

#SoAatHome | How I write – in conversation with Ruth Millington
Thursday 23 April 2026



1

00:00:00,000--> 00:00:03,148

Welcome, everyone,
to today's event.

2

00:00:03,172--> 00:00:06,095

I'm going to be In Conversation
with Ruth Millington.

3

00:00:06,119--> 00:00:08,748

I'm very excited
to speak to her.

4

00:00:08,772--> 00:00:12,651

I'm Susie Hodge. I'm not going
to tell you all that's written here,

5

00:00:12,675--> 00:00:14,205

but I have written
lots of books,

6

00:00:14,229--> 00:00:16,231

and lots of them have
won awards and bestsellers,

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7

00:00:16,255--> 00:00:17,628

and that's all I'm going to say.

8

00:00:17,652--> 00:00:20,468

I just work all the time,
as I'm sure many of you do.

9

00:00:20,492--> 00:00:23,788

I need to describe to you
what I'm wearing today

10

00:00:23,812--> 00:00:27,548

and I'm sorry I can't tell you I'm
wearing Chanel because I am in the arts.

11

00:00:27,572--> 00:00:29,348

And it doesn't pay that well.

12

00:00:29,372--> 00:00:33,588

So, I'm in lemon and I
have dark hair and pale skin.

13

00:00:33,612--> 00:00:36,508

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And I'm sure Ruth will
tell you what she's wearing.

14

00:00:37,612--> 00:00:39,988

This event is part of our

15

00:00:40,012--> 00:00:41,788

Society of Authors'

16

00:00:41,812--> 00:00:44,478

#SoAatHome Spring/Summer 2026...

17

00:00:44,502--> 00:00:45,588

Sorry, I'm reading this.

18

00:00:45,612--> 00:00:47,428

2026 programme.

19

00:00:47,452--> 00:00:51,308

And its in conjunction with the Society
of Authors Educational Writers Group,

20

00:00:51,332--> 00:00:53,268

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EWG.

21

00:00:53,292--> 00:00:55,468

The event is free
for everyone but

22

00:00:55,492--> 00:00:57,228

if you can feel
it in your hearts,

23

00:00:57,252--> 00:01:00,628

please consider donating
today because it helps

24

00:01:00,652--> 00:01:02,788

the Society of
Authors Access Fund

25

00:01:02,812--> 00:01:04,948

which provides grants to authors

26

00:01:04,972--> 00:01:08,908

so that travel, subsistence,
childcare costs and access needs

27

00:01:08,932--> 00:01:10,988

aren't barriers to
authors taking part

28

00:01:11,012--> 00:01:14,148

in events, residencies
and retreats.

29

00:01:14,172--> 00:01:17,308

We suggest a
minimum donation of £5,

30

00:01:17,332--> 00:01:19,748

if you can please donate.

31

00:01:19,772--> 00:01:23,548

You can also help the
Society of Authors Access Fund

32

00:01:23,572--> 00:01:26,788

by making a purchase
on our virtual bookstore

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33

00:01:26,812--> 00:01:29,268

on Bookshop.org,

34

00:01:29,292--> 00:01:32,028

where you'll find books

by writers taking part

35

00:01:32,052--> 00:01:33,668

in our events programme.

36

00:01:35,252--> 00:01:38,308

This session is going

to last 45 minutes,

37

00:01:38,332--> 00:01:40,908

including a 10 minute

Question and Answer.

38

00:01:40,932--> 00:01:44,548

I will try to keep it to 45

minutes... no, I'm sure it will.

39

00:01:44,572--> 00:01:46,548

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Um...

40

00:01:46,572--> 00:01:50,468

I just want to let you know
that if you have any questions,

41

00:01:50,492--> 00:01:53,188

please post them in the
Question and Answer box.

42

00:01:53,212--> 00:01:55,548

You can post them
anonymously if you prefer,

43

00:01:55,572--> 00:01:56,868

and at the end

44

00:01:56,892--> 00:01:58,908

I will ask them to Ruth,

45

00:01:58,932--> 00:02:01,868

but meanwhile I'm going to
be asking her some questions.

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46

00:02:01,892--> 00:02:04,668

So I'd like to introduce
everyone today

47

00:02:04,692--> 00:02:07,228

to our guest, Ruth Millington.

48

00:02:07,252--> 00:02:09,908

Ruth is an art historian,

49

00:02:09,932--> 00:02:12,468

a curator, broadcaster
and author,

50

00:02:12,492--> 00:02:15,388

specialising in modern
and contemporary art.

51

00:02:15,412--> 00:02:17,788

Her first book *Muse*,

52

00:02:17,812--> 00:02:20,748

which always fascinates

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me, the muse of artists,

53

00:02:20,772--> 00:02:22,748

Muse, published by Vintage,

54

00:02:22,772--> 00:02:25,508

uncovers the

inspiring real-life stories

55

00:02:25,532--> 00:02:27,548

of figures in famous portraits,

56

00:02:27,572--> 00:02:30,028

while This Book Will

Make You an Artist,

57

00:02:30,052--> 00:02:31,565

published by Nosy Crow,

58

00:02:31,590--> 00:02:34,991

encourages younger readers

to be as creative as possible

59

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00:02:35,015--> 00:02:38,668

by taking inspiration from the
world's greatest masterpieces.

60

00:02:38,692--> 00:02:40,988

She has presented
several documentaries,

61

00:02:41,012--> 00:02:44,188

including 'Painting with
Scissors' for BBC Radio 4,

62

00:02:44,212--> 00:02:47,988

which tells the overlooked
yet radical story of collage art.

63

00:02:48,012--> 00:02:50,708

Ruth believes that
anyone can be an artist,

64

00:02:50,732--> 00:02:52,548

no matter where they come from.

65

00:02:52,572--> 00:02:53,828

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And I agree.

66

00:02:53,852--> 00:02:54,852

[laughs]

67

00:02:54,876--> 00:02:56,658

Right, over to you Ruth.

68

00:02:56,682--> 00:02:58,468

I'm going to ask you

a few questions, but

69

00:02:58,492--> 00:03:01,348

no problem if you... if

you want to move on.

70

00:03:01,372--> 00:03:05,268

Where are you geographically? It

looks fascinating where you're sitting.

71

00:03:05,292--> 00:03:08,028

Can you explain a bit

about where you are?

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72

00:03:08,052--> 00:03:11,748

-Yes, well firstly, thanks for
that really lovely introduction.

73

00:03:11,772--> 00:03:13,948

And for my audio description,

74

00:03:13,972--> 00:03:15,228

I'm a white woman

75

00:03:15,252--> 00:03:18,628

wearing a green top and glasses,

76

00:03:18,652--> 00:03:20,708

like most authors

need glasses nowadays.

77

00:03:20,732--> 00:03:21,788

[laughs]

78

00:03:21,812--> 00:03:24,508

And I'm sat in the

library of the BMI,

79

00:03:24,532--> 00:03:27,468

which is the Birmingham
and Midlands Institute.

80

00:03:27,492--> 00:03:30,678

Which, as it sounds like, it's
in Birmingham City Centre

81

00:03:30,702--> 00:03:33,028

which is where I live and work.

82

00:03:34,452--> 00:03:36,668

-Brilliant, do you
always work there?

83

00:03:37,412--> 00:03:38,718

-So...

84

00:03:38,743--> 00:03:41,188

I work here quite regularly.

85

00:03:41,212--> 00:03:44,698

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I live maybe a 15
minute walk away,

86

00:03:44,722--> 00:03:46,908

and I find it really helpful
to have a separate space

87

00:03:46,932--> 00:03:49,548

to come and do my
writing, research in

88

00:03:49,572--> 00:03:52,308

to separate my work and...

89

00:03:52,332--> 00:03:56,748

home life out as much
as possible as a freelancer.

90

00:03:56,772--> 00:03:59,828

And also during lockdown,

91

00:03:59,852--> 00:04:02,468

I was in a block of flats where
there's cladding problems.

92

00:04:02,492--> 00:04:04,788

So there was a lot
of noisy building work,

93

00:04:04,812--> 00:04:07,748

so I had to get out and
find an office to work in.

94

00:04:07,772--> 00:04:09,708

And I put a little
call out on Twitter

95

00:04:09,732--> 00:04:11,388

and the BMI wrote and said,

96

00:04:11,412--> 00:04:14,628

Why don't you come and
have a look at our spaces?

97

00:04:14,652--> 00:04:17,068

You can be a member.
It's only £80 for the year

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98

00:04:17,092--> 00:04:19,348

and you can use
the rooms in the BMI,

99

00:04:19,372--> 00:04:21,548

and it's honestly
such a magical place.

100

00:04:21,572--> 00:04:23,228

So I'm in the library,

101

00:04:23,252--> 00:04:25,508

but there's other rooms
you can book here,

102

00:04:25,532--> 00:04:28,628

lecture theatres
and a little gallery,

103

00:04:28,652--> 00:04:29,936

cafe space as well.

104

00:04:29,961--> 00:04:32,145

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So, yeah. It's a really
nice place to work.

105

00:04:32,169--> 00:04:33,228

-Oh, it sounds perfect.

106

00:04:33,252--> 00:04:35,345

So you're in the library.

How big is the library?

107

00:04:35,369--> 00:04:38,658

I mean, I'm not asking you to
give us actual cubic feet, but...

108

00:04:38,682--> 00:04:41,388

-Yeah, well, I'll just do a little
swizzle round on my laptop

109

00:04:41,412--> 00:04:43,391

to show you all
the amazing books.

110

00:04:43,415--> 00:04:46,198

Oh, it's a proper

library, isn't it?

111

00:04:46,222--> 00:04:48,710

-Yeah, it's a proper library.

-It's like a lovely old library

112

00:04:48,735--> 00:04:50,000

with real books.

113

00:04:50,000--> 00:04:53,000

-Real books, there's

a massive art shelf.

114

00:04:53,000--> 00:04:54,828

But I was in here

after hours one night

115

00:04:54,852--> 00:04:56,228

and I think there

might be a ghost.

116

00:04:56,252--> 00:04:57,748

[laughter]

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117

00:04:57,772--> 00:04:59,148

Oh, there's got to be a ghost.

