



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An interview with Duncan Beedie

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

My earliest memory of books revolves around the Mr Men series or comics. I had quite a collection of He-Man books too. I clearly remember falling asleep one night with my Banana Man annual covering my face and my mum having to wake me up. Comics and cartoons were a useful conduit into reading for me.

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

I have long been an animator first and foremost, having worked in TV animation and online games & apps for 14 years. But my work seemed to take an organic shift towards character and background design, which led to me working chiefly in illustration by about 2011. I have always loved drawing and, again, childhood comics provided my inspiration from a young age.

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

As an adult reading to my 5 year old daughter, it is all too easy to skip over an illustration as you concentrate on getting through a story in time for bed. But a good illustration will make a reader stop and take stock. It doesn't have to be complex (in fact, the simpler the better) but a composition, or colour scheme, or visual metaphor that makes you actually regard the artwork and think about it like you might in a gallery is always a bonus.

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

At the risk of sounding narcissistic, when I set out to write or illustrate a story I am only aiming to impress one person – me. Not because I think I am some sort of almighty arbiter of all things that are aesthetically pleasing in the universe, but I have to *enjoy* what I draw

and write otherwise the entire process is in vain. I have worked on projects in the past where designs have been scrutinised by countless art directors or test audiences, and the end result is that you feel personally removed from the work. So I try not to think about other people's interpretations as I work and trust my own instinct as much as possible.

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

The physical book is fine. In terms of mechanical structure, not much has changed since the Gutenberg Bible, so the book has enjoyed a generous period of evolutionary perfection compared to all other forms of written media. It's here to stay.

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

I'm not a collector, but my father-in-law most certainly is. His house is lined with shelves of books in every room. If I could find a special book for him, I know a first edition John Buchan or Theodore Dreiser would have him doing somersaults – even with his dodgy hip.