



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIA TURTSCHANINOFF

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

A1: One of my earliest memories of reading is curling up in the back of a deep closet in the flat where I grew up, sitting on a soft pouf and reading books and comics with a flashlight. If I had a snack I was truly content, and could stay in there for ever.

Sometimes I think I was quite an easy child.

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

A2: I just loved reading and stories more than anything else, really. I remember protagonists from books better than some of my classmates. I wrote my first stories as soon as I had the most rudimentary grasp of writing, at age five. I had no grasp on punctuation or spelling, so the stories are quite a challenge to read, but if you manage to decipher them they actually contain a beginning, a middle and an end, and all the ingredients of traditional fairy tales.

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

A3: Today a book that makes me forget that I am reading a book and where I stop analysing how the writer has crafted the story is a rare treat. When I find one of those, however, I am truly happy. It takes a good story and a good storyteller to do so – one of the two is not enough.

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

A4: No, never. My primary driving force is always to simply tell the story I have to tell as well as I can, and in the manner the story demands to be told. Of course, writing a novel is about communicating with readers, but I do not imagine a specific reader. It would feel false to me, like I was putting my effort into the wrong end of the process.

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

A5: I think the physical book has a long life ahead of it. I am no prophet, but I do not think the e-book market will grow to be much bigger than today. In Finland, where I live, e-books are not popular at all and sell very little. And I think all people who really love books will never give up the physical book entirely. We are too much of book geeks for that!

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

A6: I do own a ton of books, but I don't collect them. I mean, not in the way a proper collector would. I simply hoard them, because I am weak and have a very hard time resisting gorgeous covers or tantalizing blurbs.