118

00:04:59,172--> 00:05:00,588

It looks as if there is.

119

00:05:00,612--> 00:05:03,428

So what do you
need in order to write?

120

00:05:03,452--> 00:05:05,348

Do you need... what
do you take with you?

121

00:05:05,372--> 00:05:06,788

Do you take a laptop?

122

00:05:06,812--> 00:05:10,291

Do you just take a pen
and paper, or your phone?

123

00:05:10,316--> 00:05:14,498

-Yeah, I definitely always

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take my laptop and art books.

124

00:05:14,522--> 00:05:18,948

So, I actually have a rucksack that I will
haul onto my back and walk through town.

125

00:05:18,972--> 00:05:20,748

And what I find is for books,

126

00:05:20,772--> 00:05:22,988

often I've been to an
exhibition and got the catalogue

127

00:05:23,012--> 00:05:25,668

or there's something in my
own personal library of books,

128

00:05:25,692--> 00:05:28,000

second hand art
books or gifted books

129

00:05:28,000--> 00:05:31,228

where there's something
useful, and it's almost like

130

00:05:31,252--> 00:05:33,908

those things are just waiting
to be written into books.

131

00:05:33,932--> 00:05:35,548

And they're just, yeah.

132

00:05:35,572--> 00:05:40,000

Housed... Housed for the time being but
waiting for me to uncover them and yeah,

133

00:05:40,000--> 00:05:41,548

bring them into my own research.

134

00:05:41,572--> 00:05:42,703

-That's brilliant, so you...

135

00:05:42,728--> 00:05:44,068

When I used to go into schools,

136

00:05:44,092--> 00:05:47,388

I don't do it so much, I

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used to try and explain to kids

137

00:05:47,412--> 00:05:50,108

that books are still
the most important.

138

00:05:50,132--> 00:05:52,992

To me, they're the most important.
The Internet is useful up to a point,

139

00:05:53,016--> 00:05:54,616

but do you agree? Do
you agree with that?

140

00:05:54,640--> 00:05:57,188

-I... I completely
agree with that.

141

00:05:57,212--> 00:05:58,748

And when I was writing Muse,

142

00:05:58,772--> 00:06:00,468

I was writing a
chapter on Frida Kahlo

143

00:06:00,492--> 00:06:04,668

and there is so much internet art
history about Frida Kahlo that's wrong.

144

00:06:04,692--> 00:06:09,545

And, actually, museums and galleries have
published incorrect information about her

145

00:06:09,569--> 00:06:11,000

and printed it in books.

146

00:06:11,000--> 00:06:12,748

And there's a
quote that she says,

147

00:06:12,772--> 00:06:15,908

"I am my own muse,
the subject I know best."

148

00:06:15,932--> 00:06:17,748

That's not by Frida Kahlo.

149

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00:06:17,772--> 00:06:21,388

That was by another artist
and poet, Oroma Elewa,

150

00:06:21,412--> 00:06:24,148

and she wrote to me and we,
yeah, we had a meeting about it,

151

00:06:24,172--> 00:06:26,708

and she was actually taking
one of these galleries to court

152

00:06:26,732--> 00:06:29,628

because they'd publish it and...

153

00:06:30,350--> 00:06:32,548

Yeah, listed it against
Frida Kahlo's name,

154

00:06:32,572--> 00:06:36,588

and that's because it just became
a popular quote on Pinterest

155

00:06:36,612--> 00:06:38,428

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and people just
took that as fact.

156

00:06:38,452--> 00:06:41,228

And I find actually now
books are even more important

157

00:06:41,252--> 00:06:44,000

because there's so much
misinformation on the internet.

158

00:06:44,000--> 00:06:45,308

-Oh, Ruth, I can't...

159

00:06:45,332--> 00:06:48,108

I can't believe... I can't explain
what I'm writing about, but one of...

160

00:06:48,132--> 00:06:50,628

one of my latest
books is on Frida Kahlo.

161

00:06:50,652--> 00:06:53,148

I can't tell you too

much. But not just her.

162

00:06:53,172--> 00:06:54,828

I mean, we're not
going to digress, but

163

00:06:54,852--> 00:06:59,388

also Picasso, there are quotations
that everyone assumes Picasso wrote,

164

00:06:59,412--> 00:07:02,000

because everywhere
you read it, even on books.

165

00:07:02,000--> 00:07:03,000

-Yeah.

166

00:07:03,000--> 00:07:04,045

-And it's not true.

167

00:07:04,069--> 00:07:06,508

It's really bad the
way this happens,

168

00:07:06,532--> 00:07:09,000

but I think the internet
is a lot to blame.

169

00:07:09,000--> 00:07:10,118

-Yeah.

170

00:07:10,142--> 00:07:12,000

-And I always explain
that, yeah, brilliant.

171

00:07:12,000--> 00:07:16,588

-And I think image searches as well,
no, I found they just can't be trusted.

172

00:07:16,612--> 00:07:19,198

So I'd say for anybody
with art historical research,

173

00:07:19,222--> 00:07:21,548

you need to get to
the catalogue resume.

174

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00:07:21,572--> 00:07:23,968

And for me, there's nothing
better than a specialist library

175

00:07:23,992--> 00:07:25,868

like the V&A Art Library.

176

00:07:25,892--> 00:07:28,028

I do miss being in
London for that reason,

177

00:07:28,052--> 00:07:31,028

because we don't have a
specialist art library in Birmingham.

178

00:07:31,652--> 00:07:34,788

-Yeah, the V&A, that's
another special... special place.

179

00:07:34,812--> 00:07:36,000

[laughter]

180

00:07:36,000--> 00:07:39,000

So do you have any

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rituals for your writing?

181

00:07:39,000--> 00:07:40,628

-I do, actually.

182

00:07:40,652--> 00:07:42,908

So I have to get up
early on a writing day.

183

00:07:42,932--> 00:07:45,348

And I don't write every day,
but on the days I do write,

184

00:07:45,372--> 00:07:47,868

I'll get up and start
writing on the hour.

185

00:07:47,892--> 00:07:50,948

Generally around 8
o'clock in the morning,

186

00:07:50,972--> 00:07:52,825

because I like to work early,

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187

00:07:52,849--> 00:07:54,388

feel like I'm ahead of the day.

188

00:07:54,412--> 00:07:57,988

I think I'm quite a slow writer.

189

00:07:58,012--> 00:08:00,468

I've never worked

in-house for a newspaper

190

00:08:00,492--> 00:08:03,428

or a magazine and had those
deadlines, so I'm quite slow.

191

00:08:03,452--> 00:08:07,828

I'll definitely spend too

long over the first paragraph

192

00:08:07,852--> 00:08:09,425

and then everything else.

193

00:08:09,449--> 00:08:11,213

Yeah, I have to get

it down on the paper.

194

00:08:11,238--> 00:08:12,988

But I like to work

in the morning

195

00:08:13,012--> 00:08:16,788

and then I find around three

o'clock, my brain just goes to mush.

196

00:08:16,812--> 00:08:19,588

So after that point, I tend

to just have to go for a walk

197

00:08:19,612--> 00:08:22,668

and then after one

full day of writing,

198

00:08:22,692--> 00:08:24,588

the next day I

like to do the edit

199

00:08:24,612--> 00:08:27,148

and start by doing

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quite a critical edit,

200

00:08:27,172--> 00:08:30,000

and then go into creating
more content after that.

201

00:08:30,000--> 00:08:31,438

So that's my ritual.

202

00:08:31,463--> 00:08:32,508

Is yours similar?

203

00:08:32,532--> 00:08:35,148

-That's brilliant. That's so
disciplined. That's fantastic.

204

00:08:35,172--> 00:08:38,108

Right, so as you're
not a full-time writer,

205

00:08:38,132--> 00:08:41,908

can you please tell us a little bit
more about the variety in your day?

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206

00:08:41,932--> 00:08:44,418

So if you're not writing,
what else are you doing?

207

00:08:44,443--> 00:08:47,628

-Yeah, people always say, oh, you
do so many different things, Ruth.

208

00:08:47,652--> 00:08:51,228

And I think, well, yeah, because the
arts pay so badly, you kind of have to.

209

00:08:51,252--> 00:08:52,988

[laughs]

210

00:08:53,012--> 00:08:56,828

So I'd say primarily
I am a curator

211

00:08:56,852--> 00:08:59,311

working on quite a lot
of public art projects.

212

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00:08:59,335--> 00:09:01,868

So taking exhibitions
out onto the streets of

213

00:09:01,892--> 00:09:05,148

Birmingham, Solihull,
Midlands towns and cities.

214

00:09:05,172--> 00:09:07,268

And I'm a broadcaster,

215

00:09:07,292--> 00:09:10,028

so I'm currently working on a
new documentary for Radio 4

216

00:09:10,052--> 00:09:12,788

based on my book
Muse, which is amazing.

217

00:09:12,812--> 00:09:16,228

So I've been on the road quite
a lot meeting different muses,

218

00:09:16,252--> 00:09:20,508

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and I went down to meet
Picasso's last surviving muse,

219

00:09:20,532--> 00:09:24,000

Lydia Corbett, and interviewed
her a couple of weeks ago.

220

00:09:24,000--> 00:09:25,588

So we're working on that.

221

00:09:25,612--> 00:09:26,908

Um...

222

00:09:26,932--> 00:09:30,428

And then I do
little bits of writing,

223

00:09:30,452--> 00:09:34,188

maybe for artists, for
magazines, for newspapers.

224

00:09:34,212--> 00:09:36,348

I wrote a piece on
Desmond Morris

225

00:09:36,372--> 00:09:38,068

who just passed away
for The Telegraph.

226

00:09:38,092--> 00:09:39,185

Um...

227

00:09:39,210--> 00:09:41,268

Couple of days ago at midnight

228

00:09:41,292--> 00:09:45,308

because, yeah, it was
breaking news, very sad.

229

00:09:45,332--> 00:09:48,788

So for me, it's piecing
all these little bits together

230

00:09:48,812--> 00:09:52,268

and trying to have
some time off for rest.

231

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00:09:52,292--> 00:09:53,468

[laughter]

232

00:09:53,492--> 00:09:54,608

-What's that? What's rest?

