

Q&A

with Clare Jay

What inspired you to write *Breathing in Colour*?

I knew I wanted to write a novel set in India because I was in love with the country, and felt it would be good to keep a lasting connection with it once I'd returned from my travels. While I was backpacking, I noticed many "missing" posters of travellers like myself who had disappeared off the face of the earth while in India. I wondered what had happened to them, and I imagined a mother whose child had vanished this way. What would she do? How can you look for one tiny person in such a vast, teeming country?

What was it like writing this novel?

The research process was extremely thorough, as the book was initially written as part of my doctoral research into the role of lucid dreaming in the creative writing process. This meant I engaged in practice-based research, examining the way my own lucid dreams informed the novel as it developed. Doing the PhD was an eye-opener for me. I also researched synaesthesia, retrograde amnesia, and the protocol for searching for missing British nationals in India.

Tell me about writing *Alida* and *Mia*?

Alida is a courageous woman who has suffered an unspeakable tragedy. Writing her character meant that I had to explore the terrible holes that loss can leave in a life. It was fascinating to get to grips with her psyche and chart the development of her understanding of her past behaviour. Writing in *Mia*'s voice was also intense. I researched synaesthesia, had lucid dreams in which I experienced my dreaming mind's interpretation of the condition, and I also engaged with it imaginatively while awake and writing.

How do you structure your writing day?

I'm very unstructured in my writing life. I'll fiddle around doing non-writing-related tasks, wander off to the beach, then suddenly be gripped by an idea, an image, a snatch of dialogue, and I'll sit down on the spot and write an entire chapter. Or I'll wake up and race to my desk at 7am and write for five straight days, barely pausing for food, sleep, or sunshine. Or I'll write nothing for a week. Really, it's that erratic.

Which writers do you love to read and why?

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, because of the richness of her language, her use of colour and scent, her skill at evoking emotion. Maggie O'Farrell for her precision, depth and fearlessness, and Audrey Niffenegger because her novel *The Time Traveler's Wife* just blew me away on every level.

What did you find to be the most inspiring event or person over the past year?

Signing a two-book deal with Piatkus of Little, Brown. In the past 12 months, I've met many talented people — my literary agent, my editor, and all the people who work at Piatkus. Emma Beswetherick's sensitive editorial comments on my "PhD novel" enabled me to shape it into the book it is today.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

I'd like to go to Bhutan, Guatemala, Peru, and many other places; all the places I haven't been to yet. Travelling compliments writing: it blows away the cobwebs and fills the mind with images.

If you could take only three things to a desert island, what would they be and why?

I'd take my husband, to see me through the dark nights, and a magical object like an Aladdin's lamp or a flying carpet, so we can escape if we want to. And a writing-boat, which is a small craft with writing materials built into a waterproof trunk on the side, so I can daydream and write with the waves rocking me.

What are your future plans?

I'm writing my second novel, which is set in Portugal and is about the effects of a violent sleep disorder on a family. I can also imagine myself tutoring weeklong novel-writing courses at some stage, and participating in writers' retreats. Writing has been a major part of my life for 10 years now, and I plan to keep it that way!

New Art Releases

Young Chinese Artists

The Next Generation

Edited by Christoph Noe, Xenia Piëch & Cordelia Steiner

Prestel



Contemporary Chinese Art is on the rise.

Young Chinese artists are the rock-stars of their time with works selling for millions, and a new era of modern art emerging. Beijing and Shanghai are taking residence as the most exciting artistic hubs on the planet.

Young Chinese Artists is an important and groundbreaking collection. It really gets to grips with the rise of contemporary Chinese art, and also offers a chronology of Chinese history since the end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong's death in 1976. It examines Chinese art in the context in which it was created — a generation of undergoing a paramount moment of change through globalisation and urbanisation.

This volume provides tremendous insight into current Chinese art, and the society from which it was created. There is an explosion of ideas, and for this reason, this collection is a must-have for anyone practicing or working in contemporary art.

Cherie Federico

Natural Affinities

Ed. Buhler Lynes & Phillips, Woodward

Little Brown



Georgia O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams were

two of America's most influential artists of the 20th century. *Natural Affinities* is a collection of essays by Barbara Buhler Lynes, Richard B Woodward and Sandra S. Phillips, and an overview of the artists' works and their connection with the American southwest. The natural world was an area of profound inspiration.

This book draws comparisons between the two artists' works and looks at the lasting influence each artist has left on contemporary art. The accompanying essays provide a new interpretation of O'Keeffe's and Adams' works, as well as a backdrop to their lives, 56 year friendship and affection for the desolation of the American southwest.

This is an essential book to understand the early workings of two of America's finest artists. Their works came to prominence when America was developing its own identity, and from that came a new sense of modern art, something different than Matisse, Picasso or Duchamp, but something undeniably American.

Shirley Stevenson