

# THE Apparition

*"your voice as hollow"*

This spectral sound reaches out to you, friend, across our spheres of likely isolation.

The Apparition - so called because it will come and go on a whim, and is liable to fade away entirely - will consist of short articles about a range of topics. It will unearth enjoyable oddities within the realms of art, literature, horror, medical humanities, the nineteenth century and neo-Victorianism, folklore, and cabaret, and will feature some illustration, photography, or other art.

Welcome to the fifth number!

## Early Haunts: An Interview with T.W. Burgess

The daylight is slowly shrinking and a chill has begun to creep in: ghost story season is upon us.

Horror writer T.W. Burgess is known for his original folklore inspired ghost stories, but now he is summoning some old spectres.

Specialising in stories of the strange and supernatural, Burgess has been self-publishing his tales since 2014. I've written about his graphic novels [The Eyrie](#) and [Hallows Fell](#) before; both are deliciously cold and creepy tales of past violence buried in the English landscape, ready to claw its way into our present.

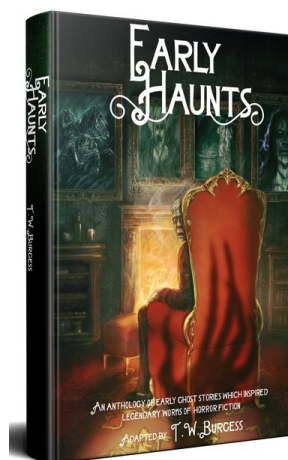
His new project is a different flavour of phantom: a graphic novel anthology of mostly forgotten tales of terror from the early folk stories and ghostly yarns which inspired some of literature's most

*as the hollow sea"* #

- C.G. Rossetti

famous supernatural characters. The book, titled 'Early Haunts', retells four seminal ghost stories through Burgess's writing

and the visual work of illustrators Mike O'Brien, Bri Neumann, Brian Coldrick, and David Romero, and colourist Bryan Valenza.



The collection includes Gottfried August Bürger's poem *De Wilde Jäger* (or *The Wild Huntsman*), published 1798, which inspired the headless horseman of Washington Irving's *Sleepy Hollow*, and Friedrich Laun's *Die Totenbraut* (or *The Death Bride*), a 1811 ghost story Mary Shelley read prior to her creation of *Frankenstein's* monster.

*Early Haunts* also summons Bunko Baba's *Dish Mansion* (1758), which inspired *Sadako* of Koji Suzuki's *Ringu* (The Ring films), and raises the chained spectre of Pliny the Younger's *The House in Athens*, from which Charles Dickens took inspiration for the ghost of Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol*.

Burgess has launched a Kickstarter for the project, and is set to send out the finished anthology at Christmas this year. I had the chance to ask the writer a few questions about this project:





*Why did you choose these four specific stories for the anthology? What was your process of selecting them?*

So I've always been fascinated by ghost stories and how they often find their roots in folktales, myths and legends. I initially had sought through so many ghost stories but these for me really stood out as being so iconic for the supernatural horrors they produced.

I've always loved Jacob Marley as a character and after hearing about Pliny's tale and it's similarities I started unpicking the threads of it's supposed inception with Dickens. From that point on I was keen to try the same with other supernatural figures I'd long been fascinated by. I'd been surprised at how after just a minimal amount of research a wealth of exciting information had been uncovered lurking behind each one. For instance Sleepy Hollow's headless horseman had for me always seemed the epitome of America's Halloween aesthetic so it was amazing to find Irving had written the tale whilst he was staying in Birmingham in the UK! Then there's Frankenstein and though true the book isn't recognisably a ghost story, Mary Shelley herself quoted the creature as 'my hideous phantom' which 'haunted' her.

Also the fact that the creature itself is effectively a ghost dressed in galvanised deadman's flesh constantly on the peripheral ever pursuing people still has the hallmarks of a ghost tale.

