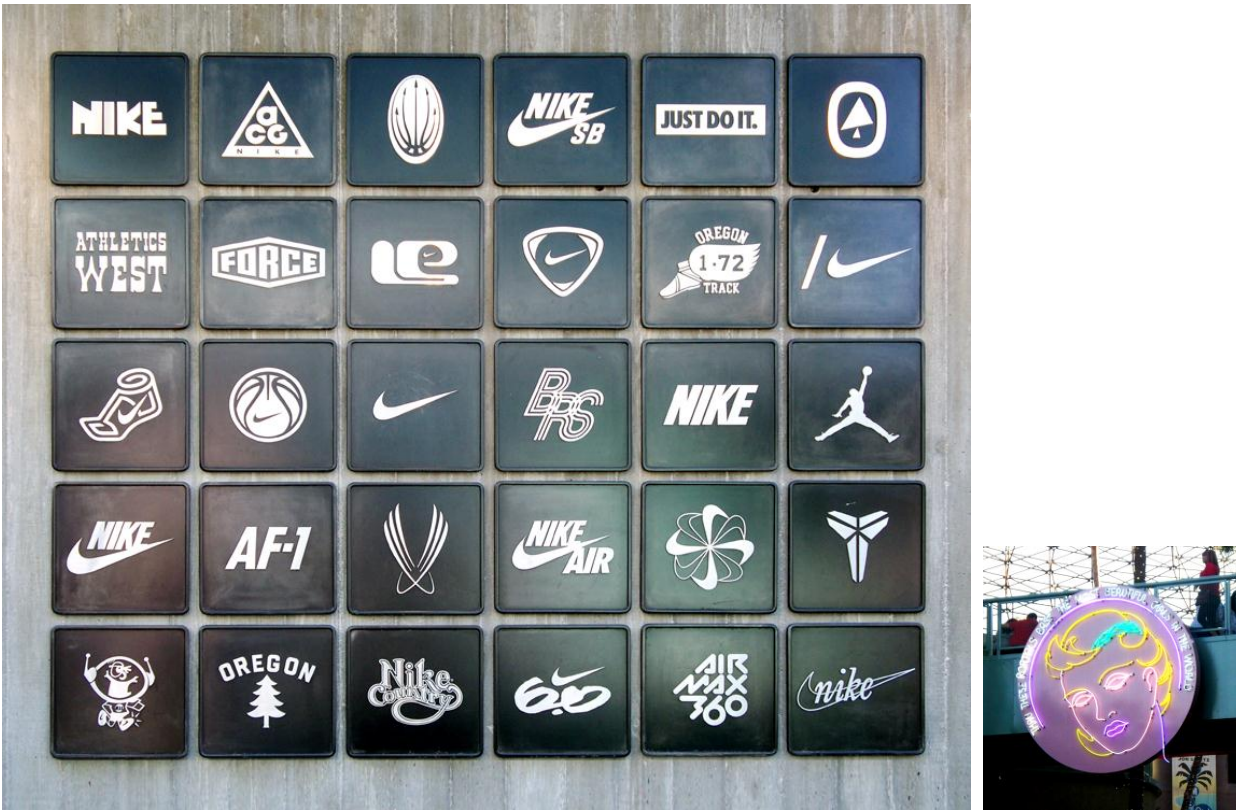
Figure 5A. Compared to illustrated and stylized imagery (right) which include more freeform outlines and shapes, symbols or symbolic images use more "straight" or "regular" curved outlines and more symmetric shapes, and have a more "abstract" outlook (left).

Figure 5B. This logo, found in mid-Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, features three symbolic images.

Figure 5C. The smiling face bounded by a yellow star is prominent in the logo of Carl's Jr. fast food chain outlets.

Figure 5E. Symbolic images of fruit produce are featured in this store.

Figure 5D. The star symbols are featured prominently in this restaurant inside Georgia Square Mall in Athens, Georgia.

Figure 5F. The logo of this business includes abstract and symbolic graphics.

Figure 5H. The two skulls are iconic in outlook in this logo found inside the Citadel shopping mall.

Figure 5G. The image of the three fishes is reduced to a symbolic abstraction in the logo of this supermarket located at the cross-section of Vermont Boulevard and 1st Street, Los Angeles.

Figure 5I. The logo of this Thai restaurant features a symbolic image of a hot pot.

Figure 5J. The symbolic icons of a cat and a dog are used in the logo of this chain store outlet found near the 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica, California.

Figure 5K. The logo of this chain store includes an iconic crown.

Figure 5L. This logo features a symbolic icon created apparently by the superposition of a radiating sun and a thoroughly abstract image of three people.
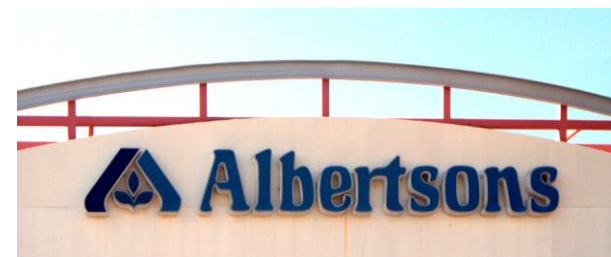

Figure 5M. The logo of this supermarket is apparently the graphical rendition of the initial letter A of the name of the company with an abstract image of a branch of three leaves.

Figure 5N. The logo of the clinic, found near the cross-section of Wilshire Boulevard and Vermont Boulevard, Los Angeles, features an iconic smiling face.

Figure 5O. The heavily abstract and outlined icon of apparently a runner is featured in this footwear and apparel store.

