



Jill Thompson

Magic Trixie
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A Q&A with Jill Thompson

1. Is Trixie based on someone you know, or is she purely from your imagination? Magic Trixie is a combination of all of my nieces and the children of my friends. She's an homage to all of the little bits of business or surprising things they have done in my presence filtered into one little girl. I've also mined some of my own childhood memories. But she's a work in progress. I'll always be adding to her, bit by bit. I've given her my curly hair. I have a fondness for wild hair on little girls, mostly because I hated it when I was a girl. I wanted long, straight, blond hair that you could brush and comb...or braid in smooth plaits. My braids always looked like dreadlocks. I was one of the "no more tangles" generation, which did not work for me, I'm sorry to say. She's also a bit elfish. **2. Did you ever get caught up in any schemes of your own like Trixie?** Nope. I was a pretty boring kid. I left all the

crazy schemes to the little rascals. I wanted to be crazier, but I guess I had to wait until I was an adult to get involved in free-form antics. **3. Describe your creative process.** Whoosh! How many web pages do we have? Usually my best ideas come to me while I'm working on something else—like Magic Trixie. I never set out to create her or sat down at a blank page and said, "Now I will create a new project!" I was working on a project for Vertigo/DC Comics. It was a manga-style project that spanned 192 pages. At about the 50-page mark, Magic Trixie popped into my head. She kept pushing aside the characters I was supposed to be drawing by dancing around and making faces. So I had to take out some paper at the end of each day and sketch and paint her. Scratches too. And then once I had her drawn, her school friends started popping up. Next came her house. It all kind of crept in a little bit at a time. **4. Do you create the illustrations or the story line first?** I usually create the characters first. Some stay exactly the same from the time I first draw them and every time afterward. Others change slightly, and still others only retain an essence of the look they first embodied. Those are more of a feeling, I guess. Then once I have the characters drawn and their personalities fleshed out, I usually start drawing them in different poses and situations, and stories grow out of those sketches. **5. What/who inspires you to write?** Everything inspires me. I carry my camera around with me so I can photograph the way the sun casts a shadow on certain things. The change of seasons. The weather. Foods I eat. Gardens. Architecture. People. Set designs for plays or films. Fashion. I like to people watch and sometimes go to coffee shops or cafés to watch pedestrians go by. I'm inspired by the way people speak or accents they might have. I like an urban landscape as well as a nature landscape. Memories. Improvisation with friends inspires me. I like making things and usually get really inspired to draw when I spend a good amount of time decorating or knitting or building something, or making Halloween costumes, or planning theme parties to invite friends to. As long as I have all of those things active in my life, my comic machine is running smoothly. It's all connected in me. I'm always inspired when I travel. I enjoy experiencing the differences in cultures. In fact, the city Magic Trixie lives in is an amalgam of all of my favorite parts of every city I have been to thus far. I could not draw a map of her city with any definite boundaries because there are still places I'd like to visit. But the elements I'm drawn to are evident. You'll find the cobblestone streets of the European cities I love, and the grand boulevards of Chicago's past. Trains and bikes and waterways as well as el trains and subways. Skyscrapers and ancient city centers. Tiny, narrow specialty shops and beautiful department stores like Marshall Fields. There are sculptures and gardens and parks that I know exist but have yet to be put down on paper. I know the history of the big tree that Magic Trixie rides past every day in Spectral Park. People come to be photographed in the big branches on their wedding day and light one of the lanterns when they name their babies. **6. What did you read as a child?** Anything and everything. I read comic strips in the newspaper. I wore out my library card at the Forest Park, Illinois, public library. I was hooked on a children's book called *Small Pig* throughout my grade school years because I had empathy for the title character. I even checked it out well into my sixth-grade year. Just to have it around. I recently found it on Alibris and am the proud owner of a copy today. I remember reading *Island of the Blue Dolphins* over and over and over. It actually inspired me to try and write a novel. I set up my "office" in the closet off the kitchen. I brought my Royal typewriter in there and put it on a TV tray with coats on either side. There was no heat in that closet, but I stayed in there writing during the weekends. I don't think I ever finished my story, and I know I did not let anyone read it that I can remember. I got hooked on comic books fairly early when I bought a box of old Archie comics at a garage sale down the alley. The house on the corner was going to be moved to another part of town (whole house jacked up, put on a truck, and driven away), and they were selling every last thing in their house, down to the doors and fixtures. So I got an orphanage crate filled with comics for a couple of bucks. But that's really what started me down this path...the comics in that box. I fell in love with the sequential storytelling. From there I moved on to any other comic book I could find: Spiderman, X-Men, old monster comics...I also read any paperback novel that my parents or grandmother had lying around, so I probably read a few things that were meant for an adult audience. I also enjoyed reading all the books that were assigned in school. It was not a chore for me to spend my time reading. I always seemed to be reading something or drawing something based on that thing I had just read. That's one thing I wish I had more time to do now. Read. I do have a problem putting down a book once I start. I tried to save the last Harry Potter book to read on a plane trip, but once I cracked the cover to just glance at the first chapter...I stayed up all night and finished the whole thing. **7. What's next?** I'm starting art for *Magic Trixie and the Dragon*. And then I'll move on to the fourth *Magic Trixie* book. That's 186 pages of painted art, so I'll be at the drawing board for a good long while. But I'm so excited to share her adventures with everyone. I only wish I could draw everything faster!