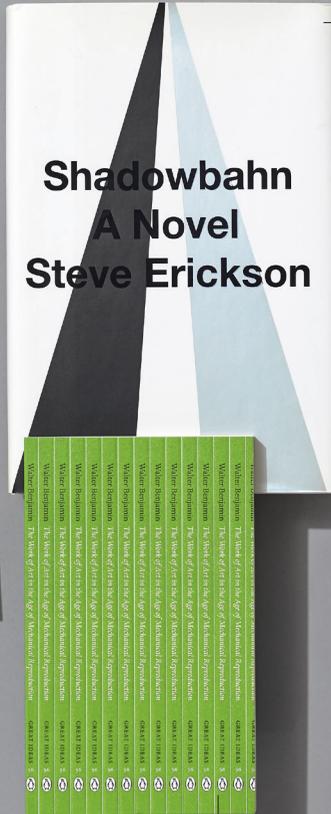




(1 & 2) John Gall's designs for Vintage and Blue Rider Press (3) David Pearson's work for the Penguin Great Ideas series



2

3

CULTURE



BOOK DESIGN/GLOBAL

Judging a book by its cover

Is it the cardinal sin? Not according to those who design the jackets that catch your eye in the bookshop. We meet them to find out why – when it comes to selecting reading material – it should be love at first sight.

Edited by Chiara Rimella



01

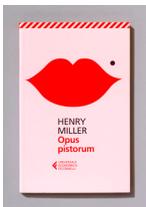
Olimpia Zagnoli

Freelance

Milan

Our favourite work:
OPUS PISTORIUM
by Henry Miller

The most renowned of Italy's new generation of illustrators,



35-year-old Olympia Zagnoli has seen her curvilinear, colourful and evocative work spread far and wide. Her images have featured in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *La Repubblica* and on innumerable book covers for Italian publishers Feltrinelli and Einaudi, as well as Germany's Taschen.

"Decorative and didactic was never my way," says Zagnoli at her studio in her native Milan. Her bright images adorn the wall behind her. "A cover should relate to a theme of the text but it doesn't have to recount every detail; it should be strong enough to stand on its own." For a series of volumes by classic poets, Zagnoli sought the most elemental details of the authors' appearance: Pasolini became a stark black haircut and sunglasses; Jacques Prevert a jaunty flat cap and lit cigarette; and Shakespeare some longish locks and an antique ruff.

As the daughter of a photographer and a painter, Zagnoli was raised with art and was "always surrounded by

books". She initially struggled to combine her disparate influences: space-age imagery, The Beatles' "explosion of references", Courrèges's futuristic fashion and graphic arts from the 1960s and 1970s, including seminal talents such as Bruno Munari and Franco Grignani. Now she combines them harmoniously in her high-impact kaleidoscopic images.

"Books are important objects," she says. "Their design deserves time and attention." She points to a 1954 cover of *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, designed by Munari to resemble layers of abstract stained glass, a vintage favourite of hers. "The cover doesn't have much to do with the text but it leaves space for readers to imagine the story in their own way," she says. "We're bombarded by the internet and television images today so we all see the same things. But books remain very intimate and up to the individual's imagination. It's a privilege to be able to influence readers." — LR



03
Sonya Dyakova
Atelier Dyakova
London



Our favourite work:
THE STORY OF ART
by EH Gombrich

The London office of Russian-born designer Sonya Dyakova has a calm atmosphere: iMacs line one wall, while the white shelves opposite are filled with books, the studio founder's stock in trade.

Dyakova's book work started at Phaidon, where she stood out as one to watch after designing a pocket edition of E.H. Gombrich's classic *The Story of Art*. "It was a bestseller for Phaidon," she says. That was more than a decade ago. Recent work includes a guide to fermentation from Danish restaurant Noma and she has won awards for projects such as *Seeing Things*, a photography book for children.

Though Dyakova is in high demand, she rejects the idea that she has a visual signature. "It's exactly what we're trying not to do," she says. "We're trying to reinvent each time. Book covers start with a studious engagement with the book's contents. It's the whole thing: the story of it."

What, then, should a successful cover do? With bricks-and-mortar retail on the ropes, should covers be designed to be viewed online? At Atelier Dyakova, this is anathema. "I think there's a category of designers who are interested in the whole object as an experience," says Dyakova. "We know what a book looks like but we like to ask the question, 'What can a book be?'" — AUM

IN THE WORDS OF...
Irma Boom

As told to Venetia Rainey

Nicknamed the Queen of Books, Dutch designer Irma Boom has always brought an experimental and tactile approach to the books she's created – more than 330 of them. Here she tells us what makes good book design – and how important it is to still make physical titles in the digital age.