233

00:09:54,632--> 00:09:56,471

But you say... I

know it seems...

234

00:09:56,495--> 00:10:00,388

I often think that people must think
that people who do lots of different things

235

00:10:00,412--> 00:10:03,068

is a jack-of-all-trades,

236

00:10:03,092--> 00:10:05,045

but they're all related,
and they're all linked,

237

00:10:05,069--> 00:10:08,000

and each one helps the
other one, I think, anyway.

238

00:10:08,000--> 00:10:10,468

-I definitely, yeah, I
definitely think so.

239

00:10:10,492--> 00:10:12,068

Maybe when I've
written something,

240

00:10:12,092--> 00:10:13,650

it might feed into
an exhibition later

241

00:10:13,675--> 00:10:16,675

and I thank myself because I think,
oh, you've already mapped out that story

242

00:10:16,699--> 00:10:18,708

and that writing, so
you can use that again.

243

00:10:18,732--> 00:10:21,988

-Yeah, brilliant. Yes, it
helps. It feeds each other,

244

00:10:22,012--> 00:10:24,588

everything feeds each other.

So are you allowed to tell us

245

00:10:24,612--> 00:10:26,348

what you're working on now?

246

00:10:27,090--> 00:10:28,451

-Um...

247

00:10:28,475--> 00:10:30,000

-Is there anything top secret?

248

00:10:30,000--> 00:10:31,978

-Well, I've got a new

book coming out.

249

00:10:32,002--> 00:10:33,748

I've just finished

working on this.

250

00:10:33,772--> 00:10:35,828

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It's a children's
art history book

251

00:10:35,852--> 00:10:38,588

with Dorling Kindersley
called The Science of Arts.

252

00:10:38,612--> 00:10:41,348

And I've spent a
year working on this,

253

00:10:41,372--> 00:10:44,828

and it's all about demystifying
what's art made of,

254

00:10:44,852--> 00:10:48,028

what are the tools, what are the
techniques behind famous artworks,

255

00:10:48,052--> 00:10:49,788

what's really in a fresco

256

00:10:49,812--> 00:10:52,348

from, you know,

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eggs to artists using

257

00:10:52,372--> 00:10:55,788

pieces of bread to

rub away pencil lines

258

00:10:55,812--> 00:10:57,305

because they didn't have erasers.

259

00:10:57,330--> 00:11:00,268

So it's a fun fact

book for kids,

260

00:11:00,292--> 00:11:02,000

and it's been really

fun to work on it.

261

00:11:02,000--> 00:11:06,748

-Yeah. And do you work closely

with the designers or the illustrators?

262

00:11:06,772--> 00:11:09,148

-Yes, with some

more than others.

263

00:11:09,172--> 00:11:11,428

So on this one, the
illustrator's Rose Blake

264

00:11:11,452--> 00:11:14,228

and everything sort of went
through Dorling Kindersley

265

00:11:14,252--> 00:11:17,708

before it got to Rose, so we
didn't have a direct conversation,

266

00:11:17,732--> 00:11:20,388

but it might be that I would
suggest, I think for this spread

267

00:11:20,412--> 00:11:22,588

we need an illustration
of whatever it is,

268

00:11:22,612--> 00:11:24,000

and I'll pass that on.

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269

00:11:24,000--> 00:11:25,068

Um...

270

00:11:25,092--> 00:11:27,308

Whereas with This Book

Will Make You An Artist,

271

00:11:27,332--> 00:11:30,908

I'd say I did work a little bit

more closely with Ellen Surrey

272

00:11:30,932--> 00:11:34,388

and we had discussions around

what should go on specific spreads.

273

00:11:34,412--> 00:11:36,028

Same with Muse.

274

00:11:36,052--> 00:11:38,388

For that one, I worked with

an artist called Dina Razin

275

00:11:38,412--> 00:11:41,948

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and we actually had Zoom calls
about every single muse in the book

276

00:11:41,972--> 00:11:44,000

where I would talk to her about

277

00:11:44,000--> 00:11:48,308

the muse, the backstory, what I
wanted there to be in the illustration, and

278

00:11:48,332--> 00:11:51,748

I felt like me and Dina
became really close friends

279

00:11:51,772--> 00:11:54,788

during the process of working
on that book, which was lovely.

280

00:11:54,812--> 00:11:58,148

-That is lovely, and all
these strong women, I like it.

281

00:11:58,172--> 00:11:59,348

-Yes. [laughs]

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282

00:11:59,372--> 00:12:02,000

-What keeps you motivated?

283

00:12:02,000--> 00:12:04,238

-Oh! Um...

284

00:12:04,263--> 00:12:07,000

Winning awards definitely helps.

285

00:12:07,000--> 00:12:08,668

-Congratulations, by the way.

286

00:12:08,692--> 00:12:11,388

I didn't say that. I'm very
proud, proud to know you.

287

00:12:11,412--> 00:12:12,948

-Thank you. [laughs]

288

00:12:12,972--> 00:12:15,628

Yeah, I was so pleased for
an art book to win an award

289

00:12:15,652--> 00:12:18,468

and I feel like there aren't
many awards for children's books,

290

00:12:18,492--> 00:12:20,028

so it really did mean a lot.

291

00:12:20,052--> 00:12:21,548

And it...

292

00:12:21,572--> 00:12:23,845

It did give me that
boost of confidence,

293

00:12:23,869--> 00:12:25,984

because I say I'm not
that confident a writer,

294

00:12:26,008--> 00:12:28,028

and even now, when
someone says, you know,

295

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00:12:28,052--> 00:12:31,308

you know, I go to a doctor's surgery
and they say, you know, what do you do?

296

00:12:31,332--> 00:12:34,468

I still don't feel that
confident to say I'm an author.

297

00:12:34,492--> 00:12:36,558

I don't know if that's
true of most people, but...

298

00:12:36,583--> 00:12:39,650

-Well, it was... It took
me a long time. Yeah.

299

00:12:39,675--> 00:12:42,308

-Yeah, I'd probably just say,
oh, you know, I work in the arts

300

00:12:42,332--> 00:12:43,988

across lots of different things,

301

00:12:44,012--> 00:12:46,668

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rather than saying, I'm
an author, here's my book.

302

00:12:46,692--> 00:12:48,748

[laughter]

303

00:12:48,772--> 00:12:51,458

-So, right, so how
do you research?

304

00:12:51,482--> 00:12:53,028

I think we've said some of that.

305

00:12:53,052--> 00:12:55,628

You find the catalogue resume.

306

00:12:55,652--> 00:12:58,148

But, so for example, the
book that you've just written

307

00:12:58,172--> 00:12:59,668

for all the scientific facts,

308

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00:12:59,692--> 00:13:00,988

how do you research that?

309

00:13:01,012--> 00:13:04,570

How did you research the
book we're talking about as well?

310

00:13:04,595--> 00:13:08,268

I'd say it actually starts quite
scientifically in terms of the structure,

311

00:13:08,292--> 00:13:10,748

about what's the structure
of the book going to be,

312

00:13:10,772--> 00:13:13,308

what journey is the
reader going to go on?

313

00:13:13,975--> 00:13:16,865

I'd say also image
rights and illustrations.

314

00:13:16,889--> 00:13:20,588

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You all know this about
securing the rights to the images.

315

00:13:20,612--> 00:13:23,068

So yes and no, what
can and can't go in.

316

00:13:23,092--> 00:13:24,618

And, actually, at
the very last minute,

317

00:13:24,643--> 00:13:25,643

um...

318

00:13:25,667--> 00:13:28,308

one main thing had to be removed
because it had naked people in it,

319

00:13:28,332--> 00:13:30,588

and America doesn't
like that at the moment.

320

00:13:30,612--> 00:13:32,828

So I'd say with

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a lot of art books,

321

00:13:32,852--> 00:13:37,191

it's actually... sourcing the images

can be the first point of research

322

00:13:37,215--> 00:13:40,708

about what can actually go in the

book, and then from there, I'll build out.

323

00:13:40,732--> 00:13:43,788

And then I do like

to draw on research

324

00:13:43,812--> 00:13:46,000

from exhibitions

I've seen in person.

325

00:13:46,000--> 00:13:50,588

So I saw an amazing Carlo Crivelli

show at Icon Gallery in Birmingham

326

00:13:50,612--> 00:13:53,308

a couple of years ago,

and I bought the catalogue,

327

00:13:53,332--> 00:13:55,708

and he does these

paintings with the...

328

00:13:55,732--> 00:13:58,628

the fly painted onto the frame.

329

00:13:58,652--> 00:14:00,668

Like, it's really coming

out at the viewer.

330

00:14:00,692--> 00:14:04,231

So I thought, well, that's got to go

in, I've got the whole book on that, so...

331

00:14:04,256--> 00:14:08,028

That, for me, that's better than

researching something just on the internet.

332

00:14:08,052--> 00:14:10,445

-Yeah, that's

brilliant. That's...

333

00:14:10,469--> 00:14:13,388

See, you retain it. That's a
good thing. That's a good tip

334

00:14:13,412--> 00:14:15,188

for other authors

335

00:14:15,212--> 00:14:17,948

that you read snippets
and it fascinates you

336

00:14:17,972--> 00:14:20,976

and it's kept in there and
it comes out, it's used later.

337

00:14:21,001--> 00:14:24,121

That's really good. It's like you've got
a notepad in your book-- in your head.

338

00:14:24,145--> 00:14:26,588

-Yeah, that's not
good for sleep though.

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339

00:14:26,612--> 00:14:27,612

-So did you work...?

340

00:14:27,636--> 00:14:28,708

[laughter]

341

00:14:28,732--> 00:14:30,508

-That's... We've

already discussed this,

342

00:14:30,532--> 00:14:33,988

but how closely did you work
with Ellen Surrey on this book?

343

00:14:34,119--> 00:14:38,228

-So, with Ellen, the
publisher Nosy Crow,

344

00:14:38,252--> 00:14:41,908

they told me they were looking at
three different potential illustrators

345

00:14:41,932--> 00:14:43,908

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and what did I think about them?

346

00:14:43,932--> 00:14:45,748

And when I saw

Ellen's name on the list,

347

00:14:45,772--> 00:14:48,053

I jumped for joy because I

already owned one of her books.

