

## **Interview with Non-fiction Illustrator Konrad Algermissen**

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/interview-with-non-fiction-illustrator-konrad-algermissen/>

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**Illustrator Konrad Algermissen and I met in October 2015 at the International Book Fair in Frankfurt.**

**We talked about the business of books from his perspective: that of an engineer who decided to go to art school and become an illustrator.**

Our conversation was in German, and we've since been emailing back and forth to get that conversation in an English form, with more details - just for this GSB interview!

Konrad has always liked to draw and shared with me some of his early childhood memories, when his dad showed him how to mix paint with water.

“...but you ask about my inspiration. My father was drawing and painting beside [in his free time]. In his official profession he was a carpenter. In the WWII he was in captivity when he was sixteen years old. He had never used a gun but he had a pencil and he drew some portraits of fellow captives. Later, as I was a small boy, he showed me his drawings. He shows me also to use powder paint with water to paint landscapes, when I was about six years old.”

**When Konrad Algermissen decided to go to art school, it wasn't easy to get in as an engineer.**

“As a mechanic it wasn't easy to convince the art school leader that I would like to be a designer. There

was a place in Hamburg for graphic design. So I took Hamburg because it was closer to my living place. The first day at the college, it was in 1989, and I had to decide on an emphasis: Illu or Kode.

“What is this?” I asked. Kode was the abbreviation of Communication Design and is used for advertising. Illu means Illustration, painting for stories or so in books and magazines. So I took Illu. It was a new word for me.”

About his inspirations, Konrad Algermissen references the drawings of “[Walter Zeeden](#) [known for his drawings of trains and ships] – and stories about shipping. And pictures of titles and drawings inside the first several hundreds of [Perry Rhodan](#) novels illustrated by [Johnny Bruck](#). It was a kind of style of the 60’s. Today some people would say Neo Impressionist or Retro Style. But in general for me the best inspiration is nature and drawing what I see.”

Konrad has always lived near water. “As a small boy I grew up for some years in Finkenwerder [a town near Hamburg that sits on the Elbe River]. It is located close to the port. In this time there was a big shipyard. I saw it each day when I was looking out of my window. So I got a very great interest in ships.” Today, he and his family still live near Hamburg. Much of his artwork involves the boating and shipping industries.

## **I thought only writers felt this way!**

I asked him how he gets his contracts for artwork. That’s when he talked about why he attends [the Buchmesse](#). In 2015, it was his tenth visit. He mostly loves the book fair experience, but there was a complaint:

He brings his portfolio and sample books to the fair, and joins the section of the book fair that is called “The Illustrator’s Corner,” a term Konrad doesn’t much like. “It sounds a little like ‘the corner for the dog,’ while the business people are ‘up in the middle.’ There should be used another word for ‘corner,’ maybe ‘Illustration Point.’

“Some German publishing companies are offering only fixed time spaces where illustrators can show their work. In such an hour a long line of illustrators appears, waiting for the show. I don’t like this. It feels like a demonstration of a ‘special species.’ In the other times, most of these companies didn’t want to take any flier with advertisings for illustrations. ‘It’s too heavy, too much,’ they said, or ‘you can send it to these address.’ That’s typical.”

I thought only writers felt this way! When Konrad and I talked about this stuff it really made me smile and we had a good laugh about it. It was so funny to get his perspective. Most writers feel that illustrators have the better opportunities to show their work at fairs... because they actually get a corner! (Same thing at the [Bologna Book Fair, coming in March 2016](#).)

Writers don’t get a corner and we also don’t get a special time when we’re invited to show our work. We just show up and run around a lot, wagging our tails and tongues.

## **What Konrad loves about the Book Fair**

“There are people coming from the whole world to show their work or their offerings. Some of them are coming alone over a long distance and time zones. I’m sure they must be tired, but they do their job with pleasure and joy. That’s very impressive. I’m looking all over and talk with the people. Sometimes, afterwards I wasn’t sure what a kind of language I’ve used. Then I’m not a German, but a human. It’s a ‘one world feeling.’ I love it.” *Absolutely.*

The one thing Konrad wishes were different about being an illustrator: the timeline. When he gets jobs to illustrate a non-fiction title, he typically needs to create 80 images. This takes time, but time is the one thing publishers don’t really want to give.

They always need the artwork Yesterday. But that, of course, is a High Quality Problem.

## **His favorite things to create**

Konrad Algermissen loves to paint nature, technology, history, sports-related images and non-fiction in general. He’s very good at adapting his work to the needs of the costumer, something you can easily spot in his portfolio.

- **Find out more about Algermissen’s work at [Algermissen Illustration](#).**
- **Get his historical books and modelling plans for tug boats at [Schlepper Buch](#).**

**Keep creating, no matter what.**

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