

About His Art...

Q: Whom Do You Create For?

A: Myself first. If I'm not happy, it's not getting done. And being a single man with no children, my stories are my offspring.

Egotism aside, expect different works to target different audiences. Most aim at the military and science fiction crowds; because these genres attract my desired demographic: hearts, minds, and wallets. I also stalk period history fans, seeing as how I enjoy those sorts of stories myself. Being a military veteran with a background in Douglas Adams, Frank Herbert, and Stephen King, you could say I prey upon my own.

Q: What Do You Compose?

A: Cross-category fiction. Much of my effort is literature disguised as a pop genre, so the literati who look past the gun smoke and tits will find all sorts of symbols, themes, and memes to wax analytical in their research papers. William Golding is one model for what I do in this area.

I build an art piece on a baseline genre--to open accessibility to the fan, and to lessen headaches for the publicist. I work in military, science-fiction, horror, spy, mystery, and contemporary fantasy settings, with forays into westerns.

As far as type goes, I prefer adventures and dramas to straight action, thrillers, or romances. Yet I've read them all and mixed them together. Again, I pick a baseline type to keep the story on track and the reader from being confused. *Revelation Range*, my debut novel, is a military adventure at its core, wrapped in many other threads.

Overall, I weave elements of genres and types around the base: to enhance atmosphere, strengthen subplots, and deepen imagery. It depends on what the story needs to survive. You'll go extinct writing in one genre.

Q: Where Do You Work?

A: In my command center. I build my World on the same desk I use to pay my taxes, mail my letters, and edit this website. My library is almost literally within arm's reach.

Really, though, my whole house becomes my work center. I pace. I look out windows. I study the insects buzzing around my yard. I'll grow an idea in the bathroom, jot it down in the bedroom, and transcribe it in the office. Then I'll walk circles in the grass, pulling cherries and apples off the tree as I improve the idea. I have notepads and pens stashed all over the place.

Q: When Will We See Your Work in the Marketplace?

A: Winter 2010-2011. After my first flurry of queries was shot down, I realized a few things. I need to demonstrate self-promotion, to do a lot more networking, and to target my submissions more carefully. A lot of badly-written books make in on the shelves, I suspect, because the artist was a better businessperson than an author.

If you study the bios of bestselling authors, you'll notice a lot of them come from business backgrounds. These folks have established networks before they ever typed a page. It's the lawyers and insurance agents getting on the New York Times lists, not the English majors.

Publishing in the 21st Century is not the same as it was in 1970. You can't just shoot off manuscripts anymore; Random House bought out most of the big houses, and they require agent representation. Agents, of course, are already juggling clients who deliver their cut. Likewise, publishers don't handle much of the editing and marketing anymore. That duty falls increasingly on the agent—and on the artist.

Q: Why Do You Create?

A: Art runs in the family. Most of us seem to be some breed of technical writers. My grandfathers include Russ Bieuragal, a long-time night editor for *The Statesman Journal*. My Grandfather Frank was a botany professor and librarian, with a knack for sketching. He and my father are among the most voracious readers I've ever met, while Dad is also a semi-pro photographer. I am most adept at editorials and narrative prose.

Creation brings ecstasy to me. If I am going to work for a living, I'm going to work by my life. And that life is writing, drawing, filming, and dreaming.

Q: How Do You Compose?

A: Haphazardly. I haven't established that 9 to 5 work schedule yet. On the other hand, I'm not Axl Rose or Joseph Heller, taking years between completed projects. Instead, I abide by the wisdom of my high school English teacher, Mr. Wolfe: "90 percent of the work is done before you ever touch a pen to paper."

Because I care about the continuity and influence of my universe, I spend my days imagining the new, editing the old, and considering the alternative. While I believe in allowing my mind to spill forth, I don't just pour it out on the floor to see what sticks. I have specific artistic and thematic intentions, and a fascist dislike for wasting my own time on dead ends and half-baked stories.

Since elementary school, I've trained myself to keep story ideas tucked away on the back shelf until the time was right. Every day, I pull these parts off the shelf and examine them to see what fits together, and whether it fits into what I'm doing overall. All of my current novels and feature-length screenplays were built this way. They include vignettes, exchanges, and set-pieces that crossed my mind as far back as kindergarten.

So before I ever touch a pen to paper, I know basically how a story begins, how it ends, how it hooks into the bigger picture, and yet how it stands on its own.

Of course, I don't plan every step. That would be boring, not to mention a violation of that old military wisdom, "no plan survives contact with the enemy." While the goal posts are dug in and the main lines laid, I make up plenty of details in between and on-the-fly. Stream-of-consciousness is valuable, so long as you keep it within the banks and don't flood over.