

The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Arthur Robins

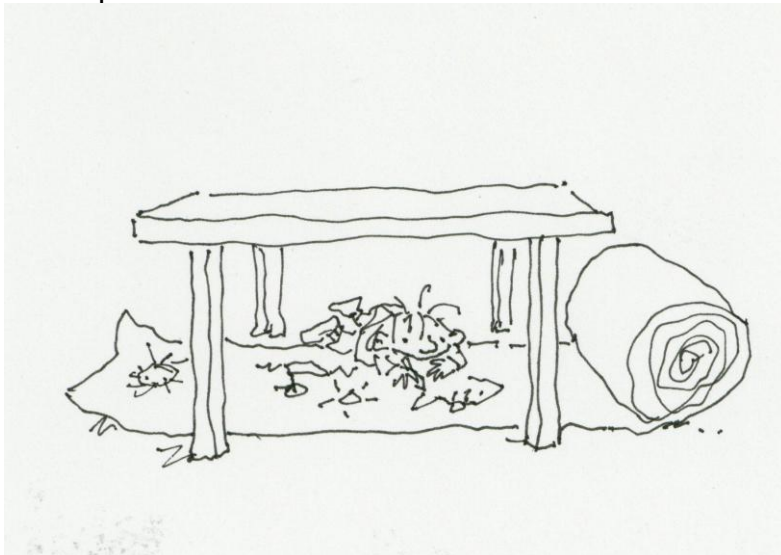
Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

There were no children's books in our house, in fact we didn't have a house it was just after the war.

There was the Beano & Dandy, American comics, the Eagle, The Rupert annual for Christmas, Punch, the Radio Times before it dumbed down and became the TV Times/Hello - a historic tradition of wonderful illustration lost , Saturday morning pictures at the Bug Hutch (so called as they sprayed us kids as we went in). Christopher Robin came later, I was soaking up what was around.

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

I've always drawn - my Father brought home a gigantic roll of paper for me, I use to draw on the floor under the kitchen table which was obviously the safest place to be if a V2 landed on the house.



Much later as a 13 year old 11plus failure, I was put forward to Twickenham Art School which became my escape route, no amount of beating could spark an interest in Mathematics into me.

Mr Caine head of Art , you would have thought a name like that would have sounded

alarm bells, he was 8ft Bohemian Socialist, big black beard and a bald head and horn rimmed glasses , to whom I'm ever grateful , even though I lived with the constant threat of expulsion every term.



Leaving after the 5 year course I was employed by an Advertising Agency where I met John Gorham who became one of the country's highly regarded Graphic Designers, he persuaded me to join him into going freelance, I worked for Ad agencies, Animation Studios, Newspapers , Magazines, Book Jackets for publishers, eventually Illustrating Children's books for my friend the writer and illustrator Laurence Anholt , Michael Rosen's "Little Rabbit Foo Foo " for Walker books, at the moment and for some time to come, I'm illustrating TS Eliot's Practical Cats for Faber & Faber, a dream project.

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

If only I knew, its intangible, inspires and delights, I know it when I see it.

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

I like to draw , I take my lead from the text , 4 year olds seem to like my illustrations as do 95 year old subscribers to The Oldie magazine who I do a monthly illustration for Virginia Ironside's column, and Laurence Anholt's stories but I don't know how old he is.

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

I hope not. I can see a Kindle has its uses - not much use for looking at paintings or illustrations though. I would sooner have a book as a gift, beautifully wrapped with a personal message on the fly leaf rather than an App.

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

Not in the sense that I'm interested in rare signed first editions, books have crept up on me and accumulated.

I have recently down sized and now have more books than house, I still can't resist a book shop.

The book I treasure is Colette's "The Boy and the Magic " beautifully illustrated by Gerard Hoffnung , it perfectly answers Q3.