348

00:14:48,077--> 00:14:49,671

I love her style.

349

00:14:49,695--> 00:14:51,948

And I just said, please,

can we have Ellen because

350

00:14:51,972--> 00:14:55,000

I just love her work

so much. It's so

351

00:14:55,000--> 00:14:58,468

cinematic, it's like

narrative-led, colourful.

352

00:14:58,492--> 00:15:00,708

Just so much detail
in all the spreads.

353

00:15:00,732--> 00:15:03,788

And then, yeah, so the...

354

00:15:03,812--> 00:15:06,588

I actually work
closely with a designer

355

00:15:06,612--> 00:15:08,948

from Nosy Crow
and the illustrator,

356

00:15:08,972--> 00:15:11,228

where the designer
would do the page layouts,

357

00:15:11,252--> 00:15:13,012

and this is probably
true of all kids' books,

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358

00:15:13,036--> 00:15:16,536

because you've got to have your little
blocks of text and the illustrations.

359

00:15:16,561--> 00:15:18,908

So it was definitely
a team of three.

360

00:15:18,932--> 00:15:21,028

So Tina was the designer

361

00:15:21,052--> 00:15:23,148

and she'd mock
out the page layouts.

362

00:15:23,172--> 00:15:26,948

And then when Ellen had
done a draft, like a pencil sketch,

363

00:15:26,972--> 00:15:29,668

she then show Tina and me that,

364

00:15:29,692--> 00:15:31,548

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and then I would
give any feedback.

365

00:15:31,572--> 00:15:32,810

So it might be, like,

366

00:15:32,835--> 00:15:36,028

there's a spread which I'm going to
read from in a bit about Janet Sobel,

367

00:15:36,052--> 00:15:39,228

who used a vacuum
cleaner to make her paintings,

368

00:15:39,252--> 00:15:41,956

and I said, please, can we have
a vacuum cleaner in this spread,

369

00:15:41,980--> 00:15:43,788

it will just look so
cheeky and fun.

370

00:15:43,812--> 00:15:46,148

And, you know, Ellen was

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just so lovely to work with

371

00:15:46,172--> 00:15:48,948

because she took on
board all that feedback,

372

00:15:48,972--> 00:15:52,028

and she was really open
and willing to work as a team.

373

00:15:52,052--> 00:15:53,388

-Oh, that's brilliant.

374

00:15:53,412--> 00:15:54,825

That is brilliant.

375

00:15:54,849--> 00:15:58,268

I know how hard it can
be to be an illustrator

376

00:15:58,292--> 00:16:01,988

and to answer or to do what
somebody's got in their head

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377

00:16:02,012--> 00:16:04,428

because as much
as they describe it,

378

00:16:04,452--> 00:16:06,828

if you're a visual person,
you've got to draw it then

379

00:16:06,852--> 00:16:08,283

and it's not what they thought.

380

00:16:08,308--> 00:16:09,428

You've got to redo it.

381

00:16:09,452--> 00:16:12,000

So that's brilliant.

That's fantastic.

382

00:16:12,000--> 00:16:14,078

And I'm sure you were
very flexible as well.

383

00:16:14,102--> 00:16:16,108

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I'm sure she came up
with things and you'd...

384

00:16:16,132--> 00:16:19,300

You'd think, yeah, we'll go with that,
even if it wasn't what you were thinking.

385

00:16:19,324--> 00:16:20,324

-Yeah, definitely.

386

00:16:20,348--> 00:16:22,308

-How do you find work?

387

00:16:22,332--> 00:16:23,548

So you're self-employed.

388

00:16:23,572--> 00:16:26,548

How do you find work? Do
you go out there? Do you pitch?

389

00:16:26,572--> 00:16:28,388

Do you have an agent?

390

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00:16:28,790--> 00:16:30,868

-So I've been freelance
for two years now.

391

00:16:30,892--> 00:16:33,028

Before that, I was working
in museums, galleries,

392

00:16:33,052--> 00:16:35,348

and then I did two years
at Sotheby's Institute.

393

00:16:35,372--> 00:16:38,365

And I left Sotheby's
Institute with no job to go to

394

00:16:38,389--> 00:16:40,788

and I thought, right, I'm
going to try and be freelance.

395

00:16:40,812--> 00:16:42,000

[laughter]

396

00:16:42,000--> 00:16:43,000

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-Scary.

397

00:16:43,000--> 00:16:45,476

-And it's definitely
been up and down.

398

00:16:45,501--> 00:16:48,305

I'm going to be honest. There are
times when I haven't had enough work,

399

00:16:48,330--> 00:16:50,508

particularly over summer breaks.

400

00:16:50,532--> 00:16:55,548

What I've found is, yeah, at the
start I really had to pitch for work.

401

00:16:55,572--> 00:16:57,668

And what I needed
was longer projects.

402

00:16:57,692--> 00:17:02,000

So curating a large public
art project, for instance.

403

00:17:02,000--> 00:17:03,668

Once I started doing that,

404

00:17:03,692--> 00:17:05,708

then I'd been

recommended to other people

405

00:17:05,732--> 00:17:09,828

and that works just kind of fed

on and I've met individual artists

406

00:17:09,852--> 00:17:12,588

who've maybe commissioned

essays for catalogues

407

00:17:12,612--> 00:17:15,708

and I feel like there's a lot

of word of mouth in the arts

408

00:17:15,732--> 00:17:18,000

and people who you know.

409

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00:17:18,000--> 00:17:21,385

With the books, though, it's
definitely been more formal.

410

00:17:21,409--> 00:17:25,468

Writing a proposal,
pitching it, and, you know,

411

00:17:25,492--> 00:17:28,868

I did maybe naively think
after writing a couple of books,

412

00:17:28,892--> 00:17:31,578

it would get easier,
but I'd say no, not at all.

413

00:17:31,602--> 00:17:34,268

And non-fiction's not having
the easiest time at the moment.

414

00:17:34,292--> 00:17:36,188

So I have had
rejections as well,

415

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00:17:36,212--> 00:17:37,908

and I think it's
important to say that.

416

00:17:38,731--> 00:17:40,651

-Really, really good, but

417

00:17:40,676--> 00:17:42,721

things like, well, I mean,
you're there, aren't you?

418

00:17:42,745--> 00:17:45,788

BBC4, Radio 4,
you're there, you're fine.

419

00:17:45,812--> 00:17:46,812

[laughter]

420

00:17:46,836--> 00:17:48,108

Because it is a risk, isn't it?

421

00:17:48,132--> 00:17:49,948

It's a risk to take that jump.

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422

00:17:49,972--> 00:17:51,703

And it's--

423

00:17:51,728--> 00:17:54,748

-It's a risk, and some
of the higher profile jobs

424

00:17:54,772--> 00:17:58,588

don't necessarily pay as well
as the lower profile work that I do,

425

00:17:58,612--> 00:18:01,788

or more like some of
the corporate work I do

426

00:18:01,812--> 00:18:03,388

that then pays my rent.

427

00:18:03,412--> 00:18:05,388

So for me, it's
a juggling act of

428

00:18:05,412--> 00:18:06,868

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the work I really want to do

429

00:18:06,892--> 00:18:09,338

and then some that I just
have to do on, you know,

430

00:18:09,362--> 00:18:10,628

Tuesday to Thursday.

431

00:18:10,652--> 00:18:12,468

-But you know
actors are the same.

432

00:18:12,492--> 00:18:14,148

I used to work in advertising

433

00:18:14,172--> 00:18:16,588

and they used to come
to my radio sessions

434

00:18:16,612--> 00:18:18,908

because I'd pick them
to record something or

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435

00:18:18,932--> 00:18:21,068

a TV ad and they would say,

436

00:18:21,092--> 00:18:22,972

thank you, thank you,

thank you. It's doing this

437

00:18:22,996--> 00:18:26,228

that pays for me to go on the

stage or to be in a film or a...

438

00:18:26,252--> 00:18:27,418

a series or something.

439

00:18:27,442--> 00:18:29,388

I think it might have

changed a bit now.

440

00:18:29,412--> 00:18:31,588

People get... are better paid,

441

00:18:31,612--> 00:18:32,988

but that's how it always was.

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442

00:18:33,012--> 00:18:34,750

It's the arts, isn't it?

443

00:18:34,775--> 00:18:36,000

-Yeah.

444

00:18:36,000--> 00:18:38,668

-But there we are, there we
are. Also, do you have an agent?

445

00:18:38,692--> 00:18:41,468

-Yeah, so I do, I
have two agents.

446

00:18:41,492--> 00:18:44,522

I've got an agent
for my adult books.

447

00:18:44,547--> 00:18:46,290

I always think that's
a weird way to say it,

448

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00:18:46,314--> 00:18:48,308

but, you know, adult

art history books

449

00:18:48,332--> 00:18:51,148

at Peters Fraser and Dunlop.

450

00:18:51,172--> 00:18:55,268

And then I've got a specific

children's book agent, Lucy Irvine,

451

00:18:55,292--> 00:18:58,348

and she recently left

PFD and I followed her

452

00:18:58,372--> 00:18:59,810

to DA Children's.

453

00:18:59,835--> 00:19:02,048

And she asked me, you know,

do you want to come with me?

454

00:19:02,072--> 00:19:05,388

And I said, yes, because

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she's a really great agent.

455

00:19:05,412--> 00:19:09,548

But what I'd say is

I wrote and secured

456

00:19:09,572--> 00:19:12,228

the Muse book deal

without an agent.

457

00:19:12,252--> 00:19:15,508

And also This Book Will

Make You an Artist, similar.

458

00:19:15,532--> 00:19:17,636

That was before I had an agent.

459

00:19:17,661--> 00:19:20,228

So I did a lot of work before,

460

00:19:20,252--> 00:19:21,508

yeah, being represented.

461

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00:19:21,532--> 00:19:24,028

So it's... it is possible
to work without agents.

462

00:19:24,052--> 00:19:28,503

But I like agents coming in
and doing the negotiating part,

463

00:19:28,528--> 00:19:29,808

which I really don't like doing.

