



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM LANE

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

I suppose my earliest memories of books are of me and my twin sister being read to by my mum at night and they were illustrated ones like Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* in which we loved the imagery and whole idea of befriending scary monsters. Also, we had nicely bound anthologies of Victorian Fairy Tales that were again lavishly illustrated and were so 'well loved' that they're now falling to pieces! Early reading on my own was Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* and *Fantastic Mr Fox* etc... also I used to enjoy reading children's versions of Classical Mythology which my imagination is still very much steeped in... I also enjoyed ghost stories, gothic short stories and poetry of Edgar Allen Poe. All of which have been inspirational and formative on my imagination and affects my taste in what I want to produce now.

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

Well, I wanted to be an artist from a very young age and was drawing all the time, retreating into my own imagination as I did so. I got into anything dark and detailed and dramatic: illustrators like Gustave Dore, William Blake for his fascinating and spiritual combination of art and writing, Paula Rego's etchings and DC Comics and graphic novels with artists like Simon Bisley. So I sort of started visually, but I always enjoyed writing too and wrote short stories but they would generally be abandoned in their word form and turned into pictures instead... as the artwork became increasingly narrative in its own right I decided to find my own way of combining the written word and visual components. My new book *Silent Quarter* is my way of doing this with its written vignettes and artworks that fold-out and animate and augment the text. I have become an 'author/illustrator' by the back door in a way... from being an 'illustrative' artist.

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

It's difficult and subjective, but for me it is probably something a bit weird, uncanny, somehow removed from the mundane and the 'everyday'. Something that draws you into a world. I tend to like complex visual stuff that is symbolic and leaves room for interpretation without spoon-feeding the reader/viewer. Something dark / mysterious / something that allows you to meditate on timeless human pre-occupations.

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

I'm very much not trying to speak to just a specific audience when I'm creating my work, I'm not commercially minded in that way... I just want to create something interesting and meaningful to me and done to the best of my abilities, like a labour of love and then hope that it speaks to others.

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

I'm still very ambitious about the medium of 'the book'. I see that to some extent electronic options for reading are already popular but -even with so many competing media for people's time and attention- the book still hold its own place in peoples' hearts and there are huge swathes of people- of all ages -that still very much engage with and enjoy the 'real' physical tactile book. Playing with the tactility of books is something I deal with in my work, my first book *Anima Mundi* was a 5 metre concertina book that folded in different ways in order to alter the story... it was a wordless book with an oblique narrative that alluded to the cycle of life. Also with *Silent Quarter*- though modern in theme and mode of expression it still has a great traditional feel to it, with gold-foiled lettering and proper binding and textured front cover. It also has fold-out pages that you can interact with... so perhaps the book just needs to be a bit more exciting as an object to keep it alive. I am a serious proponent also for a more sophisticated use of illustration / artwork into literature for adults as modern culture becomes increasingly more visual.

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

I have many books and am even sad enough to have put them into colour order on my shelves. I also cherish the old picture books I have and recently found a beautiful copy of *The Water Babies* with full-colour plates that I bought in an old bookshop in Cornwall. I am always on the lookout for well made, interesting stuff modern and old... I'd probably like to own -in a dream world- a beautifully bound old edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1814, first English translation) with illustrations by Sandro Botticelli reproduced from the first Florentine edition (1481) But don't quite have the funds for that!

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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