



**The Letterpress Project**

**Author and Illustrator E-Interviews**

# **An Interview with Louie Stowell**

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

Books have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I remember poring over the illustrations in Jan Pienkowski's fairytales. Even then I was drawn to stark black lines and story worlds that felt a little spiky and unpleasant. A little later I remember reading Fungus the Bogeyman. I didn't know the word "intertextuality" then but I was so tickled by the idea of seeing references to OTHER books in a book. It made sense to me, as all books were connected in my mind, in a single story universe. They still are.

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

I've always loved drawing and making up stories but the idea of being a professional author only crystalised slowly for me. The professional part was a practical consideration - in order to spend a lot of time creating things, you need someone to pay you. And if they're paying you to make those things, rather than do something else for money and squeeze the making around the edges of your life, there's more room for the stories to breathe. So what inspired me to become an author/illustrator? Money. But what inspired me to make stories and art? It's a curled up, worm of a need that I can't fully explain. Drawing is a physical act to me, an extension of my body and my sense of the space in the world. Ideas and stories - the words side of them - are a little like voices I hear, that are chaotic at first and I have to untangle. The beginning of every story is like an autonomic response. But

the rest is work and sighing and resenting it and talking to my wife until things make sense.

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

What kind of success are we talking about? Let's say artistic. To be an artistic success, a book or an illustration has to cause change inside a person who reads it (you read illustrations as well as text, I'd say). That change could be an emotion, or a thought process. It could be laughter. It's not always the emotion or the thought process you intended to spark. I'm firmly of the belief it's none of the writer or the artist's business exactly what someone should feel reading their work. I make it, they take it from there.

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

Every time I try to do that, I'm always wrong. I assumed a lot about readers of Loki and the actual readers I've met have largely been nothing like that image. Readers are unruly and I like that. I've written a book that's constantly saying how tedious sport is and every other reader at a Loki event is in football strip. Maybe that says something about Loki? It attracts people who can't be told what to be? Or who are ornery and like to read about someone mocking something they love?

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

When it comes to children's books, I don't see an end to the physical book any time soon. Parents don't want their kids having MORE screen time, so why give them a screen to read on instead of a physical book? (Though there ARE a lot of very cool screen-free audio devices around so there's that.) And for adults, there's been a real growth in book-as-gorgeous object. I don't know a great deal about the ebook market specifically and I don't read ebooks but I DO love audio.

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

I wouldn't call myself a collector. I have a core collection of books I refer to again and again, especially comics and texts of various mythological sources. But I get rid of books often, once I've read them, unless they're something I know I will want to lend out to people. I'm not precious about books, unless they're physically beautiful. (Or comics. Leave a comic open face down and I will GET

YOU.)