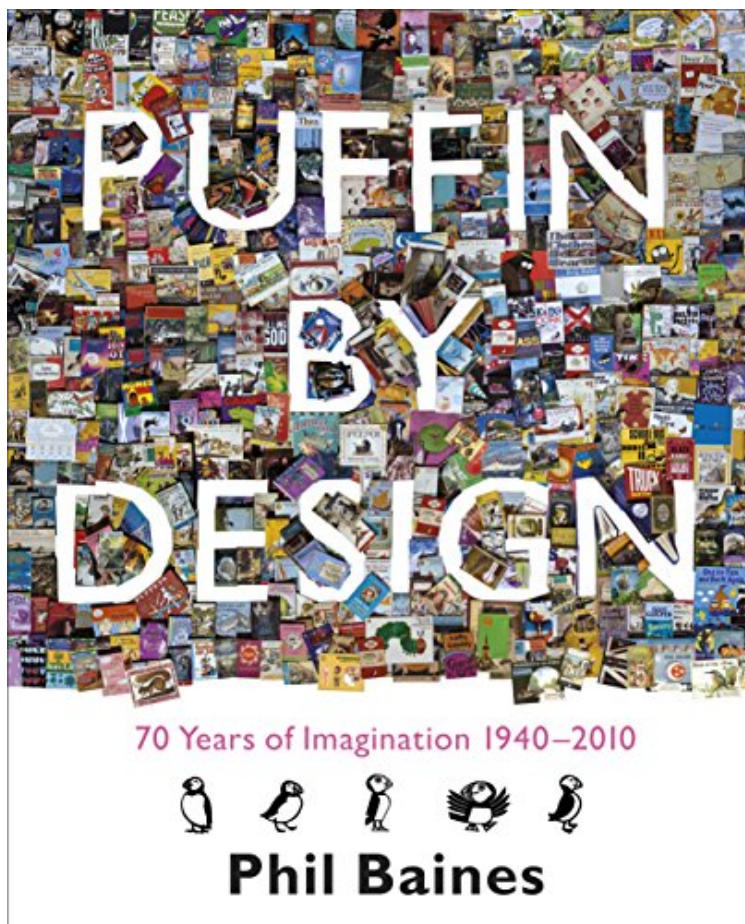


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*Phil Baines*

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## **Puffin By Design: 70 Years Of Imagination 1940-2010**

**Phil Baines : Puffin By Design: 70 Years Of Imagination 1940-2010** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Puffin By Design: 70 Years Of Imagination 1940-2010:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. English children's book cover-art of the BEST KIND, across DECADES! By John Gough Puffin Books is a subsidiary of the English publishers, Penguin Books. Most North American readers will be familiar with books published by the North American subsidiary of Penguin Books. Because of trans-Atlantic copyright issues, relatively few British editions appear in North American bookstores, and vice versa, unless a local company reissues them within either the North American or the British Commonwealth copyright arena. This means that many of the book whose covers are discussed by Phil Baines will be UNKNOWN to North American readers, unless, as I explained, they have been re-issued with a North American publisher's imprint. Alas! The English children's books and artwork and illustrations that feature in "Puffin By Design" are a treasure-trove of top-quality children's literature, and first-class art! Where they are NOT KNOWN in North America, they ought to be! Where the book has been separately issued with new North American artwork, it is often salutary to compare the

