

THE PERFECT SHELTER- MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR



Illustrator, Åsa Gilland

1) Have you always loved to draw and create?

I can't remember a time that I didn't draw. I had an old typewriter as a child and used to write little short illustrated stories. I love drawing because it allows you to create a world the way you wish it to be, I think this is why I enjoy illustrating children's books so much.



2) What was your favourite book as a child?

One of my favourites was (and still is) Astrid Lindgren's "Pippi Longstocking" because she was such a unique female character. I loved how strong, independent and brave she was.



3) Can you tell us a little bit about how you came to children's book illustration?

I went to a high school that had a program allowing students to graduate in fine art and afterwards I moved to Italy to study interior design. After my studies I landed in Indonesia where I've spent many years working in graphic and packaging design, doing some illustration work in between. The move into illustration came gradually and the past two years my work has been almost exclusively in children's books illustration, which I am overjoyed about.

4) How did you get your first break in illustrating professionally?

It has been many little breaks over a long time as I have produced work for everything from tableware, textiles to book covers over the years. I had always known that I wanted to work with children's books though and the opportunity came after I was signed by my agent, Lilla Roger's Studio in 2018. The Perfect Shelter is very special to me, not only because of Clare Helen Welsh's beautiful storytelling but it's also my very first picture book to be published by Little Tiger.



5) How did you feel when you first read Clare's text for *The Perfect Shelter*?

I fell in love with this story at first sight. I really liked how tenderly the relationship between the sisters and their family was described. Clare's use of the weather and the den-building to symbolize the turmoil surrounding them is so beautifully done too.



It also felt like it was a story that many could relate too, whether a family has battled cancer or other uncertainty. When I was around five years old, my older sister became very ill and had difficulties breathing. She spent some time in hospital and I

only remember the fear and confusion that it brought. She was so suddenly brought away that I wasn't sure she was coming back. I think Clare portrays this subject matter so beautifully and I love that it takes into account what it's like to be a sibling to someone seriously ill.

6) Could you envisage how the shelter would look immediately, or did you have to try a few different versions?

I did try a few versions and had a lot more fabrics before settling on a more natural den with lots of flowers and branches in the end.

7) How do you create your illustrations?

Nowadays I sketch and do all illustrations digitally on a drawing tablet and then I refine the layout and edit in Photoshop. Some textures are hand drawn, scanned in and added later.

8) What are some of your favourite things to draw?

I love drawing people and animals of all types. Also, perhaps because of my background in interior design, I love drawing rooms and environments.



9) Can you tell us about some other children's book illustrators who you admire or that inspire you? (Any images you particularly love.)

Ingrid Vang Nyman, who was the original illustrator of all the Pippi Longstocking books, has greatly influenced how I draw. I love her environments and all the little details. Tove Jansson of the Moomins. More contemporary illustrators that I admire are Owen Davey and Isabelle Arsenault.



10) Which is your favourite spread in the book, and why?

I really like the first spread where the family is seen from above with them all lying around in the grass in the sunshine. It turned out like I hoped it would and it just makes me feel warm and happy.

This resource was compiled from interviews by Heather James heatherjames.blogspot.com/ and Get Kids Into Books <https://getkidsintobooks.com/blog-spotlight/> You can find out more about Åsa on her website www.asagilland.com