



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Francesco Dimitri

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

My earliest memory is not of reading, but of being read to: my mother reading to me Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, an epic poem from the Sixteenth century. Not exactly the first port of call for a four-year old, but my mother always had very clear ideas about what she liked and she didn't. A penchant for the unusual remained with me: the first book I remember truly enchanting me was The Hobbit, and then The Lord of The Rings, books that have stayed with me to this day.

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

Stories help us understand our world, and the people in it, and to realise different worlds are possible, and that we could be different people, for better or worse. Being a reader means stuffing the experience of hundreds of lives into the one you have, and as an author, I can help with the stuffing.

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

A successful book shouldn't make you think while you read it, and should make it impossible for you to stop thinking once you have read it. If it manages to change the way you look at the world, even just a bit, I call it a resounding success.

Oh, and it should make its author a billionaire, possibly.

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

Yes. I always write for someone. It is not a target as such, it is more an image of the ideal reader of that particular thing I am writing. It often takes the shape in my mind of someone

I know. But I never write for myself, my diary being the only exception. I see my writing as a form of communication, and I don't like to talk to myself.

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 not. I think the physical book has a long and glorious future ahead. I bought a Kindle the first day it was available in the UK, and I still read e-books, but less and less of them. I am not against e-books, I don't believe that the written world necessarily belongs to paper. But I find, so to speak, the user experience of physical books much more pleasant on the long run. Besides, with physical books you have the opportunity to try and create a beautiful object (which we tried to do with To Read Aloud), and I do have a soft spot for beauty.

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

I have a lot of books, but I wouldn't call myself a collector. But if someone has an original *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, well, that would be a nice gift.