464

00:19:29,832--> 00:19:32,872

-Oh, you do. I was going to say, I
didn't want to put their jobs on the line,

465

00:19:32,896--> 00:19:34,500

but it sounds like
you don't need them.

466

00:19:34,524--> 00:19:36,188

Oh, no, I see what
you mean, yes.

467

00:19:36,212--> 00:19:38,668

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-They do the negotiating,
the contracts and all that.

468

00:19:38,692--> 00:19:40,988

-Talking about money,
it's not pleasant, is it?

469

00:19:41,012--> 00:19:43,668

How much do you want for
this? Mm... Do I have to tell you?

470

00:19:43,692--> 00:19:44,692

-Yeah.

471

00:19:44,716--> 00:19:45,716

[laughter]

472

00:19:45,740--> 00:19:47,388

-So social media,

473

00:19:47,412--> 00:19:50,268

I know we met more or less
on social media, didn't we?

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474

00:19:50,292--> 00:19:53,868

And it's become a huge
part of everyone's lives.

475

00:19:53,892--> 00:19:57,948

What do you think that both authors
and publishers' expectations are

476

00:19:57,972--> 00:20:00,068

around social media now

477

00:20:00,092--> 00:20:03,228

as compared to say even
a couple of years ago?

478

00:20:03,743--> 00:20:05,690

-Yeah, so I think...

479

00:20:05,714--> 00:20:07,388

Even from when I first...

480

00:20:07,412--> 00:20:09,785

when I wrote This Book Will

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Make You an Artist and now,

481

00:20:09,809--> 00:20:11,308

the expectations have changed,

482

00:20:11,332--> 00:20:13,548

and there's a lot

more emphasis on

483

00:20:13,572--> 00:20:15,508

authors publicizing their books,

484

00:20:15,532--> 00:20:17,988

sending publishers their stats

485

00:20:18,012--> 00:20:20,588

on how many followers they

have and engagement levels.

486

00:20:20,612--> 00:20:22,000

I've been asked to do that.

487

00:20:22,000--> 00:20:24,068

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Making video content,

488

00:20:24,092--> 00:20:25,668

doing a lot of
the heavy lifting,

489

00:20:25,692--> 00:20:30,068

and I feel like those expectations
are a lot on author's ends.

490

00:20:30,092--> 00:20:32,348

Most of us are
natural introverts,

491

00:20:32,372--> 00:20:35,668

and yeah, I'm chatting, I'll
get up and present something,

492

00:20:35,692--> 00:20:37,068

but by my very nature,

493

00:20:37,092--> 00:20:39,000

I'm quite private, so for me...

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494

00:20:39,000--> 00:20:41,785

And also, I think I didn't
grow up making videos,

495

00:20:41,809--> 00:20:45,148

so it's quite unusual to have
to sit and create video content.

496

00:20:45,172--> 00:20:47,228

And that also takes ages,

497

00:20:47,252--> 00:20:50,465

and I think I could have
written, you know, 2,000 words,

498

00:20:50,489--> 00:20:52,868

and what have I done? I
made a 10-second reel,

499

00:20:52,892--> 00:20:55,268

which has probably got
5 likes and 2 unfollows.

500

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00:20:55,292--> 00:20:56,292

[laughter]

501

00:20:56,316--> 00:20:59,868

-Oh, gosh, you're speaking
to the converted there.

502

00:20:59,892--> 00:21:03,308

I've noticed a couple
of my contracts

503

00:21:03,332--> 00:21:04,948

have got in the small print,

504

00:21:04,972--> 00:21:07,308

you will promote
this on social media.

505

00:21:07,332--> 00:21:09,028

And I am really private.

506

00:21:09,052--> 00:21:11,268

I spend my life
behind my computer.

507

00:21:11,292--> 00:21:13,868

And same as you, I don't
mind standing up and talking,

508

00:21:13,892--> 00:21:15,868

but as long as I can
scuttle away afterwards.

509

00:21:15,892--> 00:21:19,388

So it is... it has
changed a lot, hasn't it?

510

00:21:19,412--> 00:21:20,412

It's...

511

00:21:20,436--> 00:21:23,108

The onus is a lot
on the writer now.

512

00:21:23,132--> 00:21:25,678

Not... I don't feel,
at the moment,

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513

00:21:25,702--> 00:21:27,508

they're actually saying
you've got to do this,

514

00:21:27,532--> 00:21:30,000

but they like
you to do it, so it...

515

00:21:30,000--> 00:21:31,000

-Yeah.

516

00:21:31,024--> 00:21:34,048

And when I noticed which books are
getting published and who's writing them,

517

00:21:34,072--> 00:21:38,228

I definitely see people with
huge platforms getting published,

518

00:21:38,252--> 00:21:42,000

and it does worry me
because I'm thinking

519

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00:21:42,000--> 00:21:44,708

maybe it's not based
purely on the writing,

520

00:21:44,732--> 00:21:47,000

which I think is a shame.

521

00:21:47,000--> 00:21:49,651

-Well, also, now this, I'm
not mentioning any names,

522

00:21:49,675--> 00:21:52,428

but I've seen some
things on social media,

523

00:21:52,452--> 00:21:56,038

huge platforms, as you say, and
then you go into the shops, into the...

524

00:21:56,062--> 00:21:58,828

Well, we... galleries,
because ours are art books,

525

00:21:58,852--> 00:22:01,708

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and you see a big display
of those particular books.

526

00:22:01,732--> 00:22:04,348

They're not necessarily
the best books, but...

527

00:22:04,372--> 00:22:05,372

That's the person who...

528

00:22:05,396--> 00:22:08,468

-Yeah, it's so
frustrating and, yeah,

529

00:22:08,492--> 00:22:11,748

and you don't want
to be mad about it,

530

00:22:11,772--> 00:22:14,028

mean about it,
but it is annoying.

531

00:22:14,052--> 00:22:16,268

[laughter]

532

00:22:16,292--> 00:22:19,548

-It's a little bit annoying,
but it's a learning curve.

533

00:22:19,572--> 00:22:21,668

As you say, it doesn't
come naturally.

534

00:22:21,692--> 00:22:24,388

I'm sure it does
for some people,

535

00:22:24,412--> 00:22:25,908

but it doesn't for a lot of us.

536

00:22:25,932--> 00:22:28,228

So what are you
reading for us today?

537

00:22:28,252--> 00:22:30,891

-Oh... So I'm going
to read a spread

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538

00:22:30,916--> 00:22:33,108

from This Book Will
Make You an Artist.

539

00:22:33,132--> 00:22:34,988

One of my favourite
spreads in the book,

540

00:22:35,012--> 00:22:37,388

like I mentioned,
about Janet Sobel.

541

00:22:37,412--> 00:22:40,268

And the story
behind this spread is

542

00:22:40,292--> 00:22:43,108

Jackson Pollock was
originally going in here,

543

00:22:43,132--> 00:22:46,000

but his estates refused
the rights for images.

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544

00:22:46,000--> 00:22:48,108

At which point,
I thought, great,

545

00:22:48,132--> 00:22:50,668

because we can put
this artist in instead,

546

00:22:50,692--> 00:22:53,868

a woman artist, who actually
influenced and inspired him.

547

00:22:53,892--> 00:22:54,988

[laughs]

548

00:22:55,012--> 00:22:57,228

So turned it into an opportunity.

549

00:22:57,252--> 00:23:00,468

-Brilliant. Do you know,
sorry, just to nip in again there,

550

00:23:00,492--> 00:23:04,828

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a lot of the estates are
a lot meaner and stricter

551

00:23:04,852--> 00:23:07,348

than the actual artist
would have been.

552

00:23:07,372--> 00:23:08,472

I find they're quite mean.

553

00:23:08,496--> 00:23:10,000

-Yeah.

554

00:23:10,024--> 00:23:13,251

And I've also found a couple
other estates where it's...

555

00:23:13,275--> 00:23:15,608

I'm trying to get a woman
artist in, and they're saying no,

556

00:23:15,632--> 00:23:18,688

and I'm thinking, well, now I'm gonna
have to put a male artist in, you know?

557

00:23:18,712--> 00:23:20,408

You're not really
helping yourselves here.

558

00:23:20,432--> 00:23:22,308

[laughter]

559

00:23:22,332--> 00:23:25,108

-But we'd love to hear you
read and see your book,

560

00:23:25,132--> 00:23:28,000

please, the award-winning book.

561

00:23:28,000--> 00:23:30,000

-Here we go.

562

00:23:30,000--> 00:23:32,668

-Oh, it's a lovely, lovely cover.

563

00:23:32,692--> 00:23:35,228

Yeah, and it's got that

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like soft texture to it,

564

00:23:35,252--> 00:23:37,068

so it feels like you

want to pick it up

565

00:23:37,092--> 00:23:39,628

and make something with it,

which was the idea behind it.

566

00:23:39,652--> 00:23:40,652

-Brilliant.

567

00:23:40,676--> 00:23:42,188

I'll just show you this spread

568

00:23:42,212--> 00:23:44,000

like I'm a primary

school teacher.

569

00:23:44,000--> 00:23:45,723

-No, that's what we like to see,

570

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00:23:45,748--> 00:23:47,508

show and tell. Oh, I see.

571

00:23:47,532--> 00:23:48,532

-Yeah, here we go.

572

00:23:48,556--> 00:23:50,228

-Oh, that's gorgeous!

So you've got the...

573

00:23:50,252--> 00:23:52,348

At the top it's

about the artist,

574

00:23:52,372--> 00:23:54,518

and then at the bottom

it's your turn to have a go.

575

00:23:54,542--> 00:23:55,890

Is that... Is that how it works?

576

00:23:55,915--> 00:23:57,028

-Yeah, that's exactly it.

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577

00:23:57,052--> 00:23:58,348

So there's a little bio,

578

00:23:58,372--> 00:24:00,548

something about the artworks,

579

00:24:00,572--> 00:24:03,508

and then at the bottom,

it's the five or six steps

580

00:24:03,532--> 00:24:06,023

for kids to go away and

make their own in that style.

581

00:24:06,048--> 00:24:08,428

-Brilliant. And what age

group is it aimed at?

