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FOR AN ILLUSTRATOR
PRIX HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN 2018
DE L’ILLUSTRATION

ALBERTINE

Candidate for the Swiss Section of IBBY – Candidate de la Section suisse d’IBBY
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1. BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS

Albertine was born in 1967 in a countryside village of the Geneva area. She studied at the École des arts décoratifs and the École supérieure d’art visuel of Geneva. She obtained her diploma in 1990 and opened a screen-printing workshop in the same year.

In 1991, she became a press illustrator and started to collaborate with many publications in Switzerland and in France such as Le Nouveau Quotidien, L’Hebdo, Bilan, Femina, Le Temps and Les Carnets de Versailles.

She met writer Germano Zullo in 1993. They married in 1996, and their relationship soon developed into one of great artistic affinity. Their first common works were published the same year and their many children’s publications were soon receiving several awards. Among others Golden Apple of Bratislava, 1999; New York Times Book Review Best Illustrated Book, 2012; Crescer Prize from Sao Paulo, 2014; Bologna Ragazzi Award/Fiction, 2016.

Animated films were born out of her collaboration with film director Claude Barras. Especially: Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis (The genie of the tinned ravioli), adapted from the eponymous children’s book in 2006. Le chat sans queue (The tailless cat) an original puppet show production, was added to Albertine’s repertoire in 2010.

Albertine simultaneously pursued a prolific artistic career. She has exhibited her drawings, screen prints, lithographic works, wood engravings, objects and notebooks in Geneva, Paris, Bologna, Rome, Valencia, Toyko...

From 1996 to 2014 Albertine also taught screen-printing and illustration at the Haute École d’art et de design of Geneva.
2. ALBERTINE’S WORK IN YOUTH LITERATURE

2.1. Albertine, from childhood to childhood

Albertine openly admits that she never thinks of her young audience when working on a book. Her full attention is rather directed towards being creative. Her intention is to become one with an idea, a story or a narrative. Albertine draws instinctively. Her stroke, which she first developed in childhood as a departure from a point, has remained her signature ever since. She uses it as though it were part of an endless ball of yarn, which she is continually unwinding.

This stroke, often drawn with a Rotring, is part of her identity. When comparing her first book, Le Petit Fantôme (The little ghost), 1996, with one of her latest work, Mon tout petit (My little one), 2015, one notices that her stroke has evolved but there has been no rupture or revolution. Rather, it continues to run its course seamlessly and is part and parcel of Albertine’s life journey.

On the other hand, Albertine is not someone who matures and freezes into a certain style. Whenever she appears to settle into one, off she goes into another. Her stroke is continually evolving, espousing her current subject or adapting itself to the exploration of her next theme. While each new drawing never resembles an old one, traces of all the works she has ever imagined are apparent in the new ones.

When asked about her work, Albertine immediately refers to the world of games; a serious game, she likes to add. She argues that we all too often forget the extreme importance that games play, namely, to understand the world. From the moment she met writer Germano Zullo, their fourhanded game, made up of endless creative exchanges, has sparked the publication of nearly thirty books aimed at young audiences.

Albertine and Germano take extreme care not to leave their respective marks on each other’s artistic universes. This can be felt in the way texts and images engage in a dialogue throughout their creations. The illustrations don’t just compliment the text, they are an integral part of the narrative and when the scenario allows, the superfluous text sometimes even disappears. Marrying poetry with philosophy, the themes present in the authors’ works are very universal. Albertine and Germano prefer asking questions rather than to attempt to provide answers. This explains why many of their books end with open questions, allowing readers to continue their own reflective journey even after the last page has been turned. La Rumeur de Venise (The Venice rumour), Les Oiseaux (Little Bird), Les Gratte-Ciel (Sky high), Ligne 135 (Line 135), Mon tout petit (My little one), all have this trait in common and are addressed to young and older audiences alike. They are a gentle reminder that childhood will always retain something essential.
Albertine’s natural spontaneity appears throughout her works but with a sense of detail, an infinite precision, a relevance, as well as a sense of humour that also come to light in her illustrations. She gives every image different layers, which, in turn, offer the reader several levels of interpretation. She may be first an illustrator; she is also a full-fledged author.

