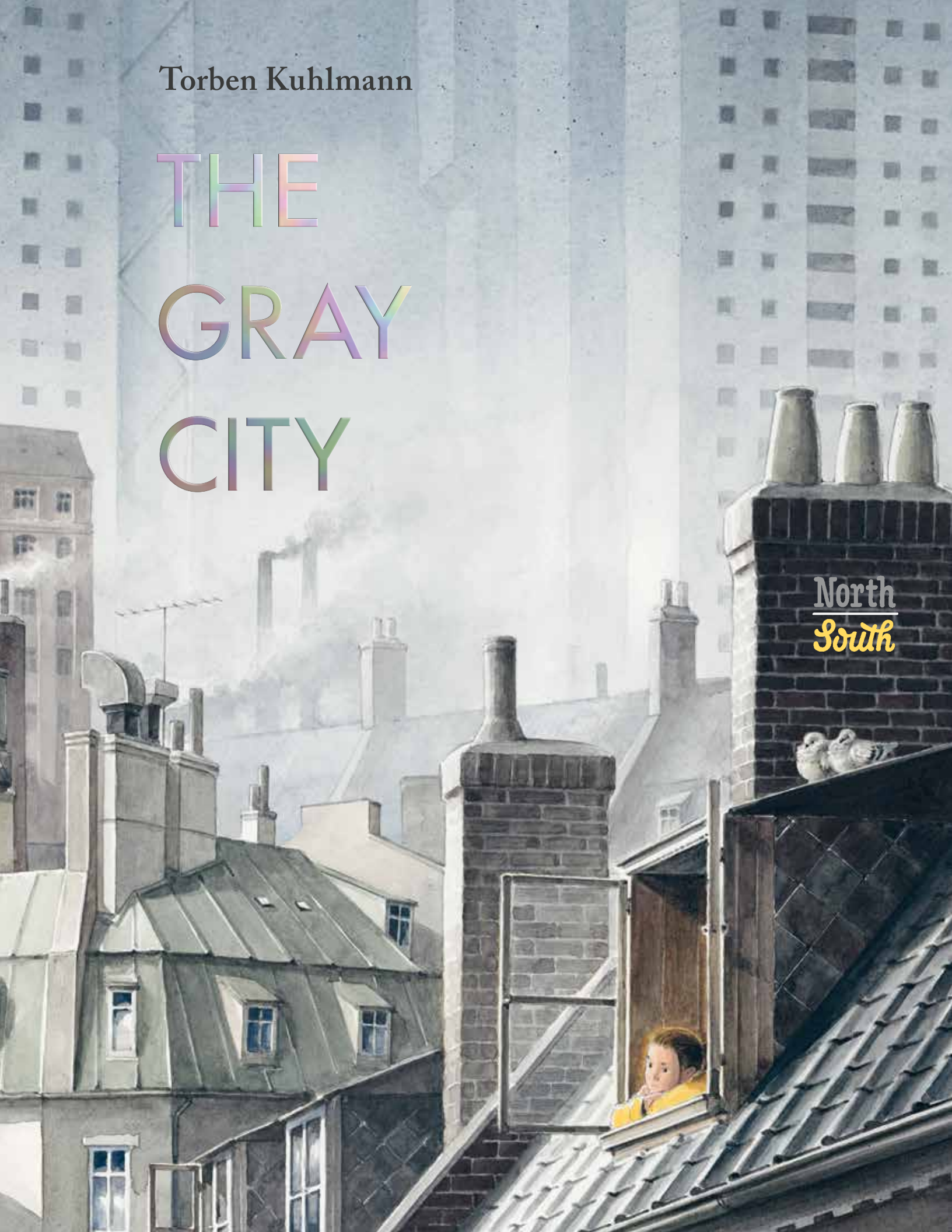


Torben Kuhlmann

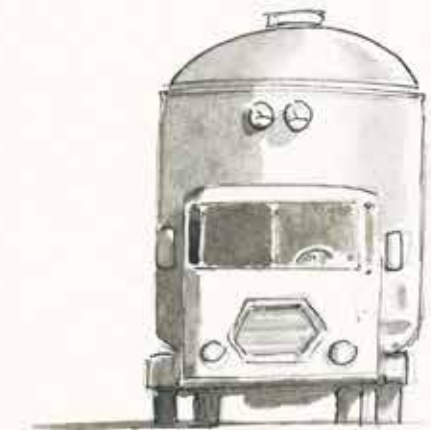
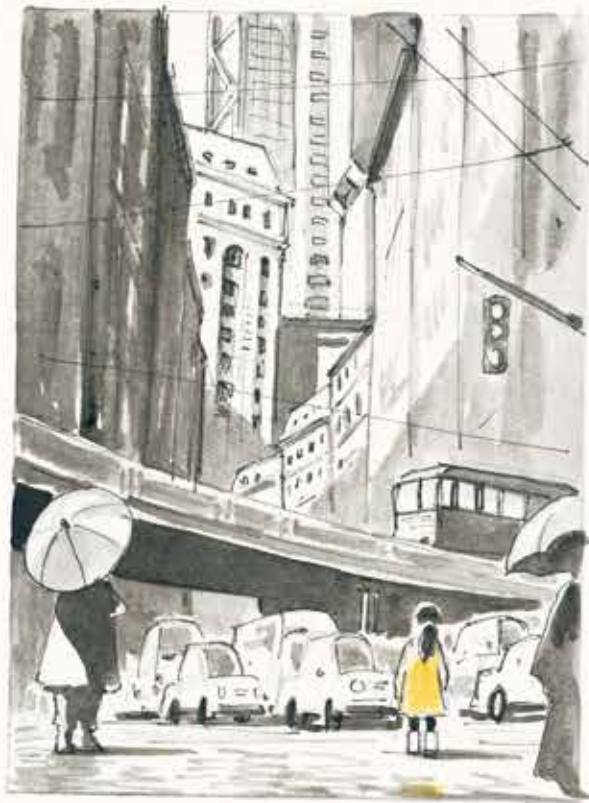
THE
GRAY
CITY

