



A 74 YEARS OLD PENGUIN

In this huge ocean of penguins, books and publishers, I wondered about which exact subject to dig down into. The possibilities are almost as many as the publisher is old. And they can celebrate 75 years in 2010!

So I searched around between old advertisements, new merchandise, podcasts, audio books, and I wondered then I saw they have a dating section (?) on their [homepage](#), continuing my research I could investigate a history of covers, or the importance of this publisher seen in the graphic design history or just stick to the “[Penguin Composition Rules](#)” Jan Tschichold made, as mentioned in the design blog. A lot of things had happened, and most of it is ways to survive and keep a publisher alive. I should probably start with the beginning and the history of Allen Lane who got the idea about making cheap books, for the price of a package of cigarettes, but I will not.

I ended up where it all began. It's all about the penguin. In this case I will take a look at the development of the logo, but first I should explain myself, and the thing about the penguins. At some point the penguins started to interfere my life, slowly but like an invasion I didn't ask for. They started to follow me and in my works and I decided to let them be in my life, even though I don't know where they come from. With that being said, I don't know anything about these birds, except that they can't fly. That thing makes them fascinating, but also because of the simple image in black and white they are presented as, and their capability to survive in the most harsh environments. I admire them. I would like to recommend a book here, which actually got me to love this animal even more. It's called “[Death and the Penguin](#)” by Andrej Kurkow and the universe about the penguin is awesome! It also has a successor “Penguin missing”.

I've tried to find something out about the Penguin logo, but there isn't that much to read anywhere. In “[Penguin by design a cover story 1935-2005](#)” by Phil Barnes is the development from 1935 until 2003 shown. Look at this background and you can see it, and take a look at these words:

Penguin, Puffin, Pelican, Porpoise, Kestrel, Peacock, Peregrine, Ptarmigan

Did you realize they, almost, all of them starts with a 'P' and is the name for a bird? I never saw half of the birds on the penguin books. The first penguin (the big one to the left) was drawn in 1934 by Edward Young (1913-2003). He was ordered to go to the London Zoo to make sketches of the bird. He drew the first one in several versions, also adaptations for the company's other imprints, Puffin, Pelican and King Penguin.

The following years changed the penguin a bit from book to book until Jan Tschichold in 1949 made the [final look](#) for the book cover. To ensure consistency, the logos were produced as typographic 'characters'. His penguin remained the definitive logo until it got a subtle facelift in 2003, which you can see in the right corner, with the orange background. The changes from the very first to the very last version, isn't that violent. It got more tightened up. It's not that clumsy anymore, and the lines got more controlled. Tschichold also made his version a bit thinner in the lines.

Of course you can see changes in the wings from black and white to all black and the eye and the white next to the eye, and it maybe even got a little bit more style. The facelift from 2003 made a thicker line around the stomach. Other remarkable changes during the years are the way the face is pointing, in switches between left and right, and that some penguins seem to be moving. I can't decide if it's an improvement, but that's probably because it's such a familiar image. But I do really like the clumsy first made penguin! And I think they hit the penguin with this very nice logo -so simple and still so strong.

You might check this [work](#) of Amy Fleisher out also, I like it – because of the penguins.