Accompanied with these I've always loved Ring. Sadoka is relatively modern compared to the other supernatural horrors, but what really sets that story apart was how ancient

the origin story's foundations and how deep rooted they are within Japanese culture. Also the fact that there are over 40 variations of that tale spreading across Japan and further afield!

*Early Haunts features stories from four different cultures - Greek, German, Italian, Japanese. Was this a deliberate decision in the process of selecting the stories for this anthology? Do you think this cultural difference adds something to the readers' experience of the collection when the tales are read alongside one another?*

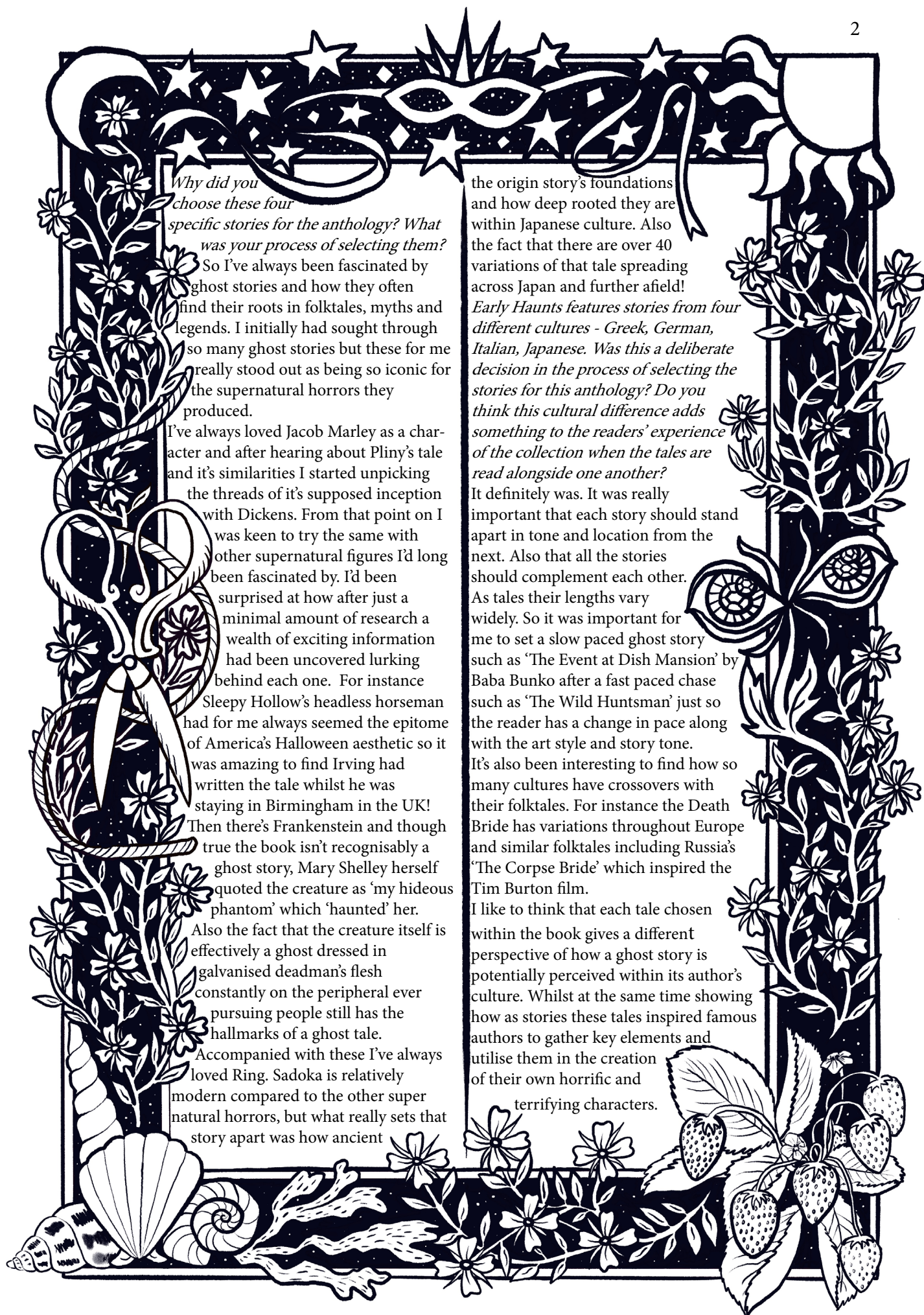
It definitely was. It was really important that each story should stand apart in tone and location from the next. Also that all the stories should complement each other.