North
South





Titelillustration

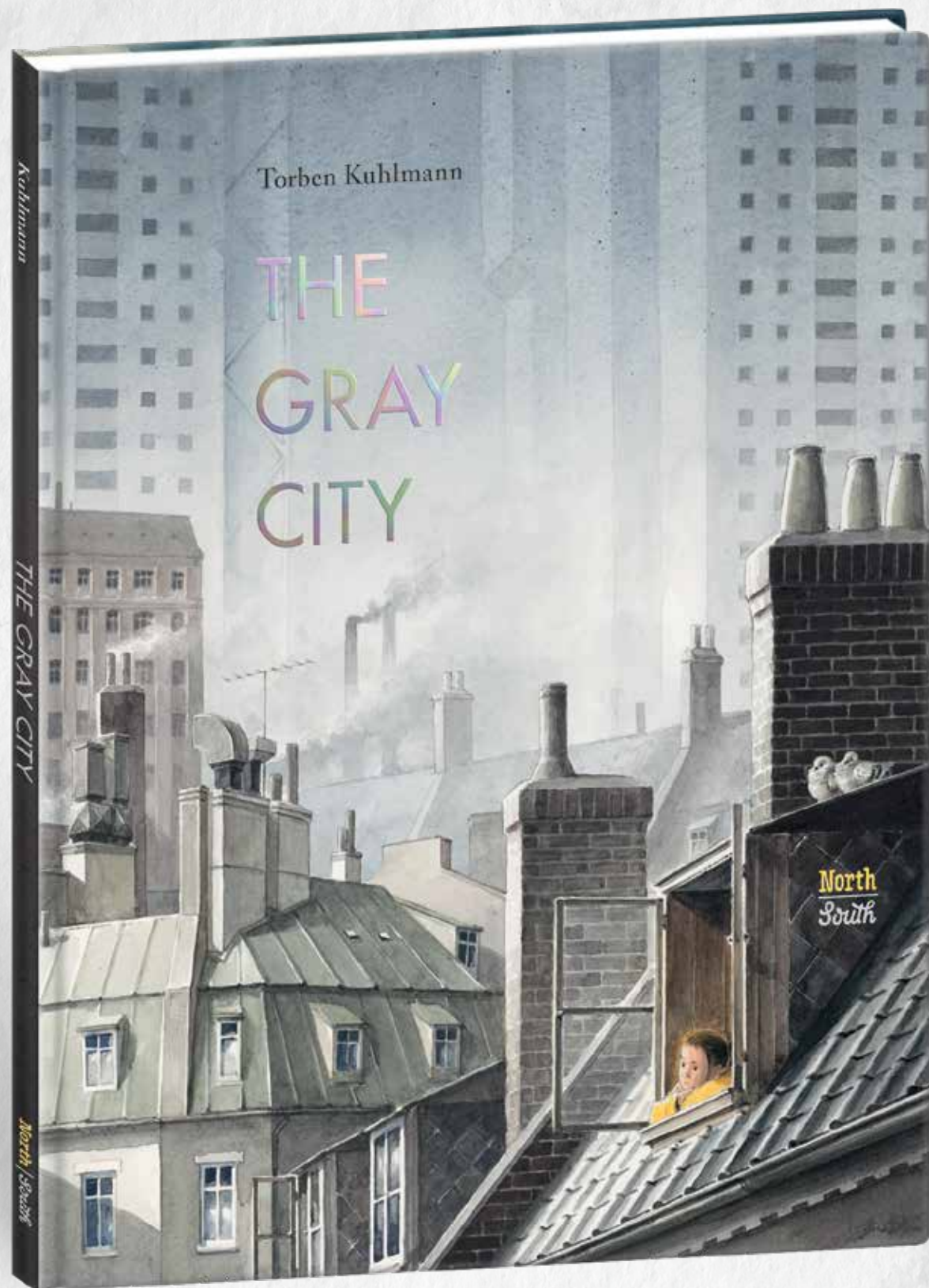


Why did you make your city so gray?

I must say my name is rarely associated with the most colorful picture books, but colors are still the most important feature of my work. A world without color, or where color is simply banned, would be a nightmare for me. But it's this very thought that gave rise to the original, exciting idea for the book: a color-loving protagonist suddenly finds herself in a gray world. I wanted to stand by her in her quest to find out the cause of this omnipresent grayness.



Torben Luhlmann



Let there be color! From Torben Kuhlmann—an epic, illustrated story about a girl who sets out to bring color back to a city where everything is gray.

