

# E. A. SEEMANN HENSCHEL VERLAGSGRUPPE

## Interview with Signe Torp

### **1) Would you like to introduce yourself?**

Hello! I'm Signe, a Norwegian illustrator and picture book writer from Oslo. I think I look like that too, I am very tall and always walk around with a sketchbook, looking for interesting houses and people to draw in my neighbourhood. I live in an old apartment building that is full of details, so I don't always have to go too far.

My latest book 'Make Yourself at Home' is my first international book and the first book translated to German, I am very excited about this!

### **2) How would you describe your style (in three words)?**

This is difficult! Maybe: detailed, dreamy and made with loads of different materials.

### **3) In which subject areas are you specialized in your illustrations?**

I did my Master in Children's book illustration where we were encouraged to draw pretty much everything, but I always had a strong fascination for buildings, especially old ones, so I guess if I have any specialization it must be that. This was in Cambridge, which is so full of old, really old! university buildings and charming old pubs I felt very pulled to draw them all as much as possible while I was there.

### **4) Are there specific features to consider in making a children's book?**

It should of course fit the age group it is made for. In my experience the publishers are good at advising on this matter. Thames & Hudson, that I developed this book together with, for instance strongly advised me to use stronger and bolder colours than what is my natural palette and it was also important to bear the child reader in mind while choosing what homes to include, and what to say about them.

### **5) Did you experience anything surprising in the creation of the book?**

Yes! During the research I was simply quite amazed by the world and the people in it! All these so different and so incredible ways of building a safe home developed so well to fit with the climate and natural resources available in such creative and skillful ways! I wish I could have travelled to see them all.

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## **6) Have you ever visited certain types of homes from „Wo wir zu Hause sind“ yourself, e.g. Eltz Castle in Germany or a skyscraper?**

Because of my interest in buildings it is one of the things I always make sure to see as much as possible of when I travel. When I was living in Cambridge there were always plenty of narrowboats on the river that I loved looking at and the same in London, inspiring the one in the book. Just to see how different they are, how much personality you can show even in such a small space is very fascinating. When doing research for this book I was in touch with Burg Eltz, they were really helpful and shared loads of information with me and also invited me to come and draw. That would really be the dream! Unfortunately I didn't have time because I was too busy with the book. I hope it can happen in the future though! I also really, really want to travel to the Pacific and try living in a tree house, but for the moment I guess we all should travel more in books than around in the world.

## **7) Which criteria did you use to select the different places of residence?**

The main thing I think was that it should fascinate me and the team at Thames & Hudson enough to want to learn more about it and do so in a way that would also appeal to

children. And that it was possible to visualize, some homes can be technically impressive without necessarily looking that interesting. We were searching for homes that looked great and also said something representative about how the people in them lived. Also we wanted to have a wide variety of homes and for them to be from very different parts of the world so there were many things that had to fit for a house to be chosen. Unfortunately many fascinating homes didn't make it to the final book!

When I was little I used to dream about living in a tree, or in a boat, or to make my own snow cave home, so I think I would be very interested to read it, or I really really hope I would!