

[Q&A]

PW TALKS TO DANIELLE GANEK

The Girl Behind the Wall

The heroine of *Lulu Meets God and Doubts Him* writes her way out from behind an art world desk.

You participate in the art world as collector and as a philanthropist.

How did you come up with the idea of writing about a fashionable young gallery concierge?

I had this character whose voice I kept hearing, who was struggling with her own creative process, and what a scary place that is. But putting her behind the desk, seeing everything from almost an invisible place, allowed her much more of a perspective. A lot of times the young women who work in galleries really are behind stone walls or barriers of some sort. It's as if they disappear: people move through and talk as if nobody were there, but there really is someone who's taking it all in.

Is there a real Mia?

There's a line in the book where Mia states very clearly, this is not a roman à clef, she cannot even pronounce the word, let alone write one. In coming to an epiphany about her own talent as an artist, she starts writing this story that's not really about her—it's about a painting, and what happens with the painting, and what happens in the art world—and in the course of it she finds herself as a writer. I never worked in a gallery; I didn't go out and interview people or anything like that. It was just sort of observing.

Like Mia.

Exactly.

If you had to pick one artist who has an effect on you similar to the effect

Jeffrey Finelli has on Mia, who would it be?

You know, I'm a really big Richard Prince fan. Full disclosure—he gave me a quote for the book—but I find him to be such a smart artist. An artist whose work, every time I see it, impacts me. I hope that's something that

does come across about Mia in the book: for all her witty asides about what goes on in the gallery world and the auction world, she's just the biggest fan. That's something that I share with her.

How does publishing compare to the art world?

The people in the book publishing world, at least the people that I've met and experienced, are the nicest people. Unbelievably kind. Really, honestly—that part of it was surprising to me. It just seems loaded with smart, fun, cool, literary women—my agent is woman, my two editors are women, the president of Viking is a woman, all the publicity and marketing people who worked on the book are women. I've really enjoyed that aspect of it.

—Kris Coyne



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