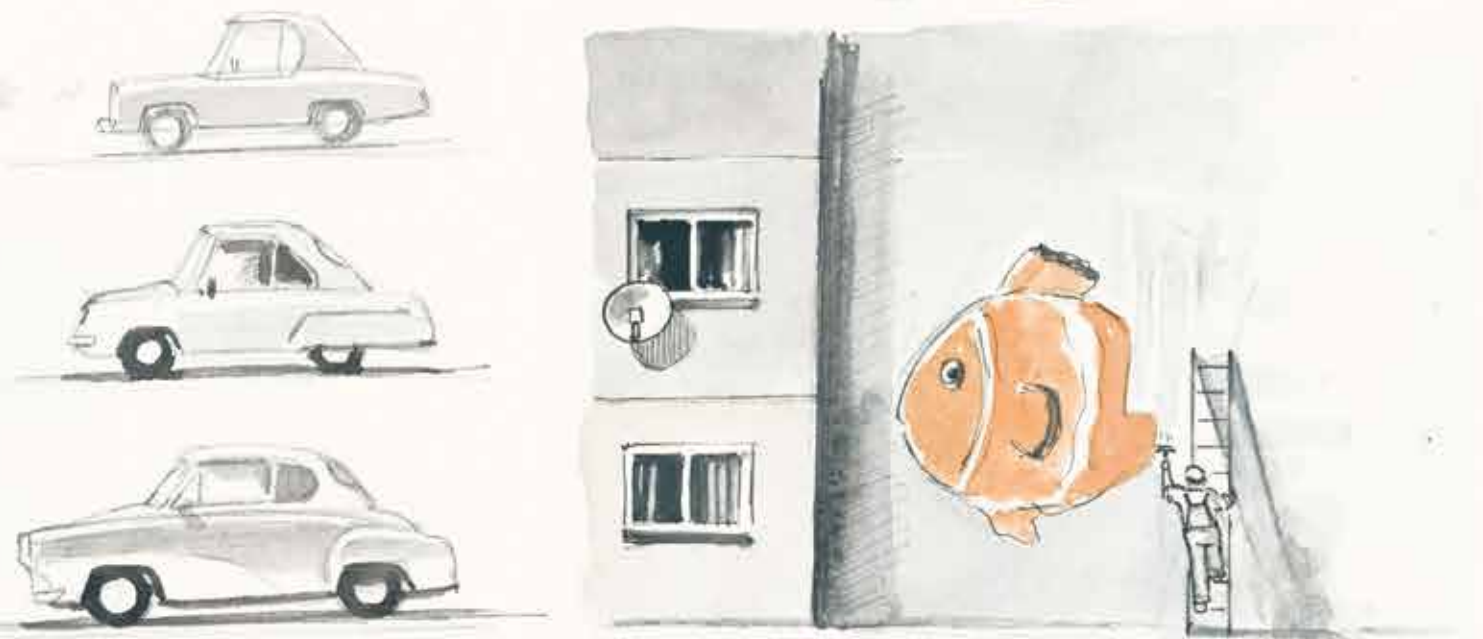
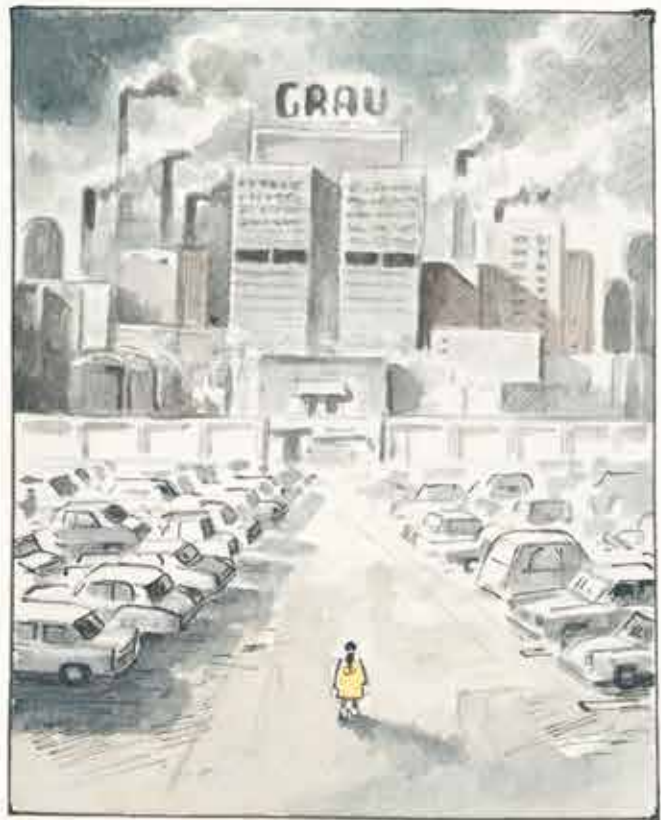
