

Interview with Christopher Corr

Would you like to introduce yourself?

I am Christopher Corr and I am an illustrator. I live and work in London. I studied illustration at the Royal College of Art and I started travelling and drawing to places that I was curious to see. The world is fascinating and I want to see it all and to draw everything, everywhere. Most of the books I work on have a global theme and are world stories.

How would you describe your style in three words?

‘Colourful Joyful World’

I love looking at the world, I travel a lot [though not this year!] to draw and paint. I love living in Europe! There is so much to see here, so much culture, art, and architecture. And we are all related to one another and we share so much. Travelling really inspires me and influences the way I work. When I travel to a new place I look for its character and atmosphere, its colour and mood, and its stories.

When I was a student I made a huge journey to the USA and I spent 5 months travelling all over the country from east to west and north to south. I drew all the time, and went everywhere. It really helped me understand the people and the place. The US has an incredible variety of landscapes and cityscapes, people and cultures. It is the land of Migration stories, ancient and modern.

I went to India and travelled all over the country from the hot and tropical south to the snowy Himalayas and again I drew everywhere. There was so much to see! So much life and so much colour! It was [almost] overwhelming. I had never seen such colour before and I think India taught me to love colour and to understand it. Colour is so powerful and it is a language in itself.

In India there are festivals every day! Lots of them and they are all colourful and very musical. And such good stories too! And you see animals everywhere, camels, elephants, goats and painted cows, monkeys in the trees.

In which subject areas are you specialized in your illustrations?

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I am fascinated by world stories and folk stories. I want to celebrate our world, its people, animals, and share our stories.

Are there specific features to consider in making a children's book?

The story is the most important element in a book. Stories are international and can be translated so everybody can appreciate and enjoy them. A good editor is essential! And a good designer.

Did you experience anything surprising during the project?

There is such a strong link with our ancient history and culture in our festivals. Our festivals are so old! We have modernized them but when you examine them they are the same celebrations our ancestors enjoyed.

So many of our festivals celebrate the seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter and the harvests and the weather and the elements, like fire and water, and the darkest time of the year. We celebrate our ancestors. I'm fascinated by this link with our earliest histories.

How did the collaboration with Claire Grace go? Did you design the entire book together?

Claire wrote and edited the book and Mike Jolley designed the book. We 3 met regularly to discuss the project and to craft and shape our ideas into a book form.

There were so many festivals to consider and far too many for one book. We wanted the book to represent festivals from all around the world and to show a good variety of celebrations from everywhere. And the great discovery was that everybody in the world likes to celebrate their history & culture!

Which celebration was most interesting or funny for you? - Is there a festivity you didn't experienced yet and would like to visit once?

There are lots of festivals that I really love. Holi, the Indian festival of colour is amazing and funny. I saw it once in India and it was astonishing and crazy and hilarious to see. It is so good natured and exuberant, joyful and playful and incredibly colourful!

I like the animal festivals too, for example Desalpe where the cows come down the mountains from the grasslands to the valleys for winter.

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Pongal in southern India where cows are decorated in flowers and beads and beautiful cloth.

I would love to see the Monkey Buffet Festival in Thailand. It celebrates the ancient Hindu story from the Ramayana where Hanuman, the monkey king, helped Rama rescue his wife Sita from an evil demon.