"I think it is interesting when books are thought about. It is not about good or bad design but about there being a good thought.

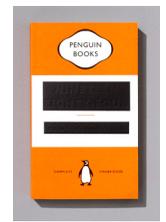
I am not sure that it has to be beautiful; I don't think that's interesting. I spent last year studying for five months at the library at the Vatican and when I was there I realised that if you make books, you make books for the future.

For me a book is a container of thoughts, because it is not changeable: it's fixed information and that notion makes the book extremely valuable. If you compare a book to the internet – which can change any second – the book is a crucial way of freezing a moment in time. If you print something you have to think about it because it will not disappear; so what you do is very important. The world is still for a moment and this is crucial, this is why I want to make books. For me, a book must be a paper book:

I think that e-reader versions are something else. Making books is part of our society and culture, which is why I think that books will never extinguish themselves. I don't consider making them to be an art form: I see it more as a necessity."



02
David Pearson
Type as Image
London



Our favourite work:
1984
by George Orwell

"I was one of those lucky people who could only do one thing: I could draw," says David Pearson. "There wasn't anything else that really caught my attention – other than football, obviously." While studying graphic design at London's Central Saint Martins, he fell for book design. "It seemed to fit my natural rhythm," he says, describing his approach. "Book design gives me time to pore over content and details."

Pearson started at Penguin Books in 2002 (as a text designer then a

cover designer) before setting up his studio, Type as Image, in 2007. He's produced covers for authors from Cormac McCarthy to Noam Chomsky and clients from Christie's to the v&a. When we met him, he was awaiting approval from John Le Carré. "Getting the cover approved by Penguin is one thing – but then it has to go through him."

Working on classics means that, more often than not, there isn't an author to convince. "You have a chance to do something different," says Pearson. Take his idea for George Orwell's *1984*: a bright-orange cover with the title and author's name unflinchingly blacked out. "That felt like the only choice I had left," says Pearson. "In many ways that's the best place to be as a designer: it's often when I have a restrictive brief that I feel the most creative."

Known for his light, literary touch, Pearson's covers are unlikely to be clamouring for the attention of passengers traipsing through an airport after a 12-hour flight. Of course, his style is always evolving. "If you work in a creative industry your taste should change daily," he says. "That will feed into your work." Ultimately Pearson's covers are about the tales told on the inside pages, not himself. "If you draw attention to the designer then you're doing it all wrong," he says. "There's nothing worse than being aware that the designer's wagging their tail when you're looking at their work." — CA

VIEW FROM THE BOOK COMPANIES

Breaking cover

Industry insiders deliver their front-page news.

Richard Ogle, art director at Transworld, the mass-market imprint behind 'The Girl on the Train' and the Jack Reacher series.

"I work mostly on commercial books, where we're hoping to sell mass numbers. You've got a second to attract customers and for them to understand the book. You can't be too clever: the book needs to say what it needs to say. I work with a handful of fonts; colours depend on the fashion of the market. At the moment for crime thriller we're seeing blue-and-yellow palettes; it used to be red and, when *Gone Girl* came out, covers were black and white. You go by recognisability: if you liked that, you'll like this. At the commercial end, a book cover is like an ad: it's a marketing tool."



Peter van der Zwaag, editor for translated fiction at De Bezige Bij, which releases Paul Auster and others in the Netherlands.

"What we decide to do for the cover after we translate a title depends on each book, whether it's famous where it was first published and if a certain cover is already well known. The UK market is focused on illustration but that doesn't work in our market. Often we'll create our own design – sometimes influenced by the original – but we have some cases where authors say they like our cover better. A couple of years ago a lot of our covers featured paintings but now it's very typography heavy. Not every book has the potential to become a big success so we target a specific audience."



Takashi Kuroda, book-design department manager at publisher Shinchosha, which releases the likes of Ali Smith in Japan.

"There's no formula for designing covers. As a rule we include the title and author's name in its original language and in Japanese. We try not to be overly affected by what is written in the book; people buy books before knowing what they're about. The cover hints at what's inside, it's the final nudge. Every new release comes with a narrow wraparound strip, or *obi*, which is like an ad for the book and can change for later editions. Fans of novels prefer cover illustration over solid colours and text because it's softer. Bookshops in Tokyo wrap books in paper also to protect the cover."



PHOTOGRAPHER: Tony Hay; Benjamin McMahon; ILLUSTRATOR: Moiniguis Laura.