As tales their lengths vary widely. So it was important for me to set a slow paced ghost story such as 'The Event at Dish Mansion' by Baba Bunko after a fast paced chase such as 'The Wild Huntsman' just so the reader has a change in pace along with the art style and story tone.

It's also been interesting to find how so many cultures have crossovers with their folktales. For instance the Death Bride has variations throughout Europe and similar folktales including Russia's 'The Corpse Bride' which inspired the Tim Burton film.

I like to think that each tale chosen within the book gives a different perspective of how a ghost story is potentially perceived within its author's culture. Whilst at the same time showing how as stories these tales inspired famous authors to gather key elements and utilise them in the creation of their own horrific and

terrifying characters.





*Could you describe the process of working with the artists to create this anthology?*

I'd previously worked with all the artists involved which made the process phenomenally straight forward. Mike, Brian, Bri and David always go the extra mile to put something special into their work which I think reflects fantastically in each tale. Also the tone of each of their illustrations really fits these individual stories perfectly. From the intricate details of a Venetian wedding in David Romero's work through to the neo-manga stylings of Bri Neumann's complimenting the adaptation of a Japanese tale, everyone has been a real joy to work with.

For me my first step was to track each story back to their original incarnations (which in several instances was in a different language). Undeniably that's been the hardest part, sourcing the original texts of these tales and adapting them into a script and then storyboard which could be easily understood by the artist to adapt into panels. That process takes into account elements such as potential 'page reveals' when the reader turns the page to hopefully reveal something horrific and how

original source

texts to ensure the descriptions matched up.

