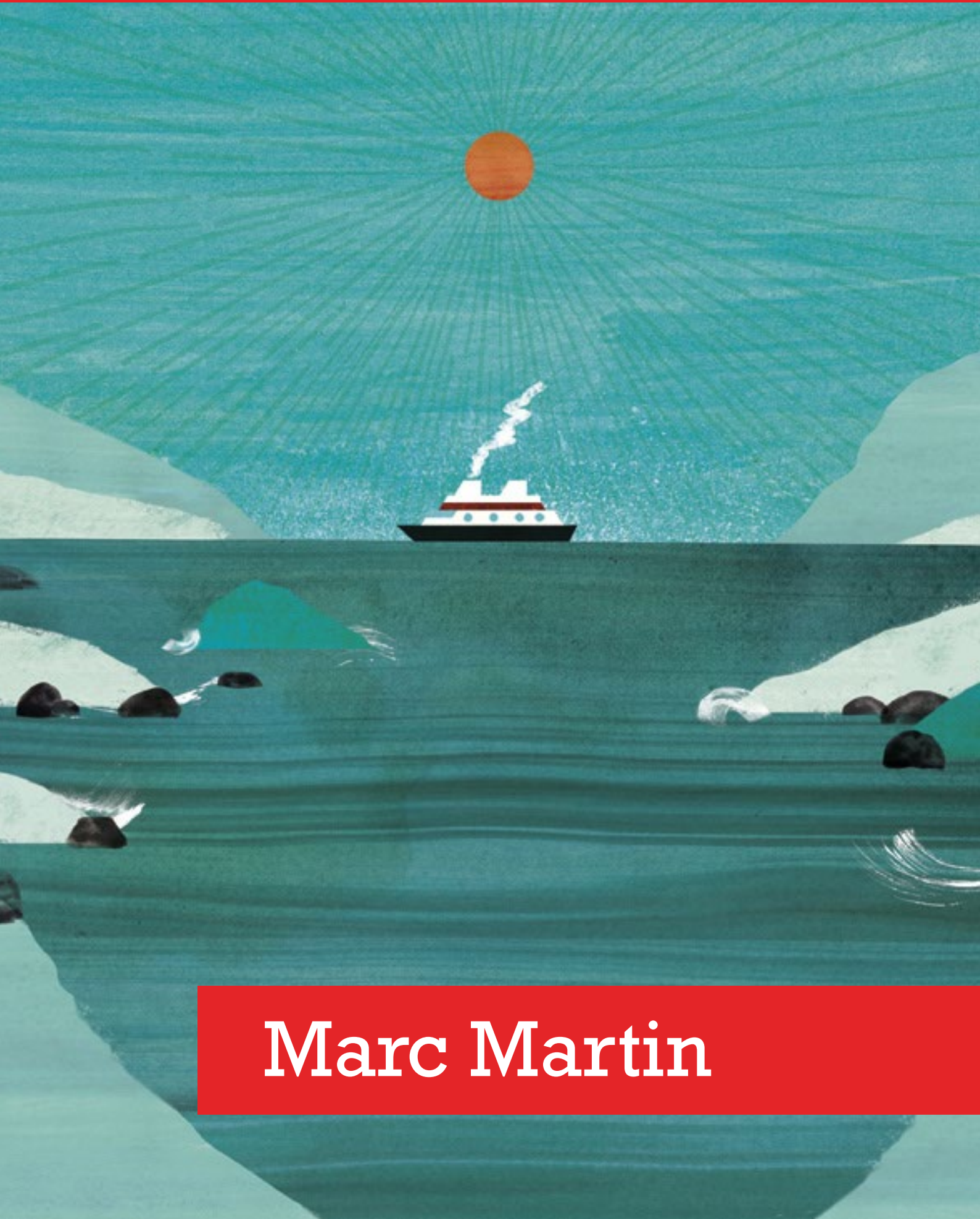# Marc Martin

Marc Martin

In my interviews over the past year I've noticed that some of the most striking illustration work comes from former graphic designers - Marc is another that falls into this category. Marc manages to balance design and colour so beautifully with a combination of computer and hand-drawn techniques. His work has gained the attention of publishers in the last few years, and Marc kindly shares his history and technique with Outline.

Outline: We would love a brief overview of your life from France to Australia, graphic design to illustration.

Marc: I was born in France but moved to Australia with my mother when I was about 5 years old. I briefly lived in Paris in my early twenties, but for the most part Melbourne has been my home.

