

This month, we've been talking to . . . Katz Cowley

Originally from the UK, Katz Cowley has illustrated several books for Scholastic including the award-winning and amazingly popular *The Wonky Donkey*, *Willbee the Bumblebee*, *The Fidgety Itch* and *Seesaw Po*. Katz is a woman of many talents! She is also a painter, assemblage sculptor, singer and passionate facilitator of creativity workshops for all ages.

We asked Katz some questions about herself and her work, and here are her responses...

Where were you born? Where do you live now?

I was born in London, but now I live at a very magical sculpture garden in Australia, where I have been since the February 2011 quake in Christchurch.

Where did you go to school?

James Allen's Girls' School, London.

Did you have a nickname?

I was known by my official name, Katie, at school. My grandparents actually gave me the nickname Katz which means 'little kitten' and I always preferred it to 'Katie' so it's what everyone knows me as now.

What were you like in school?

The daydreamer at the back of the class doodling! I was the only girl in my year who failed my exams. But I loved drama & art, which I passed with flying colours, and I think the daydreaming was because I preferred to get lost in my imagination.

What is the naughtiest thing you did?

Wrote 'poo fart wee bum' in the condensation in the window with my best friend Rosy Wood. We got sent to the headmistress because she recognised our handwriting.

What was your favourite book growing up?

Hard to choose! *The Magic Wishing Chair* by Enid Blyton holds very magical memories ... it's a book to disappear into, and makes you think about your wishes!

Who is your favourite children's author?

I love anything Shaun Tan does. He is an inspirational genius, he's very clever.

What is your favourite food/colour/movie?

Well, I love my avocado and banana smoothies in the morning ... they are green, like my favourite colour! *Mirror Mask* is a movie crammed full with creatively juicy characters and ideas and *The Lost Thing* by Shaun Tan is a bite-size stroke of genius – it may be short but you can watch it over and over and see something new every time.

Who inspired you to illustrate?

My art teacher told me when I left school that I had an illustrative style, so I went to study illustration as a degree.

How did you get started?

Craig Smith asked me if I would like to work with him on *The Wonky Donkey*. A first book for both of us ... the rest is history!

How old were you?

I was 35 when I illustrated *The Wonky Donkey*. I wrote and illustrated a book for my degree when I was 22 and it is in the pipeline to be released in the future, which is very exciting! You're never too old or young to start.

Why did you want to be an illustrator?

I have always loved creating and inventing characters, so it made sense to let them lead me into the world of publishing. I feel like a midwife

helping characters be born into the world. I also love writing, so these are parts of me that have always been there. It is a pleasure and the greatest reward to share my creativity and have it be enjoyed.

How do you think up ideas?

When I am creating characters, they start as more of a feeling. I pick up my pencil and watch as it shows me where it wants to go. I feel like I am 'meeting' them when they take shape on the page. It's a very magical process.

Do you have a special place where you illustrate?

I love to create the initial sketches in cafés and public places before I go into the next stage, where I disappear into my studio with my music on loud and take my imagination by the hand and let it lead me deeper.

What is the best thing about being an illustrator?

1. I get to do what I love for a living;
2. I get to meet interesting characters, both on the page and beyond;
3. I don't have to wear a special uniform to work.

Have you had a funny or embarrassing moment as an illustrator?

Drawing Wonky Donkey's bottom while he farted

in my direction (I had to wear a gas mask for that illustration and I nearly fell off my chair)!

What do you do when you are not illustrating?

Sing, dance, draw in my journal, teach art classes and workshops, explore and create in every way. My partner Bruno and I also have a gallery where I show my original works and talk about the process of giving birth to characters and books.

What would you have chosen to be if you were not an illustrator?

I love to sing, inspire people's creativity and make people laugh, so in another life I might have chosen to be an opera-singing, paint-splashing comedian!

Which famous person from the past would you like to talk to?

An amazing artist called John Waterhouse ... there is a very special feeling to his paintings.

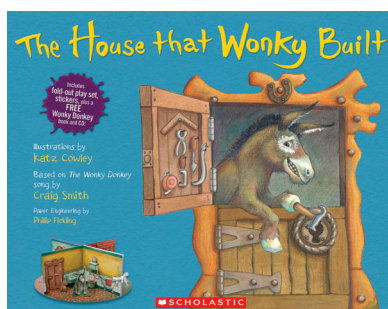
Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

I believe in faeries and magic!

Website/blog details:

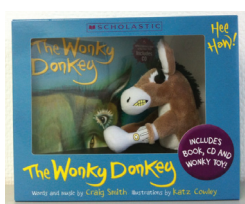
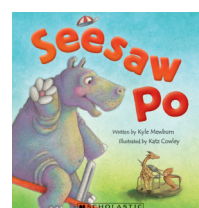
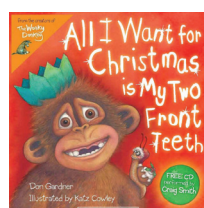
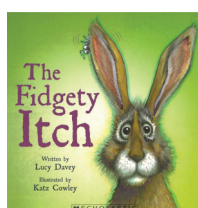
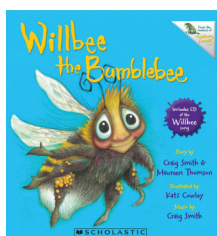
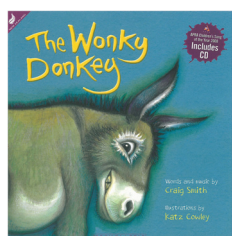
www.katzcowley.com

BOOKS BY KATZ COWLEY



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by Craig Smith
Paper Engineering by Philip Fickling

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