



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Nick Sharratt

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

The first books you engage with can be incredibly significant in your life. I've never forgotten what must have been practically the first book I was ever given: 'I am a Bunny', words by Ole Risom, pictures by Richard Scarry. I liked it very much that the bunny was called Nicholas but what thrilled me to the core were the stunning illustrations capturing the four seasons so perfectly that I could truly feel the sunshine, wind, rain and snow. Another very early book that had me trembling with delight was 'The General' by Janet Charters and Michael Foreman. Every time I draw flowers I'm taken back to that book and my favourite illustration of all time: the general sitting in the middle of the most eye-poppingly wonderful flower meadow. Both books have been reissued in recent years and they are just as amazing as I remember them being.

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

I've always loved drawing and back at primary school I decided I was going to earn my living as an artist. I'm not from an artistic family but looking at pictures in books like the ones mentioned inspired me hugely and illustrating books was always my big dream. After art school I spent the first ten years working primarily as a magazine illustrator and gradually found my way into the book world. The writing then came with the encouragement of the brilliant editors with whom I've worked.

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

A successful illustration is when the marks on the page are magically transformed into something vividly alive in the reader's imagination.

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

I work instinctively but if I have to analyse it, I'm creating books that would have appealed specifically to me in my primary school years. The colours, style of drawing, humour and level of sophistication are what I would have enjoyed as a youngster.

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

I think the physical book, especially the children's picture book, is going to be just fine. The only way the electronic book might usurp the picture book is if it can be made to feel as good as, and work as effectively as a real book with proper pages to turn.

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

I've held on to the books of my childhood and I have a rather wonderful collection of books signed for me by fellow authors and illustrators. I've always been a great fan of Heath Robinson and one of my most precious books is a copy of his autobiography 'My Line of Life' given to me by Jacqueline Wilson.