



The Letterpress Project

Author and Illustrator E-Interviews

An interview with Keggie Carew

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

I was a lover of classical fairy stories, Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Anderson, and poems from Palgrave's Golden Treasury which my mother read to us. The Highwayman, and John Masefield's Sea Fever, and anything about mermaids. And I loved The Tales of the Riverbank, of course, Pooh. Mum was a very good reader and did all the accents. Generally I have always been drawn to stories of loss and longing. The most inspirational book for me remains, Michael Ondaatje's The Collected Works of Billy the Kid – a collage-poem-narrative of disrupting boundaries where life crosses into death; sanity becomes insanity. Ondaatje gets behind Billy's eyes and under his skin - something I wanted to do in DADLAND.

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

I wanted to create the same deep heat, the same heart-roar I felt when I read things that lit up my interior world. I had been making art for years, but it was words, the eternal combustion of them, that gave me the giddy pilot-thrill of distant horizons. I like the specificity of writing – I can really be myself. And I like walking through the wardrobe, entering other worlds.

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

Voice, first of all, that is the thing that will lure me in. Then authenticity, clarity, and of course excitement (I get distracted easily). I like layers ... where pictures build, and where nothing is black and white, but full of subtlety.

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

I write for myself, what I want to read, and hope there are a few people with the same sensibilities out there. Luckily, DADLAND seems to resonate with men and women of all ages, which goes to show how many things in life are universal.

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

I love physical books, I like the smell of them. And I love marginalia ... so I am a bit wedded to the physical book. I think the physical book is here to stay.

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

I am a book hoarder and a reluctant a book lender – firstly, because I write all over the books I love, underlining sentences and jotting down thoughts that come to me; secondly, if books are good enough to lend they are good enough to buy, and usually for under a tenner ! A special book to own? One of Anselm Keifer's leaden book sculptures.