



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Barbara Bakos

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

I was a huge book collector when I was a child. I remember I could spend hours in bed on the weekends, surrounding myself with my favourite stories. You probably could only see the very top of my head from the huge piles around me. I was a big fan of 'The Busy World of Richard Scarry' and Vladyslav Yerko's 'Tales of the Foggy Albion'. I had also a lot of favourite Hungarian classics, such as Istvan Kormos's 'Vackor' or Katalin Varga's 'Mosó Masa Mosodája'.

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

I can't remember the time when I wasn't drawing. My fingers were constantly covered by ink. I was drawing on the wall, on the tables all around the house or on the TV screen (with cream cheese!). We lived very close to a little forest when I was a child and it was one of my favourite things to get lost in the woods trying to find fairies and little magical creatures among the trees. My first little stories were born like this. I ran home to my mum and asked her to write down all the adventures I just had and I couldn't wait to illustrate them.

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

A successful book never let you to put it down. I remember going to a garden party with my friends but I couldn't finish Agatha Christie's 'Ten Little Indians' at home so I had to hid away at the party for an hour or so to read and find out who is the murderer. I think the same thing is valid for the illustrations. When I am illustrating a book I am not 'just' illustrating the story. I am always trying to create my own storylines in the pictures adding more layers to the story. A good illustration has to work on it's own too just like the story itself.

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

I am also working as an animation director/ art director so I learnt that in an animated film for children it is important to entertain the whole family. This is true for the Children books too. I am always trying to make sure that my illustrations have a message for the older audience.

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

I do think that both of them have a very bright future and they are constantly strengthening each other. I love the joy of physically turning pages and see where I am up to with my books. However electronic books are a great opportunity for self-publicity and as a writer you can reach your audience more easily and directly. At the same time, I never think twice when it comes to buying children books. I would always choose the printed version. Nothing can replace the smell of the paper and the texture of the vibrantly printed pages.

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

I have been collecting books all my life. I still have all my children books from my childhood and I am constantly on the hunt for new beautiful picture books. I just ordered Miroslav Sasek's 'This is New York' and planning to own the whole series as soon as possible. When I am travelling somewhere it is one of my favourite things to do to explore the local bookshops, and see what the regional illustrators creating.