work of English artists to their American colleagues. I very highly recommend this book to customers who rely on the North American version of . (A separate version, UK, exists, and is well worth exploring! The differences can be surprising!!) Let me try to explain some of the pleasure and insight Phil Baines gives with this book, but I begin with some background of my own that explains how I am able to assess the book, and recommend it so highly. Please bear with me, ...In the mid-1950s, my father owned a city bookshop in a back lane in Melbourne (he called it Boffin Books), and when it folded (few customers found it, perhaps, or knew what boffins were?) he brought home some of the unsold stock. I was the delighted pre-teen recipient of several early Puffin books, including Cyril Bibbys *The Human Body* (which I found eerie and a bit disturbing too much guts, and I wasn't ready to read about gonads, Fallopian tubes, and the like), and *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* (which, oddly, showed Aladdin as Chinese, rather than Arabian! but so exotically Chinese!), and John Strouds beautiful and inspiring *Airliners* (which was a major contributor, alongside *Biggles* and *Dawn Patrol* and *The Dam Busters*, to me developing a life-long passion for aeroplanes), and Roger Lancelyn Greens superb retelling of *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, illustrated by the astounding Lotte Reiniger, who created fascinating Medieval-styled stained-glass window-like black and white illustrations by delicate paper cut-outs using special scissors her artwork was, and still is, staggering! I grew up in the Kaye Webb era of Puffin, and still collect and read and enjoy Puffin books. I worked for several years, part-time, in a Melbourne (Australia) bookshop, and developed a special interest in Penguin and Puffin and Pelican paperbacks during the late 1960s. As a young father I contributed a short piece to the Australian version of the Puffin Club magazine. On its debut, I knew, and was puzzled by, but visually exhausted by Jill McDonalds stunning illustrations for *The Pirates Tale*, written by Janet Aitchison (age five and a half!!!!). Jill McDonald had an almost psychedelic visual style comparable to that of Alan Aldridge, who had a separate brief impact on Penguin book covers (and created an astounding book of illustrated Beatles lyrics!). As a grown man with adult children I was delighted to find (from the Eleanor Graham era) Monica Redlichs delicious eccentric-family romp, *Jam Tomorrow* (a reference to a sad passing joke in Lewis Carrolls *Alice* book, *Through the Looking-Glass* and typical of Redlichs informed sense of a widely-read audience. I count myself as a reasonably knowledgeable Puffin Books enthusiast. Phil Baines has done a fine job with *Puffin By Design*! I happily read his commentary, and enjoy looking at the beautiful old covers, many of which I still have. (Sadly, my copy of Strouds *Airliners* was so loved and read that the cover fell off and has been lost. And I accidently cut some balsa wood making model planes of course with a razor blade on top of the inner pages. I studied and memorised the airliners, and can still recall many of them, all beautifully described and illustrated. But I digress.) *Puffin By Design* is an excellent book! But I hope there will be a revised and expanded edition, soon, because so much more could (and I think, should) be added and said. I enjoy judicious white on a printed page almost as much as the next person, perhaps. But I prefer to have less white empty page than more. There is scope for Baines to add details into the current acres of empty white space. Lotte Reiniger, for example, could be explained. Gil Sans is mentioned, but should be explained, and other type-faces should be named. Not every reader of this book will know the difference between serif and sans serif, and, in book-cover design, that can be an issue. What about other striking cover-artists? There are too many omissions, I feel. What about, for example, Michael Heslops grippingly chilling covers for Susan Coopers *The Dark is Rising* sequence: they are a visual epitome of each of the books! Or Chris Molans touching covers for Jenny Overtons *Creed Country* novels. Phil Baines companion piece, *Penguin By Design* has the subtitle *A Cover Story*, and logically deals with the covers of Penguin books. Apart from brief notes on a few featured artists (Ardizzone, Ransome, Pienkowski, Jansson, Lauren Child, Pauline Baynes, Quentin Blake, Kathleen Hale ), and the autolithographers, very little is said about other artists, their life or work. Importantly, the AUTHORS are often not cited separately, with their books covers, and the authors name in a book cover, in the smallest size of reproduction, is often not (easily) readable. Very little is said about the authors, some of whom are close to slipping into oblivion. (Monica Redlich, as one example, can be researched with the help of Professor Google, but certainly deserves to be better known in our modern era!) Joan Aiken is mentioned, but her work is not described (fantasy, and alternative history). Nor is she described as the daughter of the major Twentieth century American poet and writer, Conrad Aiken. (Such details matter to readers.) By contrast, *Puffin By Design* lacks the subtitle, *A Cover Story*, and yet it deals almost wholly only with covers with the exception of some very early Picture Puffins produced using autolithography, with hand-created colour separations, rather than colour-filter photo-separations. Only the art INSIDE these early PPs is considered. But Puffins are famous (!) for their illustrations, and their illustrators, such as Brian Wildsmith, Quentin Blake, Charles Keeping, Pauline Baynes, and many others. Also omitted is any description of the CONTENTS of almost all the Puffins included for discussion in Blaines book. (Occasionally an inside page is included, although more often in the autolithography era, and usually with the text so small it is unreadable. Alas!) What, for example, are some of the questions from 1956 in the *Puffin Quiz Book*, or some of the puzzles in *The Puffin Puzzle Book* (1944), or *The Second Puffin Puzzle Book* (1958), all of which are discussed, critically, by Blaine for their covers (pp 68-69, 82-83). It would be very interesting to compare Pauline Baynes now archetypal Puffin covers for C.S. Lewiss *Narnia* books with her covers for the preceding non-Puffin hardcovers. So many of the older Puffins are 50 years or more out of print and exceedingly rare. (REPRINT TIME!) It is great to see some of their covers, but what are these books ABOUT? Why do the *Cranes Fly South* (1948)? What happens at *Greentree Downs*