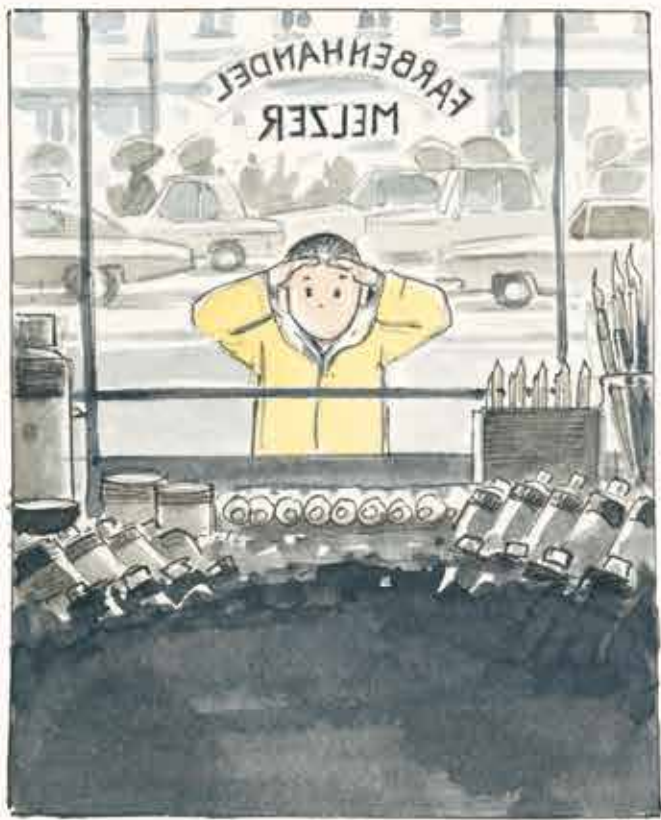
A story with many shades