2.2. The jury’s arguments

For twenty years, Albertine has been developing her own personal style, which has gained recognition in Switzerland as well as abroad. Having reached her artistic maturity, the Geneva-based artist is undeniably a figurehead for the art of joyous and unrestrained illustration in French-speaking Switzerland. Her works have freed themselves from the constraints of traditional art and comic books – that were phases of her own evolution – in order to make place for her very own, instantly recognisable, universe.

«Joyous» and «unrestrained» doesn’t mean, however, that Albertine’s works are frivolous, but rather that she uses her drawings as a springboard to an imaginary world made up of dreams and constant questionings. Her audience has developed a fondness for her perfect mastery of the image which gives way to a certain audacity and irreverence. In fact, her readers aren’t all young but they are all charmed by her imagined universe where the human being is undeniably the main protagonist.

In the stories created by the creative couple, the relationship between the text and the image is perfectly controlled and the articulation between the two crafts is seamless. The poetry present in one is echoed in the other and the humour which emerges out of Albertine’s stroke springs up in Germano’s texts. The reading rhythm makes room for moments of silence, a dreamlike and reflexive pause before turning the next page. The articulation between the text and the image is, in fact, so well executed and the symbiosis between the two artists so smooth that the reader sometimes forgets that a duo is behind the creation of the book they hold between their hands, which seems to be the fruit of a single creator. This mastery of the art of illustration takes the readers elsewhere; a place where they can indulge in a plethora of emotions and feelings that are exacerbated by inspired narration.

Albertine uses form, page compositions, strokes, colours and typographies to tell a story. In her works, everything takes on a new meaning. The polysemic potential of her art allows Albertine to deliver albums that are both coherent all the while being unexpected. Every book complies to her hand’s movements, endlessly unravelling like the Rumeur de Venise (The Venice Rumour) leporello, rising along a vertiginous vertical line in Les Gratte-Ciel.
(Sky high), marrying a horizontal perspective in Ligne 135 (Line 135), or unwinding into an endless embrace in the flipbook Mon tout petit (My little one).

For a long time, Albertine worked with vivid colours and one could think that it was her main area of expertise. Towns, houses, pastures and seas would be populated with timeless silhouettes of men, women and children whose elastic bodies would bend and bow in a feline manner. They would stretch and pose vibrantly and sensually at the mere thought of being alive.

At times however, a sense of freedom, a need to go elsewhere, to tell the story differently takes over, blending the characters into the background. For several years already, Albertine has mastered the ability to capture the present moment; her fine drawings, almost caricature-like, possess dimensions of poetry and of questioning, sometimes down to earth, at other times philosophical, even existential; whereas Germano Zullo chisels his texts down to their essence, making ellipses the motor of his narration.

Whether sober or eccentric, low key or outlandish, the worlds of Albertine are always elegant, as if out of deference to children and her readers; to give greater significance to the page, her images are orchestrated in a gentle choreography and she mingles reality and fantasy, the trivial and the sublime, dream and memory.

A gaze that is raised, a leg slightly turned, an outstretched arm; Albertine’s images engage in lightness and yet invite attention, as if to tease the reader and yet inspire many questions:

«Details are not to be noticed, they are to be discovered. And when we go to the trouble to look for them. Smaller details appear. Here and there. Tiny. But suddenly so real That they become enormous (...)» Germano Zullo in Les Oiseaux (Little Bird), La Joie de lire.

Albertine has illustrated more than forty children’s books. Large part of them have been translated in many languages. Thus her poetic universe has been able to enchant an audience well beyond the European borders.
3. AWARDS

3.1. Awards for albums

1999
Prix de la Pomme d’or de la Biennale d’Illustrations de Bratislava BIB, for Marta et la bicyclette (Marta and the bicycle)

2009
Prix suisse Jeunesse et Médias for La rumeur de Venise (The Venice rumour)

2011
Prix Sorcières for Les Oiseaux (Little Bird)

2012
New York Times Best Illustrated children’s book Award 2012, for Les Oiseaux (Little Bird)

2013
Book design Award from the «design future in the Communication Arts Design Annual for 2013» for Les Gratte-Ciel (Sky high)