(1945)? Where is Coconut Island (1945)? Why is there only Jam Tomorrow (1946)? Who is Jehan (1945)? and so on, all illustrated on pages 70-71. Importantly, with the special imprint of Peacock books, Penguin essentially created what is now known as the Young Adult range of books, sub-adult (to some extent) and certainly post-(young)-children, or, in the older publishers terminology of the earlier Twentieth century, juveniles. Later, as Baines points out, Peacock books ceased in 1979 (Baines p 97), but a variant was later revived as [Penguin] Plus, with challenging authors such as Alan Garner, Geraldine McCaughrean, Jane Gardham, John Gordon, and others. The fact that Penguin had won the Lady Chatterly pornography and censorship case opened up topics that had previously been unpublishable, especially for pre-adult readers! Some of Baines comments are insightful, such as his exploration of different ways that the cover page uses a rectangle (uniformly but unrelatedly black, or coloured to fit the rest of the artwork) to contain the title. Some are funny, such as the daftest Puffin logo (pp 38-39), and C. Walter Hodges amusing maritime Puffin (pp 73, 77). (C. Walter Hodges was a prolific and sensitive illustrator, and author-illustrator across decades, but is not discussed.) But sometimes Baines seems to miss the point. On p 130 he makes a rather scrupulous comment about the use of a type-face with a print-script design, so that lower-case a has no overhanging curl, and g resembles y with a closed oval at the top supposedly to aid readability. What he does not say is that Penguin, as a whole, tried VERY hard to lead the way with special use of fonts and phonetics. Penguin famously published *Androcles and the Lion*, using George Bernard Shaws phonetic alphabet, and several childrens titles using Pitman I.T.A. (International Teaching Alphabet). During the 1970s there was, across England, a heightened educational sensitivity to both readability (for children) and learnability (of literacy skills), and Penguin and Puffin responded courageously! On p 136 Baines includes Richard Kennedys cover picture of *Walkabout*, by James Vance Marshall, but fails to comment on the fact that this must be one of the very few books for younger readers showing a naked penis (apparently uncircumcised, although circumcision is a traditional rite of passage for young adolescent Australian Aboriginal boys), although Cyril Bibbys *The Human Body* did this 20 years earlier. (Richard Kennedy, a prolific cover-artist and illustrator, is not discussed!) On p 141 Baines includes the cover of Benjamin Lees *It Cant Be Helped*, but (as elsewhere) says nothing about the contents of the book. He fails to highlight the storys striking inclusion of a parents mental illness, anothers death, or a young man being seduced by a teenage girls genital fondling, or the use of the word clitoris not even Judy Blume used that word in her celebrated book of teenage sexuality, *Forever !* Puffin, in this case, Peacock, was a pioneer in subject-matter! There is surprisingly little mention of Shirley Hughes, as illustrator, cover-artist, or author-illustrator, including her pioneering work in wordless stories and cartoon-style narratives graphic novelettes before graphic novel was invented as a term. Ditto, Raymond Briggs creative use of cartoon format. More could be done to show differences in cover art and in cover design between different covers for re-issued redesigned titles across the years. Baines gives the excellent example of Beverly Clearys teenage novel *Fifteen* (pp 168-9: perhaps oddly, Baines cites 1977 as the Puffin publication date, but my 1962 Peacock edition is virtually identical apart from the bird-logo used). Interestingly he highlights the subtle cropping, or zooming in, used in recent re-uses of the classic covers of Clive Kings *Stig of the Dump* (Ardizzone!), and E.B. Whites *Charlottes Web* (Garth Williams, who is otherwise not discussed, alas! Baines 187, 213, ). However he leaves comparisons of alternative covers implicit with other titles and covers scattered through the pages (and not helpfully Indexed in fact the brevity of the Index is a weakness, lacking authors, and many titles): Dahls *Fantastic Mr Fox*: Baines pp 112, 195; Nortons *The Borrowers*: pp. 187, 199; Dick King-Smiths *The Sheep-Pig*: 184, 199, 213. Although Baines refers to Eric Hills *Wheres Spot?*, mentioning its innovative lift-the-flap concept (p 150-1: but also used much earlier in books by H.E. Rey and others), and includes Ed Veres chick, whose cover declares it is a pop-up book (p 210), Baines does not discuss pop-up or lift-the-flap as a widely used design feature in Puffins probably because, unfortunately, he is only, or mainly concerned with the covers, not the innards. (Alas!) I could go on. But I will conclude by saying, Hooray, for Phil Baines great book about Puffin covers! Very highly recommended!! And, having said that, I hope for a bigger and better second edition, or a companion volume that discusses the CONTENT and the INSIDE PICTURES from the start of Puffins to now. John

Gough Deakin University (retired) jagough49@gmail.com

Late in 1939 a chance meeting between Penguin founder, Allen Lane, and natural history publisher, Noel Carrington, changed the future of children's publishing with the formation of a series called Puffin Picture Books. The first four titles appeared in 1940 and the series quickly established a reputation for presenting children's non-fiction in a unique blend of editing and design. Puffin Story Books soon followed with the publication of *Worzel Gummidge* in 1941 and, like the original launch of Penguin itself, these story books appeared in the three horizontal stripe design. Looking back at seventy years of Puffin paperbacks, Phil Baines charts the development of Puffin and the role of illustrators and designers in creating and defining the identity of the Puffin list from the very first picture book through to modern day. Rich with stunning cover and inside illustrations, and filled with detail of individual titles, Phil discusses the changes in typography, illustration and printing techniques over Puffin's spectacular 70-year history. An extraordinary and beautiful book, this is a perfect companion to *Penguin By Design*.

About the Author Phil Baines was born in Kendal, Westmorland in 1958. He graduated from St Martin's School of Art

in 1985 and the Royal College of Art in 1987, and is now Professor of Typography at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. He has written extensively for the design press as well as three books: *Type Typography* (2002, with Andrew Haslam); *Signs, Lettering in the Environment* (2003, with Catherine Dixon), and *Penguin by Design: A Cover Story 1935-2005* (2005).