

ALPHABET CITY MELBOURNE



WRITER, DESIGNER, ILLUSTRATOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER MAREE COOTE HAS CAPTURED HER BELOVED CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF MELBOURNE IN AN ALPHABET BOOK FOR KIDS.

Why did you create an alphabet book for children?

I wanted to get children in touch with their surroundings. They live in a virtual world these days, and I fear they will lose the joy of noticing things around them and overlook the inspiration it can give to a creative mind.

Our environment has always influenced us, seen through the natural and botanical motifs in art, textiles, ceramic design and so on. The urban or built environment offers new forms and ideas that can be just as inspirational, and noticing the architectural shapes around us is a great start.

I hope finding the letter forms in my book will become a game for children and make identifying and learning the alphabet fun.

Why is Melbourne special to you?

Melbourne is special because we have a rich tapestry of architecture to discover and enjoy. We also have a wealth of sculptures and statues, and of course our laneways are filled with brilliant street art. It's a great place for little eyes to explore.

What is your artistic training?

I studied graphic design at RMIT, looking at photography, darkroom techniques, printmaking, cinema, architectural drawing, life drawing, etching, typography, visual communication, graphics, communication design, book illustration, calligraphy and linocuts – everything and anything that could be a medium for the visual expression of ideas.

What inspires you?

In a city that brags of its livability and multiculturalism, I love to discover and retell the stories behind what creates and frames these attributes and this identity.

Funniest or most-inspiring Melburnians?

I'm inspired by Melburnians like Barry Humphries and his 1950s prank of riding the train to the city and progressively dressing and eating breakfast with the aid of stooges who delivered clothing garment by garment and breakfast course by course at each stop along the line.

There's also Germaine Greer, Nellie Melba, Lillian Wightman and Ellis Rowan. I'm inspired by their creative irreverence, courage, conviction, authenticity and originality, so fearlessly launched from this place at the bottom of the world.

For more information, visit alphabet-city.com.au

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