2014
Prix Enfantaisie for Dada (Jumping Jack)

2014
Prix Crescer de Sao Paulo for Les Oiseaux (Little Bird)

2016
Bologna Ragazzi Award / Fiction for Mon tout petit (My little one)

3.2. Awards for animated films

2003
Prix SACD, concours de projets, Festival international du film d’animation, Annecy, France, for Le Génie de la boîte de Raviolis (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Prix Canal+, concours de projets, Festival international du film d’animation, Annecy, France, for Le Génie de la boîte de Raviolis (The genie of the tinned ravioli)
2006
Emerging talent award, Encounters International Short Film Festival Bristol, United Kingdom, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Award for best short film. Australian International Film Festival, Australia, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Kodak Award, Curtocircuito, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Prix du public (Public’s award), Court 18, Paris, France, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Prix du public (Public’s award) SSA-Suissimage animation, Solothurn Filmtage, Switzerland, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Prix du public enfant (Children public’s award), Festival Cinéma tout enfant, Geneva, Switzerland, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis* (The genie of the tinned ravioli)

Mention spéciale du jury (Special Distinction by the Jury), Festival du Film Romand FROG 2, Geneva, Switzerland, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis*

2007
Prix du meilleur court métrage (Award for best short film), European Youth Film Festival of Flanders, Belgium, for *Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis*
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS PUBLISHED IN FRENCH

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<tr>
<td>Marta et la bicyclette (Marta and the bicycle)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions la Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>Adaptation: short animated film: Marta et la bicyclette, Guy Susplugas</td>
<td>La Cinquième</td>
<td>CNDP, Centre de documentation pédagogique</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>Marta au pays des montgolfières (Marta in the land of the hot air balloons)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>Marietta chez les clowns (Marietta visits the clowns)</td>
<td>Corinna Bille</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>Adaptation: Theatre: Marietta chez les Clowns, Sandro Santoro, Compagnie Naphtaline</td>
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<td>First performance on 14 February 2010 at the Petit théâtre, Lausanne, Switzerland</td>
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<td>Zinzouin le martien visite la galaxie (Zinzouin the alien visits the galaxy)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
<td>les Versatiles</td>
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<td>Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis (The genie of the tinned ravioli)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
<td>Collection Somnambule</td>
<td>2002</td>
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<td>Adaptation: Short animated film: Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis, production by Claude Barras, Cinémagination, Fribourg, Folimage, Valencia</td>
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<td>Hôtel Rimini (Rimini Hotel)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>Marta et la pieuvre (Marta and the octopus)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>La Java bleue (The blue java)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Fromage (The cheese)</td>
<td>Germano Zullo</td>
<td>Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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A la mer (To the sea), scenario by Germano Zullo, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2008.

Le retour de Marta (Marta’s return), text by Germano Zullo, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2008.

Paquita (Paquita), text by Germano Zullo, Zurich, Éditions OSL, 2008.


A la montagne (To the mountain), text by Germano Zullo, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2011.


Mademoiselle de trop (Miss too much), text by Bridget and Caroline Dommen, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2014.


Mon tout petit (My little one), text by Germano Zullo, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2015.

La mer est ronde (The sea is round), text by Sylvie Neeman, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2015.

Le grand roman de ma petite vie (The great novel of my little life), text by Susie Morgenstern, Paris, Éditions La Martinière, 2016.


Farces et Attrapes (Tricks and catches), album/CD, text author compositor by Jeanne Plante, Éditions Label/Little Village (Harmonia Mundi), 2016.

S’aimer (To love), collective publication, text by Cécile Roumiguère, Brussels, Éditions A pas de loups, 2016.


5. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH INTO OTHER LANGUAGES

Translations of Marta et la bicyclette (Marta and the bicycle)
German, 2001
American, 2002
Hebrew, 2003
Japanese, 2006
Korean, 2006
Thai, 2009
Chinese, 2014
Portuguese, 2015

Translation of Violette et Ficelle (Violette and Ficelle)
Korean, 2003

Translations of Marta au pays des montgolfières (Marta in the land of the hot air balloons)
Dutch, 2001
Korean, 2003
Thai, 2009
Chinese, 2014
Portuguese, 2015
Spanish, 2016

Translation of A l’étranger (Abroad)
German, 2002

Translations of Le Génie de la boîte de raviolis (The genie of the tinned ravioli)
Korean, 2004
Iranian, 2013

Translations of Marta et la pieuvre (Marta and the octopus)
Korean, 2006
Thai, 2009
Chinese, 2014
Portuguese, 2015

