

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Return of the Muse

Chiwan Choi · Wednesday, March 27th, 2013

Last week, I had a chance to go down to Riverside City College and speak to a class about publishing for a couple of hours. This wasn't the first time I've gone to RCC. Jo Scott-Coe, [an incredible writer](#) and a dear friend from way back, is the professor of the class I spoke to and she has invited out there before for readings and discussions with her students.



This group of students are in the process of bringing back the school literary journal, *MUSE*. It was around for a little while, but I guess it had stopped publication a few years ago. Now, with Jo's advising and support, they are ready to deliver a complete reboot using channels that weren't available years ago, like ebooks and print-on-demand and social media. It all actually sounds like a big group experiment. And that's awesome.

We discussed a few specific things, like [Lightning Source](#) and Square credit card reader and the advantages and disadvantages of selling books through bookstores. I reminded them that if there's a bad piece of writing in the book, it's not the writer's fault. It's the editor's for accepting it.

They were disappointed that Judy couldn't come and speak to them about design. It was a big part of the discussion they wanted to have and I was looking forward to it too, but she got pretty sick the night before and couldn't make it. I managed to talk to them about how, starting with Wednesday, our old literary journal, we've partnered up with artists we love to not only feature their work on the cover, but to help shape the overall design of the book. They actually had a printout of the cover design. It looks gorgeous.



For me, the love for making books was given to me by Jack Grapes, my longtime writing teacher. It is mandatory for all of his beginning students to make chapbooks at the end of the 7 week session. I made my first over 25 years ago. Since then, I've made many more. I even have a project going on right now, Chi's Chapbook for Charity, in which I make one new chapbook a year and send it to a generous person who pledges to a [DonorsChoose](#) project.

There are a couple of other things that I've been thinking about since that day:

- While speaking of the early days of Wednesday, I told that story again about how in one of our very first editors' meetings, I said to the others we'd fail within two years no matter what and that we should embrace that as an opportunity. My thinking was that the inevitable end should give us the freedom to do whatever we want and push beyond our personal limits. I've told the story many times, but this week it's been rattling around in my head, maybe because I'm in the middle of some soul searching. As much as I was letting the Muse crew know, I think I was reminding myself to

experiment again and be unafraid of failure.

- I love Riverside City College. Every trip down there has been amazing. It's funny, but whenever I tell someone I'm going down to Riverside for a reading or to speak to students, they assume I'm speaking of UC Riverside and its much touted writing program. But to me, it will always be RCC. Professor Jo has really created an environment where students can be excited about and love the world of literaturez—studying it and writing and publishing and collaborating. They are in the shadows of UCR and its award winning professors and its stable of talented students, but [they are no less wonderful](#). I know when the first issue of the new *MUSE* comes out, I'll be championing the fuck out of it.

I did a little show and tell with all the Wednesday we made and all of our books and even my old chapbooks that didn't even have cardstock covers. Holding up each publication, I told them the stories behind each one, the process of design and editing and such, even a little about where I was personally at that time in my life. Got a little nostalgic. Looking at what we have done over the years, I felt proud and fortunate. And being able to share the things we have experienced and continue to learn with a new wave of editors and publishers is a real honor.

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