I originally studied graphic design at RMIT, and that training has definitely influenced my illustration work – I'm continually battling between the learned restraint of design, and the creative freedom that illustration allows. It's only been in the last couple of years that I've transitioned from being a 'graphic designer', to a full-time illustrator. I think I always knew that I didn't want to work in the graphic design industry, so in the periods between graduating from university and being a full-time illustrator, I've also studied sculpture, social sciences and furniture making. I'm always open to new ideas and new possibilities!

Outline: It was great to hear that your book *A Forest* was first self-published, and then picked up by Penguin. Was this your first publishing deal? Would you recommend the process of self-publishing for other illustrators looking to work in the children's book industry?

Marc: Yes, *A Forest* was my first publishing deal. When I first self-published *A Forest* in 2008, I didn't have much of a plan on where I wanted it to go. At the time I just thought of it as a creative outlet for myself - a way of making something beautiful and hopefully sharing it with other people. It was a personal experiment in self-publishing - to make a book and see where it would go, without putting any pressure on myself of having to sell a product.

In that sense, I guess I took the approach most artists would take when making something; make the work for the works sake; and if people happen to like it (or buy it), then that's a bonus. The thought of approaching a major publisher with the initial idea never crossed my mind – it was more a case of having an idea and wanting to do it as soon as possible (I can be a pretty impatient person!) – so

for me that meant self-publishing as a starting point. It was pure luck that Penguin happened to see the book, and like it! So, from my experience, I'd definitely recommend having a go at self-publishing – you never know where it may lead.

Outline: I've spied watercolours, digital, pencil works and more... Do you have a preferred medium? Do you follow a similar process irregardless of the medium?

Marc: My process is pretty similar regardless of the project. I always start by doing some simple pencil sketches to nut out the idea in my head. Once I've got a concept down on paper as a sketch, I can pretty much imagine what it's going to look like in my head – so it's just about bringing that idea to life. I'll usually have an idea of the medium I want to use before I start on the artwork, but I like to experiment with different mediums as well. I often find that the tests and 'mistakes' I make whilst experimenting can later develop and inform the finished artwork, so it's good to try things out and be open to new ways of working.

Outline: How do you balance your other illustration work - such as editorial and advertising - against children's book

illustration? Do you have a preference for working in a certain area?

Marc: I'm always working on several projects at once, so there's a constant balancing of different types of work going on. I wouldn't say I have a particular preference for any of these. I really enjoy working in different disciplines, it keeps things interesting – one day it might be a mural for a bookshop or hospital, the next an editorial illustration for a magazine. I'm open to all kinds of projects.

Outline: We'd love to hear of the children book illustrators that inspire/influence you.

Marc: I'm influenced and inspired by so many things! In terms of picture books, I'm finding myself being more and more influenced by illustrators from the 50s and 60s. People like Bruno Munari, Charley Harper and Saul Bass did some amazing things that still resonate in design and illustration today, and I'm strongly influenced by that modernist aesthetic and philosophy. Other people I admire are M. Sasek, Jenny Baker, Dahlov Ipcar, Jon Klassen, Jon McNaught, and Tomi Ungerer to name a few.

Outline: Can you share any 2014 projects you are excited about?

