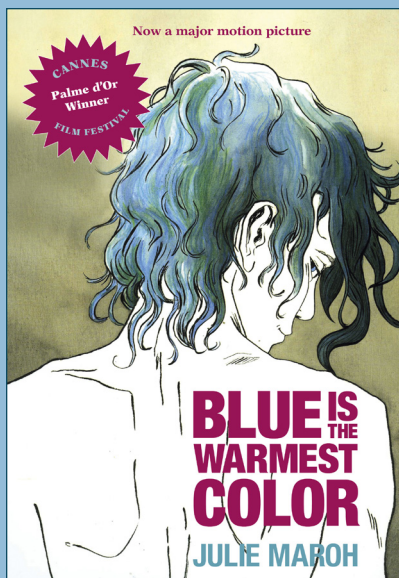




BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR

BY JULIE MAROH

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The live-action French film version of *Blue Is the Warmest Color* was the winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes 2013.

Originally published in French as *Le bleu est une couleur chaude*, *Blue is the Warmest Color* is a graphic novel about growing up, falling in love, and coming out. Clementine is a junior in high school who seems average enough: she has friends, family, and the romantic attention of the boys in her school. When her openly gay best friend takes her out on the town, she wanders into a lesbian bar where she encounters Emma: a punkish, confident girl with blue hair. Their attraction is instant and electric, and Clementine find herself in a relationship that will test her friends, parents, and her own ideas about herself and her identity.

Gorgeously illustrated and beautifully told, *Blue Is the Warmest Color* is an elemental lesbian love story that crackles with the energy of youth, rebellion, and desire.

First published in French by Belgium's Glénat, the book has won several awards, including the Audience Prize at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, Europe's largest.

The live-action, French-language film version of *Blue Is the Warmest Color* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2013. Directed by director Abdellatif Kechiche and starring Lea Seydoux and Adele Exarchopoulos, the film generated wide praise as well as controversy for its explicit scenes. **It will be released in North America in the fall of 2013 through Sundance Selects/IFC Films (USA) and Mongrel Media (Canada)** as well as in other countries around the world, including the UK and Ireland (Artificial Eye) and Australia (Transmission Films).

JULIE MAROH is an author and illustrator originally from northern France. She studied comic art at the Institute Saint-Luc in Brussels and lithography and engraving at the Royal Academy of Arts in Brussels, where she still lives. Her new graphic novel *Skandalon*, will be released by Glénat in French this coming September. Visit her website at juliemaroh.com



self-portrait by Julie Maroh

BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR

Q & A with author and artist

JULIE MAROH

“The best thing this book could do is help queer youth, somewhere, somehow.”

Q: You began *Blue is the Warmest Color* (*Le bleu est une couleur chaude*) when you were 19 and it took you many years to complete. Did it evolve over time, or did you have a very clear vision of the story of Clementine and Emma from the beginning?

A: The beginning and the end of the book take place at the same moment in time; this idea was clear to me from the start. Otherwise, the main events of the story revealed themselves to me after Clementine and Emma’s personality traits were settled. I suppose that using such verbs might sound weird, but this is really how it worked for me. As soon as a character is clarified, he/she can react in only one or two possible ways in any given situation. By this I mean that the personalities of my characters were my guides and helped me to have a clear vision of the story.

Sometimes the most difficult part was determining what would take place between the main events of the story. It took me months just to write a few transitional scenes in order to shift the story from one important situation to another.

Q: Clementine goes through a very difficult process of coming out to herself, classmates, and her conservative family. Her family’s disowning of her is something that haunts her and her relationship with Emma. Do you think the climate has changed for queer youth in France since 1994 (when the book is first set)?

A: I couldn’t tell for sure, however the recent political climate in France proved that we still have a long way to go about this issue. During the debate around gay marriage, a lot of young queer people have been harassed and kicked out by their families. I mean: more than “usual.” In France we have great LGBT associations doing an amazing and difficult job, and their reports on this subject were really alarming and demoralizing. The best thing this book could do is help queer youth, somewhere, somehow.

Discussion with Julie Maroh continued next page . . .



Discussion with Julie Maroh continued . . .

Q: The first part of *Blue* explores Clementine and Emma's courtship and eventual union, and the next part skips ahead ten years in their relationship. Can you talk about why you chose to tell the story this way?

A: When I write a story, I always ask myself one question for each scene: "Is it useful for the story?" In this case, ten years could be encapsulated in one page, and it's still easily understandable that their intimacy went further, that they moved in together and were happy. The details of this part don't really matter. What matters is what led to this happiness and what followed afterwards.

Q: What is your illustration process? Do you go through many drafts? Can you tell us how a panel comes together for you?

A: Actually, it's quite a neurotic process! And it's more about creating a page or a scene than a panel. First of all, I write down everything that runs through my head: events, situations, dialogues, gestures, shots, closeups, backgrounds ... Starting from there, I draw a rough version of the page; most of the time I create two facing pages at the same time. When I feel that all the elements are balanced and efficient, I draw the final version on another sheet of paper. The color comes at the end.

I usually don't go through many drafts on paper. It can happen mentally. But I do a lot of sketches of the characters, to be sure to get their ... cartography, if you will.

Q: What other writers are you inspired by? Who inspired you to become a comic creator?

A: I've been inspired by so many that it wouldn't be fair to name only a few. Everything feeds me in my work; every kind of art becomes every little rock on my path. For me, it's more about what and how to pass on. I first became a storyteller when I was around six years old, and drew my first comic book when I was eight. So really, it was my entire environment that helped to shape me as a storyteller and comic artist since I was a child.

Q: What are you working on now?

A: My next graphic novel *Skandalon* will be released in France this fall, as will a little comic I made about Brahms, the composer. I'll spend the rest of this year and 2014 working on my new project called *Les corps sonores*, a series of little love stories and introspections focused on alternative identities and sexualities.

Julie Maroh is available for interviews over email. Excerpts from *Blue is the Warmest Color* are available with permission from the publisher. Please contact Cynara Geissler at cynara@arsenalpulp.com with your queries and requests. To read Julie Maroh's statement (and final comment) on the film adaptation, go to <http://www.juliemaroh.com/2013/05/27/le-bleu-dadele/>

