

Marx hopes you judge her book by its cover

STEPHEN HUNT
CALGARY HERALD

Patricia Marx is a former writer for Saturday Night Live who currently writes for The New Yorker. She is the author, most recently, of the novels Starting From Happy and Him Her Him Again The End of Him, as well as a number of children's books, television and film scripts. Marx teaches at Princeton University and lives in New York City.



WordFest presents Patricia Marx at the Friday Night Showcase at Vertigo Theatre and on Saturday at Lattes, Love and Laughter, also at Vertigo. Tickets and info: 403-237-9068 and wordfest.com.

Q. Where do you write?
A. Right here. On my chair. Also my favourite place to write is my bed, because they will see me and judge me. But I like to write until three or four in the morning.

Q. When do you write?
A. I'm always starting but writing nothing. I wish I was one of those writers who gets up at six in the morning and writes until noon, or whenever, but I'm not.

Q. What do you write on?
A. On a computer that doesn't like me to write on it. My Think Pad. Yesterday it didn't have an 'a'. Do you know how hard it is to write without an a? You want to pound it but that doesn't help.

Q. Where did this book (Starting From Happy) come from?
A. I thought it was going to be somewhat autobiographical, but I'm too despicable a person to be the basis of a novel. I thought it would be a romance about a woman who wasn't lonely and pining for a man. I thought of it as a cross between The Bridge and Edward Gorey.

Q. What do you like most about it?
A. I like that it's finished.

I love the cover. I hope everyone does judge my book by its cover. And its spine. They (the publisher originally) had a smiley face (on the egg on the cover) and I said, no! I (also) contributed the colour. I was just thinking about colours that haven't been used too much on book covers. there are too many white books. My first book had an orange cover, which is also one of my favourite colours, but now there are too many orange covers.

Q. Would you change anything about it?
A. Maybe everything. I don't know. I put a lot of my friends' names in it, but not all of them, and now some of my friends are mad at me for leaving them out. I might try to make the second half longer. I would draw more pictures.

Q. What did the publisher say when you told them there was going to be pictures?
A. You would think they



Patricia Marx

would say, 'Do you know how to draw? I don't know how to draw,' I told them. All my editor said was, 'Then it will be funnier.'

Q. What was the hardest part about writing this book?
A. I wrote this one in spurts and it was hard to remember what it was about when I went back to it each time. My job was really getting in the way; getting re-immersed each time was hard. (Having lots of) short chapters that skipped years helped. My book is full of non sequiturs.

Q. What are you reading now?
A. Three books: Patrick DeWitt's The Sisters Brother, Better Living Through Plastic Explosives by Zsuzsi Gartner, and Jessica Westhead's And Also Sharks — the WordFest authors I'm on a panel with (on Oct. 16 in Banff).

Q. DeWitt's not coming now.
A. I can't believe DeWitt isn't coming. I got farthest in that one!

Q. Three desert island books?
A. The Desert Island Phone Book. The Desert Island Zagat's (Restaurant) Guide. The Desert Island Escape Guide.

Q. How do you read? Books or e-reader?
A. Both. I like e-readers very much, although I'm sure that's not what I'm supposed to say. I like reading e-books better. They remember where you are. I'm used to looking at a screen. You can do things, like eating with your hands, when you read on an e-reader. It's easier. The words are clearer.