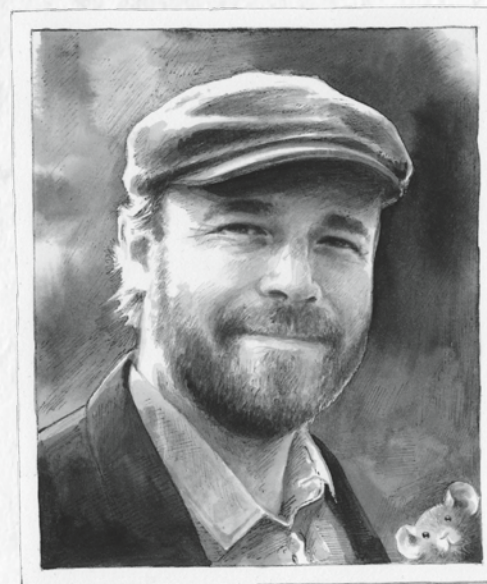
There is something off about Robin's new city. Everything there is gray—house facades, people, even flowers. Where are all the colors? Robin sets out in search of color and uncovers a plot: behind all the gray is the faceless Gray Works company. Thanks to her powers of deduction and a few allies, Robin gets into the company's control center and sets all the controls to colorful. In the end, only her cat is left gray.

Kuhlmann uses his love of science and his mastery of illustration to introduce color theory to young readers through his striking visuals and contemporary narrative.

The Gray City
Translated by David Henry Wilson
Hardcover / 8.5 x 11
64 pages / ages 6 to 10
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4554-1







Torben Kuhlmann

Torben Kuhlmann was born in Germany in 1982. Highly creative as a young child, Torben was recognized as early as kindergarten for being a gifted draftsman. He was captivated by small airplanes, strange machines, and steaming trains; these elements made their way into his drawings. He studied illustration and design at the Hamburg University for Applied Sciences. His preferred media are pen and watercolor. He also works with acrylics, oil paints, and digital programs. He works as a freelance illustrator in Hamburg. The books in his *Mouse Adventures* series are best sellers and owe their inventiveness to Torben's great enthusiasm for unusual mechanical inventions. *Edison: The Mystery of the Missing Mouse Treasure* was chosen as a 2019 Batchelder Honor and an ALA Notable Children's Book.

Dear Torben, you've told us that *The Gray City* has been in your mind for a long time.

Would you tell us a bit more?

The idea of *The Gray City* has been at the back of my mind for several years. As with a lot of my books, there's a direct line back to my childhood. I remember various car journeys when I first saw Hamburg, but I only saw it from the motorway. All the way along the A7, there seemed to be nothing but an endless industrial landscape full of chimneys, cranes, and office buildings. Many years later, this memory influenced a lot of my illustrations—and now it's actually spawned a whole picture book. But the story itself went through several changes. The first attempts were focused more on environmental issues, rather like my book *Moletown*. After a while, though, it was the grayness that took over. We've all seen pictures of depressingly gray towns—especially in winter. But what would it be like if the powers-that-be deliberately imposed the grayness on the people? Would gray swallow up every other color? These were the questions that got me going.

“Gray” is the keyword. How much gray is there in our world?

The fact is that big cities are often gray: concrete apartment houses, brutalist office buildings, eight-lane streets. But my gray city goes way beyond what you find in the real world. It's not just the physical color—it's also an attitude of mind. For the authorities it represents uniformity, and that's something you'll find all too frequently in our real world. Whenever something colorful, different or unusual appears, they'll feel obliged to cover it up in a standardized uniform. But I don't want to say any more than that. Let people read the story and look at the pictures, and then think their own thoughts and decide for themselves what the gray can stand for.

