



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Owen Davey

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

One of the first books I remember reading as a kid was 'Hot Hippo'. It's a beautiful book with distinctive colour palette, great stylisation and fun compositions. It's an African folktale retold by Mwenye Hadithi, who was born in Kenya and my cousins are Kenyan, so that probably helped solidify my love for the story.

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

I just like drawing. I always have. Every spare minute I had as a kid, I would draw. Asked by a teacher in primary school about what job I wanted when I grew up, I said I wanted to write and draw pictures for books. I just never deviated from that path.

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

I think it's as simple as whether somebody gets something from it or not. Are they inspired by it? Does it make them laugh? Do they learn from it? Does it make them feel seen or heard? There are thousands of ways that books can connect with people on some level.

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

Yeah, I have to think about who the book is aimed at and what they might find interesting or what they can relate to. With 'Can I Come Too?' it's built for people around the age that my kids were when I wrote it, because it's how they would sometimes play. There are lessons in there and I tried to make both main characters understandable for children of those ages.

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

People have been worried about the physical book for years but it hasn't gone anywhere. In my mind, people will continue to value physical books and prioritise the experience of reading them tangibly, over the ease of electronic books. I think there's plenty of space for both of them in the world and they perform different functions and benefits. I don't see physical books going anywhere for a long time to come.

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

I have collected a lot of kids books over the years. They bring me a lot of joy. There are very few places where text and image have equal importance, so kids books feel quite unique in that. I don't covet any specific books at the moment though. I'm not somebody who cares about the first print run or anything. I just like a nicely printed book on good paper stock, and ideally hardback for that extra bit of tactile luxury.