Translations of La Java bleue (The blue java)
German, 2005
Chinese, 2006
Korean, 2013
Spanish, 2013
Translations of *A la mer* (To the sea)
Flemish, 2008
English, 2009
Spanish, 2009
Polish, 2016,
Chinese, 2016

Translation of *Le retour de Marta* (Marta’s return)
Thai, 2009
Chinese, 2014
Portuguese, 2015

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Flemish, 2009
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Translations of *Paquita* (Paquita)
German, 2008
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Rhaeto-Romance, 2008

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German, 2011
English, 2011
Greek, 2013
Korean, 2013
Taiwanese, 2013
Chinese, 2014
Translation of A la montagne (To the mountain)
Korean, 2012
Chinese, 2016

Translations of Ligne 135 (Line 135)
English, 2012
Chinese, 2013
German, 2013
Korean, 2013
Spanish, 2014
Polish, 2016

Translation of Dada (Jumping Jack)
English, 2013
German, 2013
Portuguese, 2014
Slovenian, 2014
Spanish (Argentina), 2014

Translation of Les Robes (Dresses)
Chinese, 2016

Translation of A la campagne (In the countryside)
Chinese, 2016

Translation of Mon tout petit (My little one)
Spanish (Argentina), 2015
Chinese, 2016
Korean, 2016

Translation of La mer est ronde (The sea is round)
Chinese, 2016
Spanish (Chile), 2016
6.1. **La Rumeur de Venise** *(The Venice Rumour)*

La Rumeur de Venise was originally supposed to be entitled La Rumeur de Naples (The Naples Rumour) as a tribute to Ger mano Zullo’s origins and to highlight the typically Neapolitan habit of embellishing any story. In the end, the Venetian canals and famous palaces became a better backdrop for this tale, told without words.

The story revolves around a man who brings his day’s catches to the quays of Venice. His first clients are quick to notice a particularly big fish. The news quickly spreads from window to balcony and gets amplified as it makes its way through the grapevine. This two meters long leporello is an analogy for the way legends are born, for the process of creation and for the way in which certain fictions have come to write themselves into the world’s reality.

Collage and gouache.


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6.2. **Les Oiseaux** *(Little Bird)*

A truck is making its way through the desert. The truck suddenly stops on the side of a cliff and the driver gets out, opens the boot and frees its load of birds. A small black chick, however, doesn’t seem to want to follow its companions. The empathetic and patient truck driver then tries to encourage the chick to take flight. Constructed in the manner of a storyboard with very few colours, this album conveys a message that is as simple as it is universal. The text and the images engage in a subtle dialogue and give the work a poetic realm, allowing for different interpretations of the underlying themes of freedom, encounters, sharing, all the while conveying an optimistic view on life.

Gouache illustrations.

Prix Sorcières, 2011.
Prix Crescer de Sao Paulo, 2014.
6.3. Les Gratte-Ciel [Sky high]

Two billionaires, Agenor Agobar Poirier des Chapelles and Willigis Kittycly Junior are engaged in a bitter war and sparing no expense to build the most beautiful, original, state of the art, expensive or highest house. The two belligerents ignore all laws of reason leading to a catastrophic outcome, split into two parts.

Albertine drew this particular book without any colour and exclusively with a Rotring. The final effect, teeming with details, gives the reader the impression to have to interpret an architect’s plan. The book’s message is undoubtedly a political one but is also about reinventing the future rather than announcing the end of the world.

Drawn with a Rotring.

Book design Award from «design future in the Communication Arts Design. Annual for 2013», 2013.

6.4. Ligne 135 [Line 135]

Waving goodbye to her mom on the town’s train platform, a small girl settles down on a monorail to go visit her grandmother who lives in the countryside. The line 135 meanders through the commercial neighbourhoods of the city and continues its journey through suburbs, forests and pastures. Throughout this itinerary, the reader will be able to read the little girl’s interior monologue, inspired by her travels. She starts imagining what it is like to grow up, but caught between the experience of adults and her own yearning to learn, she realises that the path will be arduous. Upon reaching her destination, the little girl is sure of one thing: the future must belong to her.

Along the way, Albertine manages to evoke the numerous questions that cross a child’s mind when growing up. The mysterious outlined figures on the page suggest thoughts that are still under construction and the genesis of a new world. With the exception of the monorail, which stands for time, movement, and transmission, the book is entirely drawn in black and white.