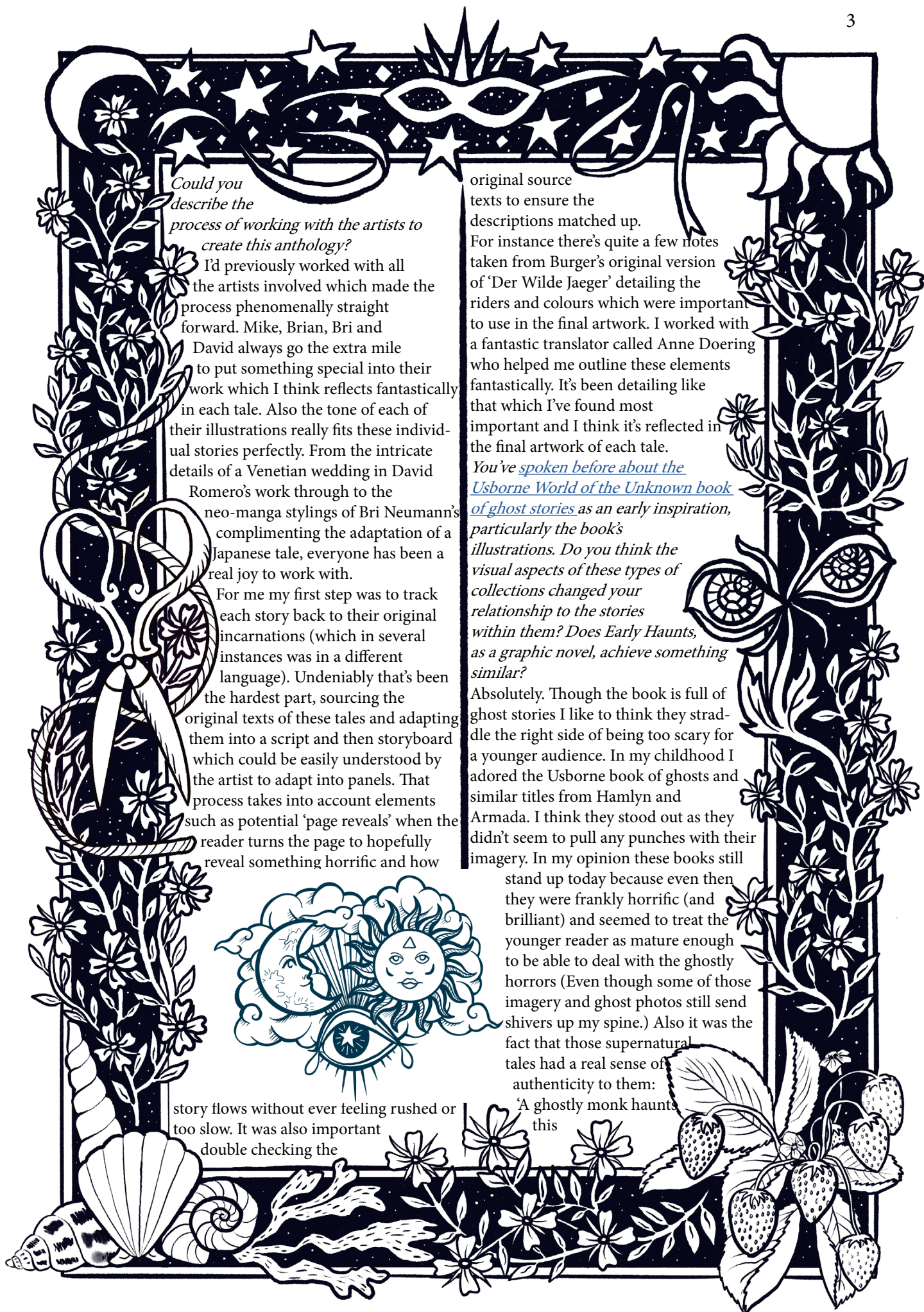
For instance there's quite a few notes taken from Burger's original version of 'Der Wilde Jaeger' detailing the riders and colours which were important to use in the final artwork. I worked with a fantastic translator called Anne Doering who helped me outline these elements fantastically. It's been detailing like that which I've found most important and I think it's reflected in the final artwork of each tale.

*You've spoken before about the [Usborne World of the Unknown book of ghost stories](#) as an early inspiration, particularly the book's illustrations. Do you think the visual aspects of these types of collections changed your relationship to the stories within them? Does *Early Haunts*, as a graphic novel, achieve something similar?*

Absolutely. Though the book is full of ghost stories I like to think they straddle the right side of being too scary for a younger audience. In my childhood I adored the Usborne book of ghosts and similar titles from Hamlyn and Armada. I think they stood out as they didn't seem to pull any punches with their imagery. In my opinion these books still stand up today because even then they were frankly horrific (and brilliant) and seemed to treat the younger reader as mature enough to be able to deal with the ghostly horrors (Even though some of those imagery and ghost photos still send shivers up my spine.) Also it was the fact that those supernatural tales had a real sense of authenticity to them:

'A ghostly monk haunts this

story flows without ever feeling rushed or too slow. It was also important double checking the





location on the 1st of every month – fact!'. Accompanied with that visual element which really drew me and my friends in. The images really solidified each tale.

One of my main motivations for Early Haunts was taking these mostly forgotten tales and adapting them in a way which would open them up to a younger audience and I think comics offer a perfect medium for this. I'm sure most readers wouldn't want to sit down with a 15th century piece of Japanese text. If it means more people take the time to stop and look into these Early Haunts then for me I think that can only be a good thing.