4 Questions for

Torben Kuhlmann

The heroine Robin loves colors and sets out to solve the mystery of the gray city.

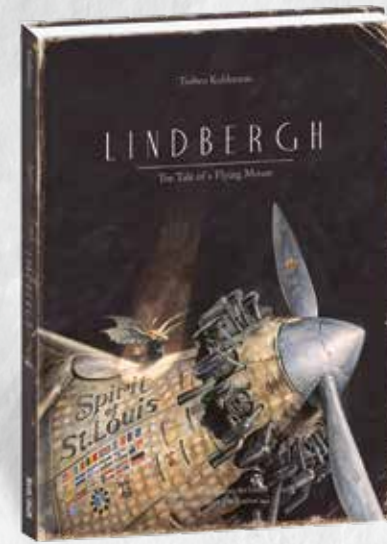
How would you describe her?

As with all my characters, there's a slightly autobiographical trait in her. It comes out mainly through her interest in technology and her love of drawing. I'd describe her as a very bright, self-confident girl, with a healthy mixture of curiosity and skepticism. She's an outsider who enters a world in which most people have come to accept the grayness. This is not an option for Robin. Her initial irritation quickly leads to outright rebellion. It's expressed very clearly by her bright yellow raincoat. And in the course of the story, her curiosity finally enables her to lay hands on the vital piece of the puzzle which will put an end to the gray world.

What distinguishes *The Gray City* from your *Mouse Adventures* series?

My *Mouse Adventures* also have a restricted range of colors. Parts of *The Gray City* are exclusively gray, although of course there are different shades of it. But the *Mouse Adventures* are illustrated stories based on nonfiction events, whereas *The Gray City* is a fictional short story with lavish illustrations. It gives far more scope to my love of writing. The illustrations in my *Mouse Adventures* often act as the narrative, without any accompanying text, but in this book their function is mainly to convey the mood and the atmosphere. They bring the world of the gray city to life. This world and the characters in it are all the products of my imagination, whereas the illustrations in the mouse books almost always depict real places and people.

Interview text translated by David Henry Wilson.



Lindbergh
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4167-3

“An exceptionally fine debut.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



Armstrong
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4262-5

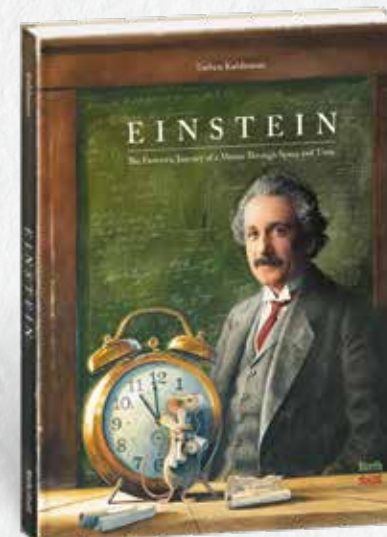
“This beautifully illustrated story is a feast for mind and eyes and a strong selection to complement STEAM curricula.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review



Edison
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4322-6

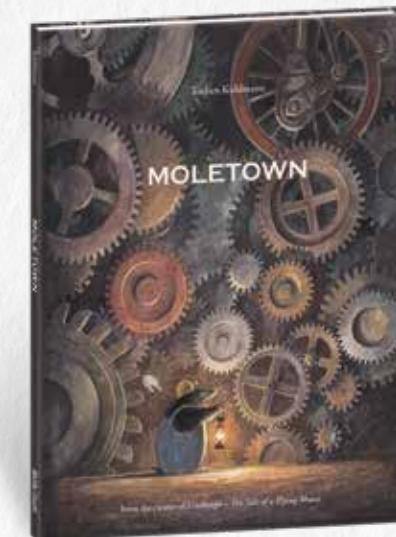
“Kuhlmann has created another science-based adventure full of delightful details.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