582

00:24:08,452--> 00:24:10,068

-They're primary school age,

583

00:24:10,092--> 00:24:14,308

although I found even

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up to like 12, 13 year olds

584

00:24:14,332--> 00:24:16,068

are really enjoying

the book still.

585

00:24:16,092--> 00:24:20,188

And I'd say as young as maybe

four can do some of the activities like

586

00:24:20,212--> 00:24:23,908

pop art printing with

apples or peppers. So...

587

00:24:23,932--> 00:24:28,000

Yeah, a real range and parents and

grandparents have enjoyed it as well.

588

00:24:28,000--> 00:24:29,000

[laughter]

589

00:24:29,024--> 00:24:30,188

-I would imagine they would.

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590

00:24:30,212--> 00:24:33,308

Go on, sorry, I don't want to interrupt
you any more. Please read it to us.

591

00:24:33,332--> 00:24:35,388

-Okay, story time.

592

00:24:35,412--> 00:24:36,628

Um...

593

00:24:36,652--> 00:24:40,428

So this double page spread is
called Splash Paint like Janet Sobel.

594

00:24:41,000--> 00:24:43,068

"During the 1930s,

595

00:24:43,092--> 00:24:46,668

Ukrainian artist Janet Sobel
experimented with painting.

596

00:24:46,692--> 00:24:49,508

Instead of working carefully

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like many other artists,

597

00:24:49,532--> 00:24:51,788

she would drip, drop,
and even throw paint

598

00:24:51,812--> 00:24:54,308

in a messy method
called drip painting.

599

00:24:55,000--> 00:24:57,381

In 1908, Sobel
moved to New York,

600

00:24:57,405--> 00:25:01,000

where she had five children with
her husband who made jewellery.

601

00:25:01,000--> 00:25:03,548

She never intended
to be an artist,

602

00:25:03,572--> 00:25:06,188

but when her son

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started art classes,

603

00:25:06,212--> 00:25:08,268

she began to play

with his leftover paints

604

00:25:08,292--> 00:25:10,868

and invented her

own way of painting.

605

00:25:12,000--> 00:25:14,868

Soon, Sobel started

on huge canvases.

606

00:25:14,892--> 00:25:16,908

Usually, when you

look at a painting,

607

00:25:16,932--> 00:25:19,188

it's obvious which way

up it's supposed to go,

608

00:25:19,212--> 00:25:21,108

but it's much harder to tell

609

00:25:21,132--> 00:25:24,108

which is the top or bottom
of Sobel's compositions.

610

00:25:24,132--> 00:25:27,508

That's because she worked
at them from all four sides.

611

00:25:28,000--> 00:25:29,708

As well as using brushes,

612

00:25:29,732--> 00:25:31,948

she used her husband's
jewellery making tools,

613

00:25:31,972--> 00:25:36,000

including glass pipettes to
drop paint onto scraps of paper."

614

00:25:36,000--> 00:25:39,070

And then moving on to page two...

615

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00:25:39,456--> 00:25:44,108

"Sobel wasn't interested in making paintings that looked neat or perfect.

616

00:25:44,132--> 00:25:48,468

Instead, she wanted to enjoy the act of making and express herself.

617

00:25:48,492--> 00:25:51,050

'I only paint what I feel', she said.

618

00:25:51,075--> 00:25:53,628

And she often listened to music while she painted.

619

00:25:53,652--> 00:25:55,948

It was as if she was dancing with her pictures.

620

00:25:57,000--> 00:26:00,108

Janet Sobel was the first to make drip paintings like this,

621

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00:26:00,132--> 00:26:01,668

but she wasn't the only one.

622

00:26:01,692--> 00:26:03,028

After seeing her work,

623

00:26:03,052--> 00:26:06,548

American artists including Jackson
Pollock and his wife Lee Krasner

624

00:26:06,572--> 00:26:09,985

began to make large pictures
by splish-splashing paints

625

00:26:10,009--> 00:26:12,000

to create all over patterns too."

626

00:26:12,000--> 00:26:13,868

And then it goes into,

627

00:26:13,892--> 00:26:17,308

"now it's your turn with six
steps for making messy paintings,

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628

00:26:17,332--> 00:26:19,388

hopefully on paper,
not on walls at home."

629

00:26:19,412--> 00:26:20,988

[laughter]

630

00:26:21,012--> 00:26:24,590

That's brilliant, beautiful
words, really beautifully written.

631

00:26:24,614--> 00:26:25,708

-Ah, thank you.

632

00:26:25,732--> 00:26:27,428

-And I love the
way you've got in

633

00:26:27,452--> 00:26:29,451

that Jackson Pollock
wasn't the first.

634

00:26:29,476--> 00:26:30,606

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-Yes!

635

00:26:30,630--> 00:26:32,548

-Very good, very good.

636

00:26:32,572--> 00:26:33,868

-Satisfying.

637

00:26:33,892--> 00:26:36,271

-Because everybody listening,
that's what everyone thinks

638

00:26:36,295--> 00:26:37,976

and it's not true.

639

00:26:38,000--> 00:26:39,000

-Yep.

640

00:26:40,000--> 00:26:42,708

-Right, so sorry, my cat's
going to come in in a minute.

641

00:26:42,732--> 00:26:44,188

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I can hear him squeaking.

642

00:26:44,212--> 00:26:46,668

So we have some
questions, I think.

643

00:26:46,692--> 00:26:47,908

Do we have any questions?

644

00:26:47,932--> 00:26:50,188

I can't actually see
them at the moment.

645

00:26:50,212--> 00:26:52,668

Do we have any
questions for Ruth?

646

00:26:52,692--> 00:26:55,388

Because otherwise I'm going
to carry on chatting to her.

647

00:26:56,132--> 00:26:58,508

Has anybody asked any questions?

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648

00:26:58,532--> 00:27:01,000

Are you all just
fascinated as I am,

649

00:27:01,000--> 00:27:02,308

and how she works.

650

00:27:02,332--> 00:27:05,611

-Oh, I can see some
questions maybe here.

651

00:27:05,636--> 00:27:07,428

-Can you? Can you
see some questions?

652

00:27:07,452--> 00:27:09,532

-Can you see them or do
you want me to read them out?

653

00:27:09,556--> 00:27:11,290

-Yeah, oh, here we
are. Let's have a look.

654

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00:27:12,000--> 00:27:13,000

Nope.

655

00:27:13,000--> 00:27:15,825

-Um... Asked a
question in the Q&A box.

656

00:27:15,849--> 00:27:18,241

Can't see, yes, can you read
them out? I can't see them.

657

00:27:18,266--> 00:27:19,831

-So the first one is,

658

00:27:19,855--> 00:27:22,948

how did winning the ALCS
Educational Writers Award

659

00:27:22,972--> 00:27:24,468

impact your career?

660

00:27:24,492--> 00:27:25,708

Um...

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661

00:27:25,732--> 00:27:27,708

On that one, I'd say

662

00:27:27,732--> 00:27:29,788

it's quite recent.

663

00:27:29,812--> 00:27:35,468

So I haven't seen an impact yet.

664

00:27:35,492--> 00:27:37,708

I'd say it definitely impacted
my confidence, though,

665

00:27:37,732--> 00:27:41,000

and it felt... made me feel
a lot more confident about

666

00:27:41,000--> 00:27:43,468

trying to write another
proposal and pitching it,

667

00:27:43,492--> 00:27:46,028

because I have had a few

rejections over the last year.

668

00:27:46,052--> 00:27:47,908

So it really gave
me that impetus

669

00:27:47,932--> 00:27:50,028

to go back out there and
think, hang on, you know,

670

00:27:50,052--> 00:27:51,228

I wrote a really good book

671

00:27:51,252--> 00:27:52,788

and I do have these skills,

672

00:27:52,812--> 00:27:56,588

and I would love to write
another kids art and activity book.

673

00:27:56,612--> 00:27:58,028

So it gave me that boost

674

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00:27:58,052--> 00:28:01,188

and hopefully publishers will
see the award and think, yes,

675

00:28:01,212--> 00:28:02,348

we want to work with Ruth.

676

00:28:02,372--> 00:28:03,708

[laughs]

677

00:28:03,732--> 00:28:05,308

-I think that's how it works.

678

00:28:05,332--> 00:28:06,628

I've got here,

679

00:28:06,652--> 00:28:10,588

do you find the research process
longer than the writing process?

680

00:28:12,012--> 00:28:13,521

Um...

681

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00:28:13,546--> 00:28:16,028

Ohh... Good question.

682

00:28:16,052--> 00:28:20,308

I think it depends whether I
know the topic already or not.

683

00:28:20,332--> 00:28:22,868

So, say, like, Impressionism.

684

00:28:22,892--> 00:28:26,628

I used to work in a modern
art gallery in London, in Mayfair,

685

00:28:26,652--> 00:28:30,188

and I've done a lot of work around
the Impressionists, so for me, that

686

00:28:30,212--> 00:28:32,948

kind of factual knowledge,
particularly for kids,

687

00:28:32,972--> 00:28:34,828

might not take as long as say,

688

00:28:34,852--> 00:28:37,028

you know, researching

Janet Sobel took a lot longer

689

00:28:37,052--> 00:28:39,000

because she was

a new artist to me.

690

00:28:39,000--> 00:28:40,948

But writing kids' books,

691

00:28:40,972--> 00:28:43,828

Susie, you probably find

this as well, it takes me ages

692

00:28:43,852--> 00:28:46,028

to distil that down into

693

00:28:46,052--> 00:28:47,548

two, three hundred words.

694

00:28:47,572--> 00:28:50,068

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You know, how do you
define Impressionism

695

00:28:50,112--> 00:28:52,325

just in that small
segment of text,

696

00:28:52,349--> 00:28:54,868

that can be really difficult
when it's conceptual.

697

00:28:54,892--> 00:28:56,788

So harder than it looks.

698

00:28:56,812--> 00:28:58,548

-Yeah, I... I...

699

00:28:58,572--> 00:29:00,948

it's the same as Winston
Churchill once said,

700

00:29:00,972--> 00:29:02,108

I always say this one.

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701

00:29:02,132--> 00:29:05,468

"If I'd had more time, I'd have
written you a shorter letter"

702

00:29:05,492--> 00:29:08,668

because it's always
harder to write a short...