Drawn with a Rotring and a digital pallet.
6.5. Mon tout petit (My little one)

A woman appears to be waiting. A child appears, tiny, in the palms of her hand. He grows up, lays his feet on the ground and eventually overtakes the shrinking woman until she stands in the hollow of the man’s hand before disappearing.

This book, full of sweetness and poetry, is like a tandem dance. Each protagonist guides the steps of the other in turn. Since the design is only printed on the front cover pages, it can be brought to life as a flip book by scrolling the pages from left to right. Equally, it can be flipped from right to left if you want to start the story with the man holding his Little One in the hollow of his hand.

For this book, Albertine illustrates using only fine-leaded grey pencil. Germano Zullo’s text is simple and understated. The storyline is beautiful, the book’s casing refined. Albertine and Germano Zullo both excel, where the intelligence and sensitively of their respective arts flourish.

Bologna Ragazzi Award, Fiction, 2016.


Mon tout petit (My little one), text by Germano Zullo, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2015.

La mer est ronde (The sea is round), text by Sylvie Neeman, Geneva, Éditions La Joie de Lire, 2015.

Albertine’s works have been widely commented on by a number of specialised publications: Citrouille, La Revue des livres pour enfants, Notes Bibliographiques, Parole, www.papier-de-soie.com, www.ricochet-jeunes.org, etc.
as well as by the general press:
Elle Suisse, Journal de la Corse, La Croix, L’Humanité, Le Nouvel Observateur, Le Temps, Le Matin Dimanche, Télérama, etc.

Praise for La Rumeur de Venise d’Albertine, read at the Prix suisse Jeunesse et Médias 2009 (Extracts). Sylvie Neeman, specialist in children’s litterature

It is a real pleasure to praise a book which, in my opinion, answers the most important criteria of what constitutes a «good» children’s book. Despite the absence of words, this book is a real pleasure to read. This pleasure can be witnessed in the words uttered and the smiles exchanged by the children who hold it in their hands; gestures which are tell-tale signs of appreciation. If the readers so desire, this book also discreetly encourages them to ask questions and to think outside the box. (…)

It is a book about a rumour: a fisher has brought back a big fish. It is certainly larger and slightly more beautiful than usual, but nothing really worth writing home about. However, this is exactly what Germano Zullo sets out to do: to write home about it. For this story, he imagined a scenario worthy of a Roberto Benigni film. The news about his catch, which becomes more and more miraculous as it makes its way through the grapevine, along the Venetian canals, is amplified from window to balcony and from roof to roof.

This is exactly what constitutes a rumour. It swells just like the fish drawn by Albertine and successively turns into a swordfish, an octopus, a hammerhead, and even a whale. It transforms to such a point that it starts to escape reality to take on chimeric qualities, which only the author can put an end to. The fish finally takes on the appearance of a mermaid, who thumbs her nose at the rumour’s propagators by diving back into the sea. Albertine has magnificently shed a light on the everyday, prosaic characteristics of the rumour: the story’s characters are shown respectively eating, reading, hanging laundry or taking in the sun. Their mundane lives are suddenly shaken by an event into which they are drawn simply because they find it worthy of being told and shared. The obvious linearity used in this beautiful leporello is another essential aspect of the rumour: in order to exist it needs the space, time and distance to spread. It also needs people to relay it. Following Germano’s very precise scenario, Albertine has recreated her very own Canal Grande which is both imaginary and real at the same time (…) [She]
then proceeds to give life to these venerable facades by offering them tenants (...).
As the rumour spreads, the same character acts both as a receiver and a transmitter to
his or her neighbour. It is a book about words where not one word is uttered. Instead, we
are offered a view on how words work and how they come to exist. It is a wordless book
that ignites conversation (...).

Ligne 135 www.papier-de-soie.com accessed 14/12/12

Inspired by a trip to Japan, this book allows readers to follow the course of a monorail
from the heart of a city to the countryside... The main protagonist, a little girl, knows
both places very well: the city is where she comes from and the countryside is where
her grandmother lives. The trip between the two destinations is a beautiful one...

