

## Q&A with Joel Stewart

Is there a particular book, author, or film that had a particular impact on you in your childhood?

Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things are*, and Tove Jansson's *Comet in Moominland* had a huge and lasting impact on my imagination and still a clear influence to this day. There was also a collection of Italian folktales edited by Italo Calvino that my dad read to me when I was really quite little that I think was very important.

What did you enjoy most at school?

I loved to draw! But interestingly one of the people to encourage me the most in this, and to push me to draw my own way, was a Physics teacher.

What is your earliest memory?

I'm not sure. I remember being awed by a complicated adventure playground type structure, that a teenager built himself out of scrap wood at the commune, (I think it included a skateboard ramp though my memory might be combining something the same person built elsewhere). It was hugely dangerous and brilliant. It was known as *The Construction*.

Is there a particular holiday destination that you have visited that you would love to return to?

I have been a festival of Luthiers (musical instrument makers) and Dance in the centre of France a number of times over my lifetime. I'd like to make it back there again at least once. Perhaps even with some instruments that I have made.

Is there anything you'd like to tell us about your pets, past or present?

My mother had a B&W Collie Spaniel dog named Cuillean (Gaelic for puppy) which appears in a few of my picture books. I've had lots of cats too, but now I can't because I found out that they make me sneeze! For some reason I've always had aquariums full of weird and wonderful fish around the house too.

What would you say is your greatest talent?

It lies somewhere in my line-drawing. If I over-think it goes away but there is something in there.

What new skill – it can be anything at all – would you love to learn?

I am always teaching myself about drawing, and about different kinds of music and instruments. Recently I have begun to build my own instruments, mainly banjos but others too, partly to stop myself from buying any more, but mostly because they have always fascinated me.

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What is the most unusual job you have done?

The one that I do now!

What is your most treasured possession?

My Nyckelharpa (a strange and complicated musical instrument from Sweden) and the instruments that I have built myself).

My Pencils. Any Pencils.

Of all the places you have lived, where have you felt most at home and why?

Home is where I open my sketchbook.

What are your hobbies?

See above re. Musical instruments and music.

Can you think of 3 things we don't know about you? (Anything at all!)

My first word was Duck. Perhaps I was just trying to warn myself about how often I would walk into light-fittings as an adult.

I know a ridiculous amount about kinds of plants that grow underwater.

I can play the bagpipes, but being a gentleman I choose not to.