



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Guy Parker Rees

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

I loved curling up and poring over any books with animals in them. I still have my favourite 'Best Word Book Ever' by Richard Scarry

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

I was painting watercolours and selling them from market stalls in London, when I met someone who wrote picture books.

She was called Lisa Taylor and she definitely inspired me and encouraged me to write and illustrate my first book.

Even though I had spent a lot of time specifically studying patterns of story for my English and Philosophy degree, as well as painting in my spare time, I had never previously thought that I could make a living by putting the two together.

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

It's very hard to say, it's a bit like saying what makes a funny joke- you just know when it works just as you know when something is funny. Maybe it needs to somehow encapsulate or reflect an aspect or a truth about what it means to be alive in the world.

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

Really, I write and illustrate to please myself. Maybe in the back of my mind I think of an adult and child reading the story together. There has to be something in there that works for the parent reading it. I've read too many dreadful stories to my children to want to inflict that on anyone.

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

I hope we will always have physical books. There is something magical about the physical space that is created when a book is opened and shared. The smell and weight and texture of a book all help to anchor the story within to a particular moment of time in the real world.

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

Don't get me started. I'm struggling in my effort to de-junk and not to hang on to EVERY book that has ever crossed my path! I would like to get a copy of a book I loved as a child called 'Teddy Bear Coalman'. There's one image of him sitting by the fire after a hard days work that has always stuck in my mind. It makes me feel cosy just thinking about it!