Germano Zullo encourages his young readers to experience the various emotions that
a train ride might trigger. By giving the little girl a voice, he allows her to describe,
simply and accurately, what this journey makes her feel. [...] Germano Zullo creates a
strong bond between his readers and the child who lets her thoughts rise to new levels
throughout her journey. In her eyes, the world knows no limits despite what her mo-
ther and grandmother tell her. Gradually, the little girl’s dreams come to dominate the
story; as she grows older, she doesn’t want to forget the promises she made to herself
as a child. The train can be seen as a metaphor for the evolution of the world which
might be happening a little too fast.

In perfect keeping with the text, Albertine allows the landscapes to unfurl and trans-
form with every turn of a page. She starts by drawing the big city with its business
quarters and its buzzing streets. Then come the leafy landscapes made up of pastures
and rivers, before arriving to the final destination: the grandmother’s house. Alber-
tine reaches a subtle harmony between dream and reality of which the Line 135 is the
symbol. Her fine and delicate stroke, complimented by black contouring, brings an
aerial and dream-like note to her plates. The only touch of colour consists in the bri-
ght green train climbing up and down the pages, bypassing all obstacles; a beautiful
way of highlighting the fast-paced whirlwind which the world has become. Albertine’s
whimsical illustrations are both poetic and gentle. Just as Les Gratte-Ciel’s format, tall
and thin, is adapted to the skyscrapers that rise into the sky, so too the «Italian format»
of Ligne 135, elongated in shape, allows the story of a trip to unfold in a practical and
imaginary way.

This is a superb album which talks about travelling, dreams, and of a world that often
doesn’t take the time to pause and enjoy the present moment. Magnificent!
A sublime and universal «Pas de deux»
Sophie Van der Linden, specialist in children’s literature.

An exquisite and sophisticated story in a notebook format. Articulately and sensually designed with a pattern of sprouting young plants, circumventing its Centre with the title «My Little one». The cover and its subsequent design is itself a gift illuminating the special moments accompanying childbirth.

Uniquely illustrated in fine grey crayon, a grand lady cradles an infant minutely in the palm of her hand and in the corner of her breast. She holds him in her hands as he grows, turning and twisting together until he touches the ground. All the while the lady shrinks, hanging on to her growing child’s neck, becoming in turn a minute figure in the palm of his hand.

The text starts from the second image and ends at the penultimate scene. Advancing delicately, sentence by sentence, it alludes above all to the universal story of entwining relationships.

Printed only on the front, the pages are aligned in the manner of a flip-book. One can scroll through the pages quickly to animate them delicately to life. It is also possible to scroll cautiously through to replay a slow waltz of life.

The storyline works just as well starting the book from the end, with the portrait of a man that reminds us of a woman’s opening scene. No doubt, it is also a couple’s story in the broadest sense taking place in the drawings...
LIVRES

DES ALBUMS À QUATRE MAINS

Ces deux-là aiment comme au premier jour. Voilà plus de vingt-cinq ans qu'elle lui a montré ses pieds dodus pour la première fois, et depuis, ils cheminent ensemble. Ils n'y peuvent rien, leur amour fou saute aux yeux, un halo tout chaud les illumine, un hologramme de cœurs les entoure, Piaf semble chanter au loin La Vie en rose. Et lorsqu'ils parlent, leurs voix se chahutent, se chahutent, se complètent.

Elle dessine. Il écrit. Elle s'appelle Albertine, tout court, sa mère lui a expliqué cent fois pourquoi, mais elle oublie tout le temps, il faudra qu'elle lui redemande. Il s'appelle Germano Zullo, à prononcer à l'italienne, GermanaZullo, sa mère l’a toujours dit comme ça quand les pâtes étaient prêtes. Avant de rencontrer Albertine, il exigeait qu’on prononçonne son nom de famille pour Zul, et puis la dernière syllabe est revenue, peut-être pour que la rime soit plus jolie sur les couvertures des livres. Ils n'ont pas pu avoir d'enfant, alors Casimir, leur chat sans queue, est comme leur fils, qu'ils auraient appelé Balthazar. Et il y a tous ces albums pour la jeunesse, qui sont leurs bébés, et qui forment une grande famille brinzezingue, sensible et rêveuse comme eux, que l'éditrice Francine Bouchet héberge depuis les débuts, à La Joie de lire. Le dernier-né, Mon tout petit (l’illustration page de droite), est le plus beau, c'est ce qu'on dit toujours quand un enfant paraît, mais là, vraiment, on se demande comment ils pourront se surpasser après cette histoire d'une mère qui chuchote des confidences à son petit garçon qu'elle tient dans ses bras et qui grandit au fur et à mesure qu'elle lui parle, tandis qu'elle rapièse, jusqu'à finir dans les bras de son fils.