703

00:29:08,692--> 00:29:10,548

less, fewer words.

704

00:29:10,572--> 00:29:13,028

Have you been able to
take your work into schools?

705

00:29:13,052--> 00:29:14,428

That's interesting.

706

00:29:14,452--> 00:29:17,308

-Oh my gosh, I did a full art...

707

00:29:17,332--> 00:29:19,388

sponsored artathon

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day in a school,

708

00:29:19,412--> 00:29:21,585

and my god, it was exhausting.

709

00:29:21,609--> 00:29:23,000

[laughter]

710

00:29:23,000--> 00:29:25,068

-I bet they loved it, though.

711

00:29:25,092--> 00:29:27,578

-The kids had a great time
and I started by asking them,

712

00:29:27,602--> 00:29:28,748

do you know any artists?

713

00:29:28,772--> 00:29:30,668

And I thought they might
say, you know, Picasso.

714

00:29:30,692--> 00:29:32,371

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They knew loads of artists.

715

00:29:32,395--> 00:29:33,708

This was in a Birmingham school

716

00:29:33,732--> 00:29:36,748

-Well done, teachers.

-They had the most amazing art teachers.

717

00:29:36,772--> 00:29:39,476

and they were listing artists, some
of them I'd never even heard of.

718

00:29:39,501--> 00:29:41,000

[laughter]

719

00:29:41,000--> 00:29:42,948

-Maybe they were making them up.

720

00:29:42,972--> 00:29:44,108

-Yeah, maybe.

721

00:29:44,132--> 00:29:48,148

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We were making collages all day,
and then we stuck them on the walls

722

00:29:48,172--> 00:29:50,828
of the school and turned it into
this massive gallery, and it was

723

00:29:50,852--> 00:29:53,068
honestly an amazing
day, and then I thought,

724

00:29:53,092--> 00:29:57,228
hats off to teachers, because I don't
have the energy for this every single day.

725

00:29:57,252--> 00:29:58,252
One day's enough.

726

00:29:58,276--> 00:30:00,656
-I know, one day
you go, I know...

727

00:30:00,681--> 00:30:04,508
-Right, you talked about all

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the... all the misinformation online.

728

00:30:04,532--> 00:30:09,000

How important do you think the role
of non-fiction is in children's literature?

729

00:30:09,000--> 00:30:10,228

-Oh...

730

00:30:10,252--> 00:30:11,308

Great question.

731

00:30:11,332--> 00:30:13,108

I think it's really important,

732

00:30:13,132--> 00:30:16,108

and I've been brought
in a couple of times

733

00:30:16,132--> 00:30:19,708

with Ladybird and DK
to fact check kids' books,

734

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00:30:19,732--> 00:30:22,028

because that's where
the misinformation starts.

735

00:30:22,052--> 00:30:25,708

And yeah, on one I
worked on where there was

736

00:30:25,732--> 00:30:28,388

some illustrations
of Frida Kahlo, which,

737

00:30:28,412--> 00:30:29,412

um...

738

00:30:29,436--> 00:30:31,828

just didn't really reflect
her heritage at all.

739

00:30:31,852--> 00:30:34,148

And then other ones where there

740

00:30:34,172--> 00:30:37,548

were some facts about Van

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Gogh which were completely wrong.

741

00:30:37,572--> 00:30:39,508

And even, you know,

for a five-year-old,

742

00:30:39,532--> 00:30:42,000

it's important to get

that, right? So I think

743

00:30:42,000--> 00:30:45,748

it's great when publishers actually

are bringing in an art historian,

744

00:30:45,772--> 00:30:47,468

a consultant to work on books

745

00:30:47,492--> 00:30:52,000

so that that misinformation

doesn't spread further.

746

00:30:52,000--> 00:30:54,388

-Yes, I always say,

when I go into schools,

747

00:30:54,412--> 00:30:57,411

that if you go on the internet,
nobody's name is there.

748

00:30:57,435--> 00:30:58,905

Anyone can really
write anything.

749

00:30:58,929--> 00:31:01,348

I know a lot of people
try to keep to the truth,

750

00:31:01,372--> 00:31:02,588

but they can write anything.

751

00:31:02,612--> 00:31:04,218

And then I hold up
some of my books.

752

00:31:04,242--> 00:31:08,000

So you see my names there. So if
I get it wrong, I can get into trouble.

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753

00:31:08,000--> 00:31:10,148

But yes, I think it's important.

754

00:31:10,172--> 00:31:12,548

What has the process been

755

00:31:12,572--> 00:31:16,000

for getting your book, Muse,
adapted for a radio documentary?

756

00:31:16,000--> 00:31:18,508

-Oh my gosh, such a long one.

757

00:31:18,532--> 00:31:19,751

Um...

758

00:31:19,775--> 00:31:22,428

So radio documentaries,

759

00:31:22,452--> 00:31:24,588

the way I got into presenting

760

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00:31:24,612--> 00:31:26,228

was a couple of years ago,

761

00:31:26,252--> 00:31:29,108

a producer was working
with the comedian Stewart Lee

762

00:31:29,132--> 00:31:32,308

on a programme about
surrealism in Birmingham because

763

00:31:32,332--> 00:31:34,360

there was a group of
Birmingham surrealists.

764

00:31:34,385--> 00:31:37,268

And she said every time she
googled Birmingham surrealism,

765

00:31:37,292--> 00:31:40,348

it came back to my website, which
was sort of how I started out writing

766

00:31:40,372--> 00:31:42,000

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a blog about art history.

767

00:31:42,000--> 00:31:44,388

And so she then
called me and said,

768

00:31:44,412--> 00:31:46,788

oh, it'd be great if you
could do a segment

769

00:31:46,812--> 00:31:48,828

on this show about the
Birmingham Surrealists.

770

00:31:48,852--> 00:31:50,148

And the more I spoke to her,

771

00:31:50,172--> 00:31:54,468

the more she then thought, oh, you could
be what they call a presenter's friend.

772

00:31:54,492--> 00:31:56,988

So then I joined Stewart
for the whole program,

773

00:31:57,012--> 00:31:59,908

and we went to all these
different places across Birmingham.

774

00:31:59,932--> 00:32:01,868

And at each I talked
about the surrealist

775

00:32:01,892--> 00:32:05,251

who'd lived there or performed
there or staged just up there.

776

00:32:05,276--> 00:32:07,508

So then I knew that producer.

777

00:32:07,532--> 00:32:09,348

And then last summer,

778

00:32:09,372--> 00:32:11,948

I was supposed to work with
Stewart on another documentary

779

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00:32:11,972--> 00:32:15,188

and he went to work on
another project instead.

780

00:32:15,212--> 00:32:16,348

And that producer,

781

00:32:16,372--> 00:32:19,908

she fought for me to present
that documentary on my own,

782

00:32:19,932--> 00:32:21,598

which I really appreciated.

783

00:32:21,622--> 00:32:23,828

She's also a woman
in the Midlands

784

00:32:23,852--> 00:32:25,908

and she just said, I
know you can do it.

785

00:32:25,932--> 00:32:27,000

Um...

786

00:32:27,000--> 00:32:29,228

And she just gave me
that boost of confidence.

787

00:32:29,252--> 00:32:30,628

So then I presented that one

788

00:32:30,652--> 00:32:34,428

and then following that one,
then we'd pitched Muse before then

789

00:32:34,452--> 00:32:35,628

and nothing had happened.

790

00:32:35,652--> 00:32:37,468

But then after that
one, she said, right,

791

00:32:37,492--> 00:32:38,808

we're going to pitch Muse again.

792

00:32:38,832--> 00:32:42,025

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And I went to meet with the
commissioning editor at Radio 4

793

00:32:42,049--> 00:32:43,308

a couple of months ago,

794

00:32:43,332--> 00:32:47,188

and then, yes, he agreed it and said,
you've got two months, get on with it.

795

00:32:47,212--> 00:32:48,428

[laughs]

796

00:32:48,452--> 00:32:51,988

So it's like, all that time, and
then suddenly, like, bang, go.

797

00:32:52,012--> 00:32:53,012

But I think it's...

798

00:32:53,036--> 00:32:55,948

-Brilliant. That's
fantastic, though.

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799

00:32:55,972--> 00:32:59,489

It's good to know as well,
though, that, like, maybe...

800

00:32:59,514--> 00:33:02,428

I think it can feel quite
hard. For me, with Muse,

801

00:33:02,452--> 00:33:04,168

it didn't make that
big splash at the time,

802

00:33:04,192--> 00:33:05,548

but it's just keeping going.

803

00:33:05,572--> 00:33:06,628

And I think that's...

804

00:33:06,652--> 00:33:08,428

it's good to just hold
on to that thought

805

00:33:08,452--> 00:33:12,000

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that actually some books are a bit
of a slower burn and that's all right.

806

00:33:12,000--> 00:33:14,428

-Yeah, yeah, that's fine. Yeah.

807

00:33:14,452--> 00:33:18,268

And they slow burn and
they last forever, hopefully.

808

00:33:18,292--> 00:33:23,000

Do you prefer writing for
adults or children and why?

809

00:33:23,000--> 00:33:24,908

-Oh... Tough one.

810

00:33:24,932--> 00:33:26,004

Um...

811

00:33:26,028--> 00:33:29,068

I think I'd probably
say children because

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812

00:33:29,092--> 00:33:35,308

I absolutely love hearing from the
kids who've read the book and the

813

00:33:35,332--> 00:33:37,548

impact it's had on them.

814

00:33:37,572--> 00:33:39,308

And some of the
kids who've written in,

815

00:33:39,332--> 00:33:41,388

now they've said, oh, I
want to be an author now

816

00:33:41,412--> 00:33:43,948

or I want to be an artist

817

00:33:43,972--> 00:33:46,000

and they're just getting
really excited about it.

818

00:33:46,000--> 00:33:48,571

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And also, um...

819

00:33:48,596--> 00:33:50,268

I have a bit of an eye condition

820

00:33:50,292--> 00:33:53,148

which makes writing for long
periods of time really difficult for me.