The World of Kuhlmann



Einstein
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4444-5

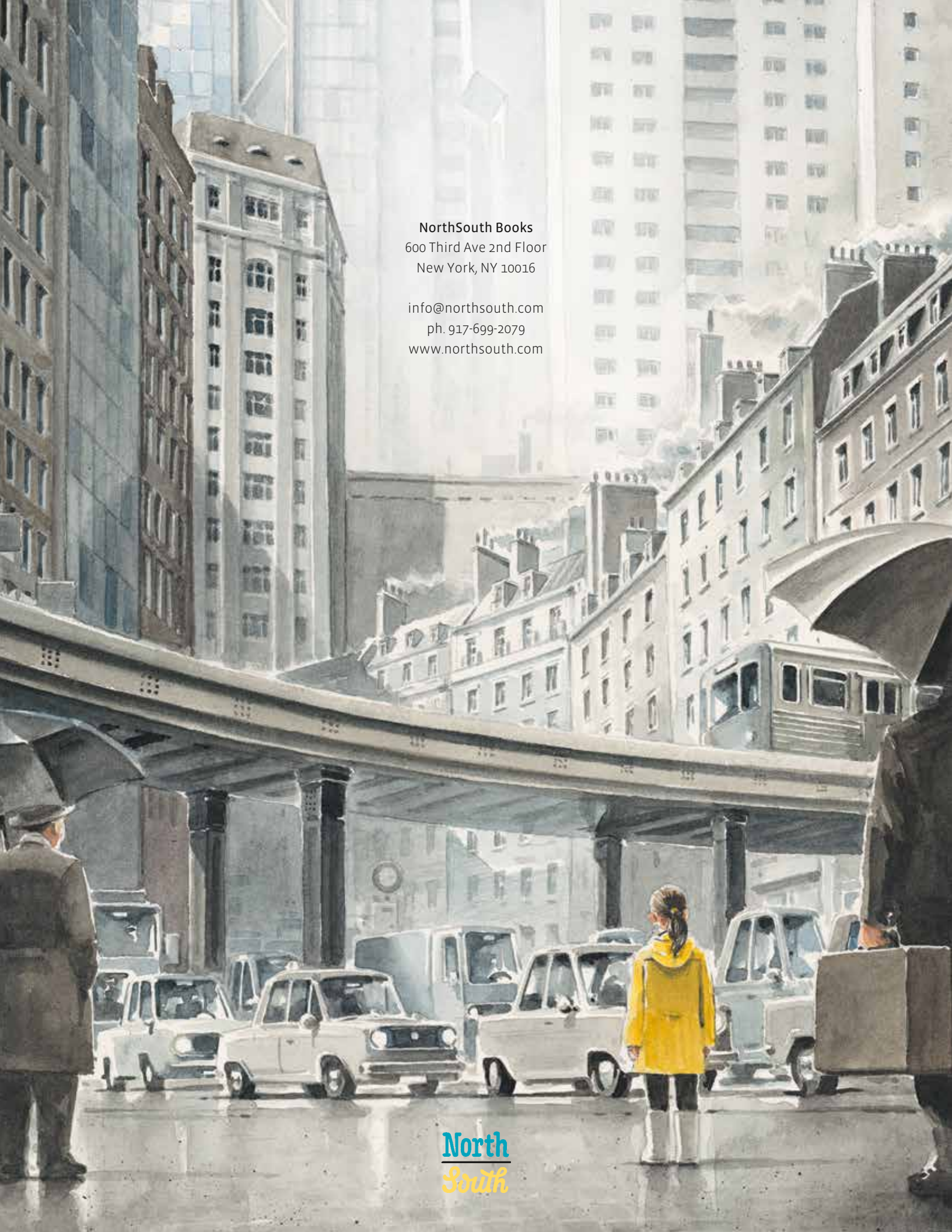
“[Kuhlmann’s] unique ability to combine fun, facts, science and biography makes *Einstein* a real triumph.”
—*BookPage*, starred review



Moletown
ISBN: 978-0-7358-4208-3

“Kuhlmann’s detailed art will pull in readers who like to see how things fit together, while his message is abundantly clear for everyone.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*





NorthSouth Books
600 Third Ave 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10016

info@northsouth.com
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