[Back the project on Kickstarter here.](#)

### Port city dreams

This time last year, we were all in a different world. I was across the sea, devouring smørrebrød and struggling to get to grips with cycling on the wrong side of the road in Copenhagen. These pictures came back with me on a very battered roll of 35mm purple lomochrome film. With their sepia tones and visible damage, they feel like relics of an early photographic age. At the same, I think, with skies the colour of apocalypse and spectral double exposures, the pictures suggest a strange but near future.





Ladybird,  
ladybird,  
fly away home  
Review - exhibition



It might be easy to assume that an exhibition of children's book art is just for the kids, but there's a lot to enjoy for adult visitors at the travelling exhibition The Wonderful World of the



Ladybird Book Artists. The exhibition, which follows the story of Ladybird Books' illustrations during the publisher's golden years, displays books, original artwork, and artefacts related to the designs created from 1940 to 1975. Starting life as Wills & Hepworth, the Loughborough printing business lost much of



its core trade during the First World War and began publishing affordable children's books and later producing work for the growing Midlands motor trade.

The Wonderful World of the Ladybird Book Artists opens with the work of Septimus Scott (1879-1965), who illustrated the Uncle Mac' Ladybird books for preschool children. Throughout the exhibition, the work of particular contributors are highlighted, such as that of Ronald Lampitt (1906-1988), whose distinctive style also found a home on railway posters depicting famous locations and cover illustrations for weekly magazine John Bill, and John Berry (1920-2009), who illustrated a series of books entitled 'The People at Work', following soldiers, policemen, roadbuilders and custom officers.

The exhibition also explores the changes to the publisher's output, demonstrating how the early Ladybird books in the 1940s,



which were fiction and rhymes books aimed at pre-school children, gave way in the 1950s to illustrated non-fiction books for the rapidly developing education market. Such books were published in series - a Nature series, which helped young readers identify trees, butterflies, birds, shells, rocks and clouds, was followed by a History series, which with 50 different titles was the largest of all the Ladybird series. Until the 1970s, the books were written by dramatist and radio personality Lawrence du Garde Peach, and illustrated by John Kenney (1911-1972), who also worked on the Thomas the Tank Engine series written by Rev. Awdry, as well as the Tootles the Taxi books.

Curated by Ladybird expert Helen Day, this exhibition is a delightful nostalgia trip: there were several covers and series logos that triggered memories I didn't even know I had. The fairytales books were particularly recognisable for me, but other viewers might remember the Learning to Read: Peter and Jane series, a reading scheme launched in 1964 which was Ladybird's greatest commercial success.

As an artist, I also came away from this exhibition feeling inspired after seeing what can be created with just paints or pastels. The graphics are engaging and painterly with dynamic colour palettes and attractive fonts.

These illustrations are exercises in worldbuilding: whether the artist is depicting Dick Whittington's journey to London, 60s youngsters playing on a rope swing, fisherman hauling in a catch, or the

historic story of

Warwick the Kingmaker in the Wars of the Roses, the Ladybird Book Artist creates a visual space that is interesting whilst also comforting and safe, designed to evoke wonder in their young audiences. Interestingly, although many of the illustrations and designs are recognisably 'Ladybird' in this tone and ambience, there's a significant difference in the styles of the book artists, from the soft focus, dreamy nostalgia of Scott, who in addition to his Uncle Mac illustrations painted pictures of rural life in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, to the superb photorealism of Berry. What I would be interested in, however, is more discussion of the artists' practices - the mediums used, the process of working alongside other creatives in the process of creating these works - perhaps a topic for a larger exhibition. Currently in Basingstoke's Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery, this is a small show but certainly very enjoyable, especially if you grew up with the Ladybird books.

[Find out where the exhibition will be next here.](#)

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Would you like to have your work reviewed or feature in The Apparition?

Email it to ejturner2412@gmail.com.