Figure 5P. The abstract image of a young girl is included in the logo of this store located in Chinatown.

Figure 5Q. The iconic image of winged flying lions is featured in the logo of this store found in the Westfield Shopping Center, Century City, in the West Los Angeles Area.

Figure 5R. The plant leaf symbol is featured in the logo of this shopping mall at the cross-section of Garvey Boulevard and Atlantic Boulevard.

Figure 5S. The symbol of the shopping mall is an abstraction of the winged horse with the king's bearded head, a symbol of authority in ancient middle-East.

Figure 5T. The logo of this lens-maker includes a symbolic icon of part of a lens.

Figure 5U. The green color in the logo of British Petroleum Corporation could be suggestive of the company's concern for the environment.

(Cross-section of Wilshire and Vermont, Los Angeles)

(Cross-section of South Atlantic Boulevard and West Floral Drive)

(Duluth, Georgia)

(Westfield Shopping Center, Century City, West Los Angeles)

(Los Angeles, California)

(Westfield Shopping Center, Century City, West Los Angeles)

(Downtown Louisville, Kentucky)

(Mid-Wilshire Boulevard, Korea Town)

Figure 5V. All of the above logos feature very abstract graphical icons that are up to interpretation in terms of their meaning.

(Cross-section of Vermont and Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles)

(Cross-section of Cadiz Street and Atlantic Boulevard)

(Near the cross-section of Artesia Boulevard and Barnhill Avenue, Artesia, California)

(Athens, Georgia)

(Ventura Boulevard, Studio City)

(Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica)

Figure 5W. The objects represented in the symbols featured in the above logos could be recognized as, from left to right and from top to bottom, a pink berry, two hands, a man with tools in his hand, an Irish harp, a paw, cogwheels, a rhinoceros, pharmacy instrument, cross and street scene (skyscrapers).

Part Two:
Three-Dimensional Logos & Signage

If companies can afford higher cost of fabrication and installation, they can choose to create three-dimensional models of both text and graphical elements in their store front signage. These three-dimensional models could be either all-round, making them as realistically-looking as real-world objects, or simply three-dimensional images extruded into three-dimensional space (to be more specific, they are two-dimensional graphics applied to sheet-metal or plastic materials which extend into various directions in the three-dimensional space). In terms of the components of the design, all possibilities discussed in all Sections of Part One of this Research Paper could apply; however, as shown in *Figures 6A* through *6C*, the graphical elements, or to be more precise, the three-dimensional models based on the graphical elements in the original two-dimensional design, are usually predominant in terms of their larger sizes and volumes.

Section One:
Logos with All-round Three-dimensional Models

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos featuring all-round three-dimensional objects as graphical elements in addition to the names or abbreviations of the institutions. Due to high cost of fabrication, the examples found are from more upscale communities such as the Studio City, the Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall, and Santa Monica Boulevard, in the Greater Los Angeles Area in California (*Figures 6A* through *6C*).

(Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall)

Figure 6A. The above logos feature all-round three-dimensional objects, such as, from left to right and from top to bottom, cinnabon, chocolate in a container, hamburger and ice cream, fishes, food container, film cartridge, a jar of candies.

(Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall)

(Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, California)

Figure 6A. Continued.

(Santa Monica Boulevard, Santa Monica)

(Cross-section of Vermont and 1st Street, Los Angeles)

(Cross-section of Lankershim and Burbank Boulevards, North Hollywood)

Figure 6B. The above logos feature all-round three-dimensional objects, such as, from left to right and from top to bottom, skyscrapers, house, boat, hand and car, bread, cow, coffee cups, athletic and clock.

(Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, California)   (3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica)

(Santa Monica Boulevard,   (Rowland Heights Shopping Center,   (Westfield Shopping
Santa Monica)   Rowland Heights, California)   Center, Century City)
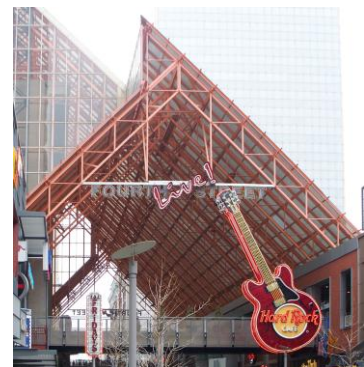
Figure 6B. Continued.

Figure 6C. The above logos feature all-round three-dimensional objects, such as, apple, strawberry, pear, and guitar.

Section Two:
Logos with Two-dimensional Artworks Extruded into
Three-dimensional Space in Various Directions

This Section intends to display some typical examples of the category of logos featuring two-dimensional artworks extruded into three-dimensional space in various directions, in addition to the names or abbreviations of the institutions. Due to high cost of fabrication, generally speaking, only resourceful businesses can afford them and they need them because their location in places of tourist attractions; the examples found are from more upscale communities such as the Studio City, the Universal Studio City Walk shopping mall, in the Greater Los Angeles Area in California, and in downtown Louisville, Kentucky (*Figure 6D*).

(Universal Studio City Walk)

(Ventura Boulevard, Studio City)

(Downtown Louisville, Kentucky)

Figure 6D. The above logos feature two-dimensional artworks extruded into three-dimensional space; and they could be extruded in one or several directions.

Conclusion

This research Paper has shown readers examples of various categories of logos or store front signage found in some shopping mall or major streets in the Greater Los Angeles Area and some other cities in the United States, in terms of their aesthetic styles, design elements, and other factors. Further study is recommended for a deeper understanding of the same issues.