821

00:33:53,172--> 00:33:54,891

So I do find that, like,

822

00:33:54,915--> 00:33:58,708

short bursts of writing, which in a way
you can do more easily for kids' books,

823

00:33:58,732--> 00:34:00,778

definitely suits
me a bit better.

824

00:34:01,902--> 00:34:03,228

-Gosh, that's... Yeah.

825

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00:34:03,252--> 00:34:05,228

Because you get the
feedback, don't you?

826

00:34:05,252--> 00:34:07,748

How do you manage
to avoid burnout

827

00:34:07,772--> 00:34:12,000

when working freelance in the
arts and juggling so many plates?

828

00:34:12,000--> 00:34:14,348

-Oh, I'm definitely burnt out.

829

00:34:14,372--> 00:34:16,548

[laughter]

830

00:34:16,572--> 00:34:17,788

Um...

831

00:34:17,812--> 00:34:19,028

Yeah, tough one.

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832

00:34:19,052--> 00:34:23,028

I definitely need to get better
at avoiding burnout and...

833

00:34:23,052--> 00:34:24,052

Yeah...

834

00:34:24,076--> 00:34:25,948

I think, honestly,
what I need to do

835

00:34:25,972--> 00:34:27,708

is increase my
day rates a little bit.

836

00:34:27,732--> 00:34:31,158

And I did think recently I'm
doing few too many projects, maybe.

837

00:34:31,182--> 00:34:33,788

Now I've done a few
Radio 4 documentaries,

838

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00:34:33,812--> 00:34:35,268

it's important to
put my rates up.

839

00:34:35,292--> 00:34:37,028

And what I'd say
there is I think it's

840

00:34:37,052--> 00:34:39,000

good for everybody
to talk to one another.

841

00:34:39,000--> 00:34:41,828

And know other freelancers
and actually get some feedback

842

00:34:41,852--> 00:34:44,588

and help with pitching and
knowing how much to charge.

843

00:34:44,612--> 00:34:47,488

So yes, it's a tricky one
to talk about money, but...

844

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00:34:47,512--> 00:34:50,388

-Yeah, there are groups, aren't
there? You can have sort of email groups

845

00:34:50,412--> 00:34:52,188

where you all
talk to each other.

846

00:34:52,212--> 00:34:54,188

It's private within that group.

847

00:34:54,212--> 00:34:55,818

It's just finding one of those.

848

00:34:55,842--> 00:34:59,108

I know I've got one for
children's non-fiction, actually.

849

00:34:59,132--> 00:35:01,388

We don't... We
haven't spoken for ages,

850

00:35:01,412--> 00:35:04,188

but every now and then someone

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will pop up and ask a question.

851

00:35:04,212--> 00:35:06,000

It's quite supportive.

852

00:35:06,000--> 00:35:07,000

-That's good.

853

00:35:07,000--> 00:35:09,908

-"What's the editorial
process like for non-fiction?"

854

00:35:09,932--> 00:35:11,428

I'm in fiction.

855

00:35:11,452--> 00:35:16,108

Also do you sell on proposal
rather than a full book?"

856

00:35:16,817--> 00:35:19,028

Yeah, you do for non-fiction.

857

00:35:19,052--> 00:35:21,936

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-Yes, yeah. Honestly, like hats
off to people who write fiction

858

00:35:21,961--> 00:35:23,748

because you've got
to write the whole book.

859

00:35:23,772--> 00:35:25,868

So for non-fiction,

860

00:35:25,892--> 00:35:30,308

typically you'll write an
introduction, maybe a conclusion,

861

00:35:30,332--> 00:35:32,428

and then two or
three sample chapters,

862

00:35:32,452--> 00:35:34,428

and then sort of like
a business proposal

863

00:35:34,452--> 00:35:37,028

for the whole book with

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all your chapter synopses.

864

00:35:37,052--> 00:35:39,148

How are you going to market it,

865

00:35:39,172--> 00:35:40,948

competitor titles,

866

00:35:40,972--> 00:35:43,788

and I've always got Susie

Hodge titles on my proposal,

867

00:35:43,812--> 00:35:46,708

like, look at this amazing

book by Susie Hodge.

868

00:35:46,732--> 00:35:47,798

Um...

869

00:35:47,822--> 00:35:51,000

Yeah, it'll be just as

popular as that one.

870

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00:35:51,000--> 00:35:53,708

And yes, and I...

871

00:35:53,732--> 00:35:56,908

with Muse, it went through
five rounds of pitching,

872

00:35:56,932--> 00:35:59,108

and there the editors
were coming back saying,

873

00:35:59,132--> 00:36:01,308

oh, could you change it
so it's a bit more like this,

874

00:36:01,332--> 00:36:02,868

or sales have
given this feedback,

875

00:36:02,892--> 00:36:05,028

so we want it to go a
bit more in this direction.

876

00:36:05,052--> 00:36:06,588

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So I think with non-fiction,

877

00:36:06,612--> 00:36:09,000

you do have to sometimes

be open to the book

878

00:36:09,000--> 00:36:11,228

changing, and the editors having

879

00:36:11,252--> 00:36:13,908

more of an idea of

where it might sell.

880

00:36:14,726--> 00:36:16,028

-Yes, yeah.

881

00:36:16,052--> 00:36:19,188

That was actually how I got

into non-fiction rather than fiction.

882

00:36:19,212--> 00:36:22,668

Although my background's always

been in art history and practical art,

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883

00:36:22,692--> 00:36:24,605

but that was...

Because I had children,

884

00:36:24,629--> 00:36:27,868

I had to pay for them, so I
couldn't write a whole book.

885

00:36:27,892--> 00:36:29,000

But...

886

00:36:29,000--> 00:36:32,228

Yeah, hats off to somebody
who does that. That's incredible.

887

00:36:32,252--> 00:36:33,988

Right, we have last question.

888

00:36:34,012--> 00:36:35,012

How do you juggle...?

889

00:36:35,036--> 00:36:36,588

I'm not sure that this is, um...

890

00:36:36,612--> 00:36:38,668

I don't know if
you've had to do this.

891

00:36:38,692--> 00:36:41,868

"How do you juggle working on a
book for children versus for adults?"

892

00:36:41,892--> 00:36:43,348

Do you work on one at a time

893

00:36:43,372--> 00:36:46,188

or go back and forth in
a more free-form style?"

894

00:36:47,012--> 00:36:48,708

-Um...

895

00:36:48,732--> 00:36:50,348

I've never had to...

896

00:36:50,372--> 00:36:51,868

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a kid's book and an adult book,

897

00:36:51,892--> 00:36:53,748

I'm writing at exactly

the same time,

898

00:36:53,772--> 00:36:55,628

but I do have to

juggle a lot of projects.

899

00:36:55,652--> 00:36:58,188

And the way that I stay

sane is by having set days.

900

00:36:58,212--> 00:37:00,988

So, I like to start

the week with writing,

901

00:37:01,012--> 00:37:03,188

because I need the

freshest brain possible,

902

00:37:03,212--> 00:37:05,358

and then maybe if I'm

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curating an exhibition,

903

00:37:05,382--> 00:37:07,948

I might have to do, like,
measure all the artworks,

904

00:37:07,972--> 00:37:09,068

work out the framing.

905

00:37:09,092--> 00:37:11,000

I might leave that
till Friday where it's...

906

00:37:11,000--> 00:37:13,388

Perhaps, yeah, it's
like a bit more admin,

907

00:37:13,412--> 00:37:14,988

bit less creative work,

908

00:37:15,012--> 00:37:17,508

and I do try to set
certain days apart.

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909

00:37:17,532--> 00:37:20,708

And with my writing days, and a
writer told me this when I first said,

910

00:37:20,732--> 00:37:22,108

oh, I really want
to write a book.

911

00:37:22,132--> 00:37:24,508

He said, just protect
that creative time.

912

00:37:24,532--> 00:37:26,388

So I actually went part-time.

913

00:37:26,412--> 00:37:29,308

I had a full-time
job at a university.

914

00:37:29,332--> 00:37:32,788

I went down to four days a week,
and every Friday was my writing day.

915

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00:37:32,812--> 00:37:34,668

Didn't see anybody,

916

00:37:34,692--> 00:37:37,708

I just worked on my
proposal, which became Muse

917

00:37:37,732--> 00:37:40,508

and became published, and
I was really strict about that.

918

00:37:40,532--> 00:37:41,828

I treated it like a job.

919

00:37:42,549--> 00:37:46,338

-I think you're really... you're
so disciplined and clear about it.

920

00:37:46,362--> 00:37:48,108

I think you're an inspiration.

921

00:37:48,132--> 00:37:49,148

So...

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922

00:37:49,172--> 00:37:51,668

I really do, and I
think that's wonderful.

923

00:37:51,692--> 00:37:54,108

Right, I'd like to say a
huge thank you to you.

924

00:37:54,132--> 00:37:55,708

Thank you to Ruth
for today's event

925

00:37:55,732--> 00:37:57,668

and thank you
everyone for joining in.

926

00:37:57,692--> 00:38:00,628

I hope you agree with
me, I've been fascinated.

927

00:38:00,652--> 00:38:03,508

And thank you to Tilly
Zeeman for moderating.

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928

00:38:03,532--> 00:38:05,188

If you've enjoyed this event,

929

00:38:05,212--> 00:38:07,348

I'm sorry I have to read
this, I can't remember it,

930

00:38:07,372--> 00:38:09,828

and aren't yet a member,
please consider joining.

931

00:38:09,852--> 00:38:13,068

I'm a member, Ruth's a
member, we're members, it's great.

932

00:38:13,092--> 00:38:17,000

With the special Society
of Authors at Home offer.

933

00:38:17,000--> 00:38:19,228

It's... It's a...

934

00:38:19,252--> 00:38:22,748

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an offer that you get, sorry, you get
20% off for the first year of membership.

935

00:38:22,772--> 00:38:25,785

Use the code, capital letters,

936

00:38:25,809--> 00:38:30,988

"SOAATHOME20".

937

00:38:31,012--> 00:38:34,508

So it's Society of
Authors at Home 20.

938

00:38:35,641--> 00:38:38,000

And thank you very
much, everybody.

939

00:38:38,000--> 00:38:40,908

Thanks, Susie.