



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this series of Letterpress Project e-interviews that we are undertaking over the coming months. The Letterpress Project is a not-for-profit initiative that exists to promote the value and pleasures of the physical book and we are keen to get the thoughts of authors and book illustrators about their own influences, experiences and love of books. We are happy for you to make your answers as long or as brief as you are comfortable with and we will undertake not to edit or paraphrase any of your comments without your explicit permission.

Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

Jan Pienkowski's *Haunted House*, Pat Hutchin's *Don't Forget The Bacon*, Maurice Sendak's *Where The Wild Things Are*, Raymond Brigg's *Gentleman Jim*, Spike Milligan's *Silly Verse for Kids*, Robin and Jocelyn Wild's *Dunmouise Monsters*, the *Richard Scarry Omnibus*, *The World of Myth and Legend* by Brenda Ralph Lewis (illustrated by Rob McCaig). These are all books I remember from when I was small that I still own copies of (in most cases, the copy I had back then). I had a library card and my dad would drop me off there sometimes when he went to do his cleaning job of an evening and then pick me up a few hours later on his way home. I guess this was when I was 8 or 9 or 10. I ate the library. Then, around then, and later on, I started reading Fighting Fantasy books, and other choose your own adventure books. it was all good.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?

I don't know what else to do. I started writing poems as a teenager, and carried on, writing more poems and better poems, and then prose and other things. And now I am what I am.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?

From the writer's side, I think maybe you want to be surprised by the fact that you made this thing. If at the end you look back and go 'Gosh, how did I do that?' then something has gone right. From a reader's side, I think you want a similar surprise, but also you want to have been involved, absorbed, delighted, shocked, moved, tickled... You just want a book to have had an effect on you. Art works retroactively – you read something, or see something,

or listen to something, and suddenly it's impossible to imagine not having known that piece of art – your whole life before it is now seen through the shadow of the artwork, the angles are new, the interactions are refreshed, the mistakes are different. That is what art should do, but there are many different paths to success. Did you enjoy it? Then it's successful, for you. Your friend didn't like it? It's not successful, for her. That's absolutely fine. Art is not worth fighting about.

Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?

No.

Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?

I doubt books as objects are going anywhere soon. But there's an important place for e-readers too. Not just for the convenience for travellers, or people living in small spaces, but also for the increased access they provide to books for, for example, people with visual impairments.

Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?

I'm not a collector, per se. I own an awful lot of books, but generally they're not special fancy editions, they're just the books I need. Is there any book I'd like? Probably, but I don't know what they are yet. I'll let you know when they turn up and I go, 'Oh, I'm keeping this one'.

Thank you very much for taking time to do this for us. We will advise you when we publish it on the website - www.letterpressproject.co.uk. Please return the completed interview to:

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