

Interview: Todd Lockwood

Kayra Keri Kupcu: Todd; thank you very much for your time and the opportunity of this interview. Most probably you've been asked this question many times but let us ask it once again: Why did you start drawing? Do you have any formal art training?

Todd Lockwood: I started drawing longer ago than I can remember, so the only honest answer would be because I liked it! I believe I always looked at the world with a desire to understand it.

I had a dream when I was five in which I stood in a long, dark hallway. At the far end of the hallway was a stair going up, and at the top stood a man. But as I walked down the hallway I discovered that it wasn't a stair at all, but a stack of progressively smaller platforms, with a tiny little man on top! It was a visual pun—a joke that I told myself in a dream—and I never forgot it.

I did attend the Colorado Institute of Art (now the Art Institute of Colorado—I guess they didn't like the initials "CIA"), a design and illustration school. It provided me with a good foundation, but an artist is always learning and refining their knowledge and skills. I learned as much from four years attending convention art shows and talking with other artists as I did in art school and fourteen years as an advertising professional.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: When did you realize that you loved painting fantasy?

Todd Lockwood: I always enjoyed science fiction and fantasy, so drawing it and painting it was only natural. Dungeons & Dragons entertained me throughout my advertising career, and I entertained my players with drawings of the things they saw and encountered.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: Mostly, do you ever paint your own ideas or do you paint strictly for clients?

Todd Lockwood: I mostly paint for clients, but every once in a while I get to do something for myself. "Cerberus," "Kali-Prakriti," and "War of Angels" were all personal pieces in which I explored religious and mythological themes from an interior perspective (but a client paid me to do the third one, because I could paint "anything I wanted"). If you look at those, though, you can see that my explorations of those themes are dense with imagery, so it's difficult to squeeze that sort of thing into my schedule. I'm most interested in the narrative of an image—what it means and what it says—as much as in technique or qualities of paint, light, form or what have you.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: We know that you are a good role player and also a good DM! When and how did you start playin' Role Playing games? Especially which system?

Todd Lockwood: I started with Dungeons & Dragons back in 1977, when it was just a white box with some pamphlets in it. I hope I still have that somewhere, because I think it's worth a tiny fortune now. Later we tried many other games: Middle-Earth, Shadowrun, Earthdawn (so good, and such a shame it couldn't find a bigger audience), various sci-fi games like Gamma World. But we spent the most time in our D&D universes.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: How did you come in touch with TSR and how did you feel when this job opportunity arose?

Todd Lockwood: I attended my first sci-fi fantasy convention in the summer of 1994, the World Con in Winnipeg, Canada. It changed my life! I realized that this was where I needed to be if I wanted to find my way into this industry, because this is where those people came to hang out together. The next year I made a friend at Dragon Con, in Atlanta, who knew an art director at TSR, who made D&D in those days. His parents lived in my town, so that Christmas season, in '95, when he was visiting his parents, he stopped by to chat and look at my work. The next spring he gave me some card art to do, then when Larry Elmore had a stroke and couldn't finish three book cover assignments he gave those to me too. One of them—The wayward Knights—made an impact in the halls at TSR, and so when two of the staff artists resigned I was given the opportunity to apply. I leapt at the chance! A salaried position painting images for the game I loved? You bet!

Kayra Keri Kupcu: Which artists have influenced you the most?

Todd Lockwood: That's a long list. One of my earliest memories is of Maleficent turning into a black dragon in Walt Disney's "Sleeping Beauty," as seen through the windshield of the family car at a drive-in. Another early memory is of sitting in my father's lap as he drew cartoon animals for me. My parents were both artistic.

N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish probably crossed my radar first. Frederick Remington, Charles Russell, and Frank C. McCarthy were western artist that my dad liked, so I studied them, too (Keith Parkinson also liked McCarthy, and you can see it in his work!). Later Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo, and Jeff Jones influenced me, then Michael Whelan truly made me take notice. Frazetta and Whelan might be my "two fathers" artistically. The one is all passion and energy, the other is cerebral and subtle. Later, TSR hired Jeff Easley, Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, Clyde Caldwell, and Brom. Love them all.

