

Tinybop collaborates with an artist on every app.
Plants features original artwork by French illustrator
Marie Caudry (<http://mariecaudry.free.fr/>).



**A
CONVERSATION
WITH**

MARIE CAUDRY

NO. **2**

PLANTS

Do you have a work ritual? What does it look like?

I drink some coffee. I turn on my computer. I look at my emails. I listen to interesting podcasts. I drink some coffee. I might look at one or two unusual pictures on Tumblr that make me feel like making up stories, and I carefully store them in my collection for later. I drink some coffee. I choose one of the playlists named Orme, Chocolate, Falaise, or Printemps Vert. I drink some coffee. I start work. I've drunk too much coffee.

What are your top tools to work with? (Favorite pens, watercolors, programs, talismans, etc.)

I have a 0.5 mechanical pencil that uses 2B lead and a 0.18 technical pen that does what it wants if I forget about it for too long. Also ivory, grained paper.



On the other hand, for someone who has a sharp sense of detail, the act of drawing a rock that's behind the tree, and drawing the bush behind that and so on is a dizzying experience. In place of the horizontal, cropped shapes we create for the format of books, another dimension is added. It's stimulating and opens new horizons for me.

In terms of equipment, I'm going to have to get a tablet.

It's strange to think that a job that took so much time to complete will take up no physical space in my library. It seems that this is a new step on my path.

***Plants* incorporates mountains of research and spans eight biomes. How did you approach translating that research into cohesive illustrations—that still reflect your personal style?**

I believe my style comes from the almost systematic use of the "ligne claire" (the clear line, with no shadows, dark contours), my color range, my trademark sense of detail, and—I hope—that difficult-to-define something that is the unique personality of the illustrator's pencil strokes.

Your drawings are full of humor. Are these moments conscious decisions?

Yes, I play with my drawings in the same way a child plays with his action figures, giving them character traits, intentions, and a presence and talking to them. This isn't done in a thought-out, intentional way; rather, a good work moment is a moment of "complicity" with shapes. And as my work is addressed to children, I particularly want to bring tenderness and humor to all of these little people.

Which biome did you enjoy illustrating the most? Why?

I love the tundra. At the moment, I'm really attracted to these large, cold spaces. I tried to translate it through color: the purity of the air and the biting cold that made the contrasts very clear.

I also liked so much drawing nighttime in the deciduous forest. You imagine that strange and marvelous things happen in forests at night, like in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In the coming weeks I'll visit the mangrove swamps. I'm so looking forward to this.



Detailed, whimsical illustrations bring spirit and humor to *Plants*.

Have you worked on an app before? How does the medium affect your approach?

No, I've never created an app before. I usually illustrate books or make work for the youth press. But since I'm used to creating colors on a computer, working without paper doesn't bother me.

Outside of your field, whose work do you admire, and why?

Outside my field? Impossible, I only admire artists.

Obviously, I admire Miyazaki, Wes Anderson, and Michel Gondry for the incredible richness of their imaginations and the elegance with which they share it. They produce works for the public, but their works are both complex and profoundly original, almost private visions.

And novelists in general because they manage to create images with words.

I like going to contemporary art exhibitions that challenge and surprise me by shaking me out of the mental trap built of my own prejudices.

And I also like Daniel Clowes because he's succeeded in creating really interesting characters that exist as vividly for me as characters do in a novel, which, to my mind, is rare and difficult to find in comic books.

Marie's verdant home in France.

If you could absorb the powers from three people into your work, what would those powers and people be?

I aspire to the inventiveness of Saul Steinberg, the humor of Blake Edwards in *The Party* or of Jacques Tati in his films, and the charm of William Steig's lines and texts.

Tell us a bit about where you live. Does this place affect your work?

I love visiting cities to enrich myself...taking in exhibitions and shows. These things are always very stimulating but I wouldn't much like living in a city. Little by little, something deep inside of me wastes away.

For three years I lived in the isolated little mountains in central France (in the Ardèche). I have a very strong connection to this landscape, where images of a fantasy nature and a familiar beauty anchored in reality are layered together in a place where time passed more slowly than anywhere else. But then I went back down to the plains to live in a Mediterranean climate. I am less inspired by this scenery but I live in a house that's bathed in sunlight all year round, which is important as I am cooped up inside working all the time.



Where do you go for inspiration?

I really like the first Disney cartoons, especially the "Silly Symphonies."

If I need ideas for compositions, colors, or details, I look at paintings, ancient engravings, or photos from the last century.

What would be your dream project?

Because this project with Tinybop opens up a whole range of possibilities linked to tablet apps, I'd like to create interactive fiction—and invent an entire universe, a portal for stories aimed at children.

What was your most prized possession as a child?

When I was a child, I played most with Koeda Chan, this incredible "Surprise Planet" toy with three universes: Earth, Space and Ocean Beds. I loved the big illustrations that extended the universes. It was really incredible. As this toy belonged to one of my friends and was no longer sold in France, I suggested trading all of my dolls for it and I've never regretted it (neither has she...I think).

What's on your current reading list?

Recently I enjoyed *Green Dolphin Country* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I've just finished Edith Wharton's *The New York Stories* and I'm now reading *Faillir être flinguée* by Celine Minard. It's a thrilling western that's very well written—a real treat! I think I practically read only women writers without having consciously made that decision.

As a child, I was frustrated that the heroines were always in the minority or that they were only used as window dressing in adventure stories. What an injustice!

What are your favorite children's books, movies, games, or toys?

Of contemporary work, I am a real fan of Aurore Caillas. I like everything in her work—her drawings, universe, stories, and her writing.

I always follow closely the works of Blexbolex, Gaetan Doremus, Marc Boutanvan, and Beatrice Alemagna. Manuel Fior, Brecht Evens, Blutch, Daniel Clowes, Charles Burns, Lucie Durbiano, and Anouck Ricard...they impress me with every publication.

I read lots of William Steig, Claude Ponti, Kitty Crowther, and Arthur Geisert to my children because these are exactly what I want to share with them.

And from my childhood, there's also *Eloïse* by Kay Thompson and illustrated by Hilary Knight. It still influences me.



Marie's favorite children's book authors include: Beatrice Alemagna (above), Aurore Caillas (right), and Brecht Evens (below).