UNE CURE DE BRINZEZINGUE


Par Marine Landrot Photo Olivier Metzger pour Télérama

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Page de l'article : p.32-33
Journaliste : Marine Landrot
Avant, il y avait eu Les Robes, conçu à partir des dessins. Sur la page de droite, Albertine avait peint des gravures de mode extravagantes, des robes de l'espace pleines de lémuriens, de feuilles d'arable rouges ou de clowns qui crachent quand on leur pince le nez. Sur la page de gauche, Germano Zullo avait écrit ces histoires courtes prises sur le vif dont il a le secret, des enfants donnant leur point de vue sur un camarade de classe pas comme les autres.

L'école n'est un bon souvenir ni pour Albertine, ni pour Germano, autodidactes jusqu'à la moelle. Elle y arrivait toujours retard, en pyjama, avec des bottines en caoutchouc vert pomme, les dents pas lavées, des traces de chocolat jusqu'aux oreilles : «Heureusement que le maître savait que je vivais dans une famille baba cool, où tout le monde se balaçait à poil sous sa djellaba dans le jardin ! À l'école, je souffrais après m'être laissée jamais de place à l'improviste, je me demandais pourquoi il fallait faire pipi maintenant, lacer mes chaussures maintenant, lire page 24 maintenant… J'ai toujours mal travaillé. L'école génère du stress alors qu'elle devrait être antipérophée. Je n'y sens toujours en danger, sauf quand je dessinais. »

Même traumatisme pour Germano, qui n'a pas oublié les sévices que les grands lui faisaient subir en lui glissant des ordures dans le culéon. Il nourrit alors un fantasme pour les livres, comme il le racontera dans son roman autobiographique : « Je suis en manque, je vais plus vite que les autres. J'adore les lettres, syllabes et phrases. Impatiemment, je développe une écriture encore de temps en temps et je fais de l'apnée sur la page. »

Le corps qui péchote, faut que je me lâche tout à la gorge mental auquel rien n'échappait des angoisses humaines…

Je découvrais qu'on pouvait observer la vie avec cette acuité-là, et en faire quelque chose qui ne soit pas vulgaire. » Albertine et Germano ont constaté que la mission devait durer plus de plus difficile, ces derniers temps. Pour le catalogue d'un festival se déroulant en France, elle a dessiné un papa qui donnait une fleur à sa petite fille, et le dessin est revenu barré, car « trop explicite, prétextant à confusion », c'est-à-dire porteur d'un sous-entendu pédophile. Et lui s'est senti obligé de mettre une grutière parmi les ouvriers du chantier de son album Les Gratte-ciel : « Je sais de plus en plus dans l'invisibilité. Le durcissement moral de la société actuelle parvient à prendre possession de ma conscience, et je me pose des questions que je ne me posais pas il y a dix ans : "Suis-je libre de montrer cela ? Quel est mon intérêt à le faire ?" On en vient à anticiper les craintes et les fantasmes des autres, et il n'y a rien de plus. »

Albertine partage ces doutes, mais se cramponne : « On pense que le dessin est quelque chose de simple, d'aléatoire, alors que c'est une réflexion, un regard, dis brouillons, trois propositions, deux retouches… C'est douze heures par jour à se lutter contre son dos, un engagement total du corps et de la conscience. Il faut se bagarrer pour cette liberté de l'image, pour qu'un dessin puisse continuer d'être perçu par le plus de gens possible, qui peuvent l'interpréter comme ils veulent. Je crois la multitude des lectures. »

L'idée leur est venue récemment d'écrire un album pamphlétaire sur ce râléissement des esprits. On peut leur faire confiance. Il sera du bon « boulot », comme dirait Zouc.

À LIRE

Les albums :
Mon tout petit, Les Robes, Dada, Les Gratte-ciel, Les Osseaux, La Rumeur de Venise, À la mer…
Les romans :
Quelques années de moins que la Lune, Le Plus Grand Footballeur de tous les temps.
Tous édités à La Joie de lire.