



The Letterpress Project

An Interview With Danielle Harvey

Q1. What are your earliest memories of books and reading? For example, did you have a favourite or inspirational book?

My earliest memories of books and reading was at primary school. I remember learning to read Biff, Chip and Kipper books and always trying to impress my teacher to move up to the next stage of reading. A vivid memory for me was also reading 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe' by C.S Lewis, an all-time classic. It has always been one of my ultimate favourite children's books and I loved the idea of the wardrobe being a portal to this magical winter wonderland filled with mythical creatures. For me it has always been a book that evokes many nostalgic memories from my childhood.

Q2. What inspired you to become an author / illustrator?

I've always had a passion for creative writing and loved studying it as a module at Newman University. However, I was inspired to become an author as I have always questioned the inequality surrounding the teaching of texts in schools and how the curriculum offers very little scope for children to read diverse books. During the national lockdown, the global 'Black Lives Matter protests' really touched me, as a result of the tragic death of George Floyd. I then decided to act and used my time whilst working remotely from home to contact a publishing house and begin the process of publishing my first ever children's book.

Q3. For you, what makes a successful book or illustration?

For me what makes a successful book or illustration is a book that has a clear message and can evoke a raw emotion inside me. I love books which have realism and can capture the reality of life such as Alice Walker's novel 'The Color Purple' or Toni Morrison's book 'The Bluest Eye.' The female characters within these fictional

books are relatable for me and highlight the treatment of black women and the coping strategies implemented as a result of triple jeopardy (a topic I enjoy exploring).

I also have a fascination with art and love the works of Banksy and Van Gough as their works allow the reader's imagination to run wild and can be interpreted in so many ways. I am a big fan of Anthony Browne's children's books and the hidden messages he uses within the illustrations to challenge the mind and lure the reader in. I adapted his style of illustration when writing 'Sienna Starts School' as I wanted the illustrations to be a complex artifact for the reader. I discussed with my illustrator how we could use colours and hidden messages to help portray the main theme inequality and capture the emotion of Sienna for the reader.

Q4. Do you have a specific audience in mind when you write your books / plan your illustrations?

I never have a specific audience in mind when I write as I try to make it accessible for everyone, I am a strong believer in equality for all. Nevertheless, 'Sienna Starts School' is an educational book aimed primarily at primary school children.

Q5. What future do you think the physical book has? For example, do you think the electronic book will replace the physical book?

I feel the physical book is extremely important and I am a lover of books (almost a hoarder). I like something that is tangible, something I can feel, see, touch and yes smell (something eBooks and Audiobooks can't provide). However, I do feel it depends on the individual's preference, at home I have a bookcase filled with all types of genre of books and my daughters also have bookcases in their rooms for bedtime stories. I feel it helps to promote a love for reading for my children and friends when they visit. I do also feel the electronic book is convenient when you need to download immediately rather than wait on postage, but I can't see it replacing the physical book any time soon.

Q6. Are you a book collector? Is there a special book you'd love to own?

I'm definitely a book collector! A book I would love to own is 'Rihanna All Hail Rihanna' Queen Size Book as there's only 500 limited edition copies worldwide, a true masterpiece of art captured into an autobiography of her life.