Max
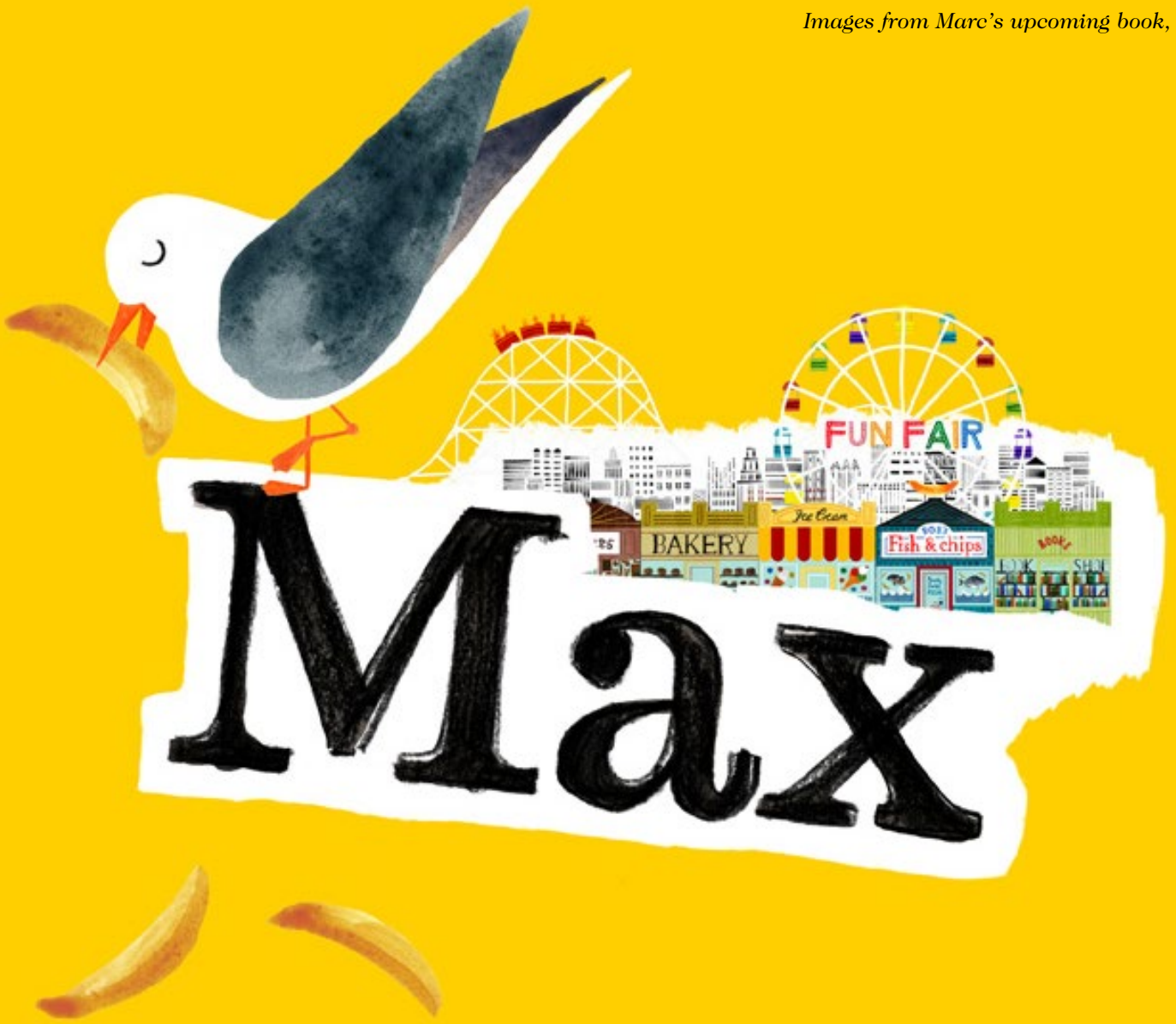
by Marc Martin

Marc: My next picture book, *Max* is due to be released in April this year, so I'm really excited about that. It's about a seagull called Max, who has a particular fondness for fish-and-chips, and his friendship with Bob, the fish-and-chip shop owner. I guess you could say that it's a story of enduring friendship.

I'm also working on another book due to be released early next year, as well as a couple of digital projects for tablet devices, one commissioned by Penguin Books, and another self-initiated. And maybe a couple of other things if I can fit them in! ⓞ
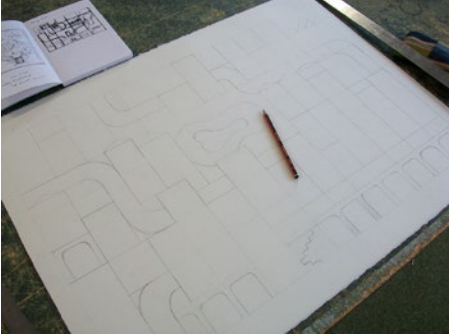
{►CLICK!} **Marc Martin**

Website http://www.marcmartin.com

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Outline: Your digital work has a "natural textural" quality to it - could you share with us your process for creating a digital work?

Marc: I recently worked on a project for Penguin books called *Sharing Stories*. Whilst this piece is primarily hand drawn, I also used the computer to adjust colours and add more elements. You can see how it developed from an original water-colour drawing into a more complex, layered digital piece.

I originally did a very rough sketch in my notebook before I started, and then a more detailed, full-sized sketch. (left top).

I then started colouring in the buildings with watercolour paints. (left).

And then I added some detail with coloured pencil before scanning in the picture. (left, bottom).

Once it's on the computer it's easy to adjust things like colour, or mask certain areas to add more texture and detail.

Sometimes I add detail by using a light box to trace certain areas.

And below, the finished piece!