



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An Interview With Mickaël El Fathi

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

I didn't really have children's books at home when I was very young. When I learned to read, I strangely was drawn to science fiction novels, or adventure novels. These were probably the books I could find at home.

I think the first children's book I read was *The Little Prince*. It inspired me a lot. But as I began to read longer novels, the one that got my attention was *The Three Musketeers*. I spent so many nights reading this one...

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

Eight years ago, I had an epic adventure in Mongolia. It took me 3 months to cross the country by horse (but it got stolen after a few days) and mostly traveled by foot. It happened that I started writing a story for children, an invitation to travel. I had a lot of time to think, as I was alone all day long, walking across inspiring landscapes. When I came back to France, I illustrated it and a couple of months later, it became my first published book entitled, *When I Grow Up, I'll be a Traveller*.

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

I guess a successful book is one that has a mysterious magic and deals with topics that are emphasized in the society we live in (social issues like separation, fear, etc...), and tells a story that children need to hear to grow better. Sometimes, one book manages to combine words and pictures in a way that really touches children. I find this theory more attractive than the one saying that books are successful because they were sold by a huge commercial battalion.

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

I'm my first audience. I have to like the illustrations or the text I've written. Otherwise, I start again. I know my books usually are for 5-10 year old children but it's also important for me that parents like it, too. Sometimes, when I write a story or make an illustration, it happens that I think about a child who came to see me at a book festival or who was in a classroom I visited. Would she/he/they like this one?

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

I could have thought a couple of years ago that electronic books were going to replace physical books but it looks like it's still important for people to hold books in their hands, to turn physical pages (and I'm very happy about this). Will this change in the future? I don't know but I'm not very fond of the idea of a child spending most of his time looking at a screen. Disconnecting is good for the health ! :)

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

I'm not a real book collector but my bookshelf is an important thing at home. I like to have books that I can share with my friends, my neighbours, ... This reminds me that I still have to get back the book I lent to my baker! Thanks for your questions!

For me, a book is something one shares, not a piece displayed in a showcase.