



1. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Hi! My name is Qin Leng, and I am an illustrator and author of children's books and graphic novels.

I was born in Shanghai, China and come from a family of 4: my twin sister, my mother and father. Growing up with an artist for a dad, visual arts have shaped my ways of self expression from a very young age. I remember spending hours on rainy days, drawing with my entire family! We were always the happiest with a pencil and paper and some paint.

I later went and studied film animation where I worked as a background designer and concept artist for over a decade, while simultaneously working on my picture book illustrations. Recently I was able to focus my career entirely on illustration and writing, a dream come true!

2. How would you describe your style in three words?

Whimsical, tender, alive

3. What areas do you specialise in with your illustrations?

I have always loved watercolor and traditional mediums. I think because all my TV animation works were created digitally, I made a point of only working traditionally when it came to my illustration projects. My lines are inked with brush or fountain pen, depending on the projects, and I always paint with watercolor, occasionally adding some gouache, pastel, and pencil crayon.

4. What did you enjoy most about working on the book?

What better way to travel in time than through the pictures of a book? I loved doing all the research, looking up clothing, and architecture of the era. As a children's book illustrator, I have covered so many stories that take place in modern day household / classroom that it can become quite challenging and redundant to find different ways to illustrate, say, a classroom. Diving into the Regency period was a breath of fresh air!

5. Where did you get the inspiration for the work on *Ordinary, Extraordinary Jane Austen*?

There is a kind of sophistication and refinement during the late 18th century. I wanted my lines to translate this aesthetic. Using a fountain pen for the illustrations and delicate watercolors seemed the perfect fit.

The themes and subjects of the books I work on always play a big part in directing my style and palette.



6. What was the biggest challenge in your work on the book?

Being historically accurate. It was what I enjoyed the most, spending all that extra time researching. At the same time, it really tested my patience. I tend to work on books head down and very spontaneously, doing very little rough and working straight to clean lineart. I like to improvise and sort of let my brush tell me what to do, let me images flow of their own free will through my hand. However with Jane Austen, I had to prepare concept art, create more polished roughs so as to make sure everything was accurately represented.

7. Are you a fan of Jane Austen yourself? And if so, which is your favourite book by her?

I am embarrassed to say that I have never read a Jane Austen novel. Though I recall watching *Pride and Prejudice* maybe when I was far too young to really appreciate it. If I were to pick one to dive into and discover her writing, I would probably choose between *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma*.

8. Did your view of Jane Austen change while working on the book? How so?

I wouldn't say that my view has changed, rather that I have learned much more about her. How much her childhood has shaped her vision as an author.