There are others whose work I admire, too. rk post does the most exquisite black and white work and his designs are outrageous. Jon Foster's work has a subtle, subdued emotional quality that I love.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: In a lot of your paintings, you use people around you as reference models. What other resources do you use to paint things such as dragons, monsters or other subjects?

Todd Lockwood: I always go to the real world as much as possible, to give the unreal the feel of reality. My dragons are based on cats, dinosaurs, and bats, for example. I spent a lot of time studying real-world animal physiology in order to build more believable monsters. Everything in the world has anatomy, when you get right down to it; there's a reason that a cloud or a mountain or a tree looks the way it does. They're not just lumps—they have architecture. An artist should study everything—and I mean everything!—in order to paint well.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: We know you draw lots of Drizzt Do'Urden arts. Most new fantasy readers recognized Drizzt with your drawings. How did you meet with R.A. Salvatore and what do you think about Drizzt and friends?

Todd Lockwood: I first encountered Drizzt when I was asked to redesign his look for the 3rd Edition release of the Forgotten Realms. I actually called Bob Salvatore and asked him what Drizzt looked like-what he wears and so on. His answer? "I don't know... ask one of my fans!" Pretty funny. He was probably just very busy that day.

Since then I've become very fond of Drizzt and his friends, even though I haven't been able to read every book (many of them haven't even been written yet when I have to do the covers!). In between I have other manuscripts to read in order to to cover paintings, so I don't very often get to read what I choose.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: We know that you love Science-fiction and fantasy fiction. Can you tell us your favorite authors and favorite books?

Todd Lockwood: Favorite science-fiction book of all time: "The Mote in God's Eye" by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. Outstanding. Also Alfred Bester's "The Demolished Man," anything by Roger Zelazny, Arthur C Clarke, or Isaac Asimov.

In fantasy, Tolkein has to be tops. Also Robert Howard's Conan books, H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos (but not his dream cycle stuff—boring), Edgar Allen Poe, Michael Moorcock' Elric series.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: Do you work close with writers? I mean do you meet and talk with them on the feeling of a fantasy world and setting?

Todd Lockwood: Sometimes. It depends on the publisher and the conditions. I prefer to chat with the author if I can, but it doesn't always work out that way.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: What do you think about computer games and the arts in computer games?

Todd Lockwood: The art is astopunding! It is changing the face of illustration. But I don't play video games. I can't spare the time! I have too much work to do.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: What do you do in your free-time?

Todd Lockwood: My what? Surely you make a joke...

Just kidding. I like to garden, or play with my cat, or exercise a bit, or watch a good movie. I cook. And I write.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: What media do you like to work with most? Digital or oil painting?

Todd Lockwood: I love Corel Painter; it is so liberating and fun. But I miss having oil paintings. I've discovered that I can only be in the presence of the fumes from oil paints and their thinners, driers and such for about two hours before I begin to get a sore throat or headache. So I don't paint with oils as much as I used to. Which is a shame, but I don't miss the mess, or clean-up, or fumes at all. I suppose you could say that I miss *paintings*, but I don't miss *painting*...

Kayra Keri Kupcu: What are you working on now?

Todd Lockwood: I have some book covers and some Magic cards coming up, and then I get back to work on a novel I have sold to DAW Books. Yes; I am writing now too. I have short stories out in two anthologies, and then my novel, the first in a trilogy will come out at a date yet to be determined—probably in about two years. That's the most exciting morsel on my plate right now, and I can't wait to get back to it.

Kayra Keri Kupcu: Any advice for FRPNET visitors and your fans in Turkiye? Especially, young aspiring artists...

Todd Lockwood: Yes— read the FAQ on my website. It's loaded with gathered advice. Perhaps you could translate some of that for them. Otherwise, it's this:

Draw from life, not from your head. Every pro uses reference.

Study everything— religion, mythology, light, geology, biology, anatomy, sociology, astrology, evolution, paleontology... I mean *everything*. The universe is a vast, fascinating place. Don't huddle in one corner of it— get out and explore!

Take classes, meet pros whenever you can, get critique, share your work, accept criticism, strive to get better with every piece.

Google "Loomis Creative Illustration" and download the book. It's in English, but it's invaluable. Every pro I know reveres it.

Don't give up.

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