

# INTERVIEW WITH THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTIST — TOM REED

Intervista

Tom Reed is an English artist, illustrator and children's book author who has lived in Zurich for the past 15 years. His stories and art are a joy for both children and adults and can be interpreted on many levels. They make us stop and think and question through their humorous, but also slightly ironic, twists!



...on museums.....

The reason I originally contacted you was because Muddy Molly made me giggle and I could picture that being in a museum! Tell us more!

Well, I think the book that most connects to museums would be "Lea und Finn langweilen sich" - here I use illustrations from the British National Library which I found and which are copyright-free. As I've used images that are picked from different eras and created using different methods (engravings, water-color, photographs), it gives a strong visual appeal to the book – these images provide a lot of depth and variety. Thus, there's a lot to talk about! And through this book, you feel like you are walking around a room in a museum.

...on creativity....

You have children of your own, offer creativity workshops, and certainly have a lot of thoughts to share on creativity – and language and teaching. Tell us more!

All children are naturally curious and creative and the role of education is to make them even more curious because the more opportunities they have to learn, the more knowledge and skills they acquire, the more curious they become, and this fosters creativity. Letting your mind wander and making connections are important parts of becoming creative. And to be considered creative, these connections are often ones that others haven't made – this you see in my books where events can take some very interesting twists and turns and end unexpectedly!

Also, one thing I enjoy is picking up on a single word or phrase and playing with it – a word or phrase can lead you to an entire story and that is incredible and something teachers can easily do with kids! There are words, like the word 'squib' that have taken my mind to amazing places and I have written or imagined entire stories spurred by a single word or expression.



I find it also so important to let one's mind wander.....and to be "bored". Just observing and dreaming allows one's mind to make creative associations, and doodling and dreaming allows you to perhaps practice a craft. So for teachers, we can say that a child staring out of the window is perhaps being creative and letting their mind go and this is important in life. What I see from my own children's experiences in school is that they had a lot of busy work so perhaps more open activities with the risk of letting children wander off topic might be better for fostering creativity. I think also in terms of language, I like to do experiments with, for example, story dice – setting a scene with a random character, a random place and a random action and see where that will take me. And I tend to ask myself "What if..." all the time – even at random moments throughout the day wherever I am! I think we can question everything all the time and practicing this is great for language and creativity.

#### **...on his art and his books....**

**Tell us a bit about your exhibitions, your books, their translations, your processes...**

To put the books together, I storyboard so I get the overall picture of what I want happening, with the full knowledge that some things will change. I try to play with emotion in the images – so the text might be about one thing but then in the images you can read more into the character's emotions. I get inspiration from many different illustrators – because I live here in Switzerland, I meet people who learned their craft in many different countries and this is always inspiring. In some of my books, for example in the newest "Little Blue Rooster", you see the influence of Tomi Ungerer or Ronald Searle – I have three little ducks somewhat humorously looking at the sad blue rooster. My stories always have some sort of message in them – sometimes linguistically they're relatively simple like in "Night in the Zoo", others are wordier but the messages through the pictures are clear and some of my books have been translated into German. As for exhibits, I have a few planned in 2023 – see my website <https://www.tomreedstudio.com/> or Instagram for dates.

