# Author R.O. Kwon on Writing 'Exhibit', Fear, and Literary Influences



**R.O. Kwon Discusses Her Novel "Exhibit" and Literary Preferences**

R.O. Kwon, a queer novelist, delves into her latest novel "Exhibit" by inhabiting a deeply personal space, grappling with themes of ambition, belonging, and queer and kinky desires. She mentions that she had to convince herself daily that the highly private and intimate content of the book would not be read by others, a necessary lie to enable her to write freely.

Kwon often explores fear as a constructive force, stating that confronting subjects she is afraid to voice can articulate deep-seated needs and desires, helping readers feel less isolated. She underscores the importance of literature in relieving the sense of loneliness she once felt.

In discussing sex scenes, Kwon emphasizes the significance of understanding characters' desires fully, allowing her writing to reflect their broader longing for connection and fulfillment. "Exhibit" addresses the hostility faced by artists, something Kwon has experienced firsthand through death and rape threats due to her outspoken political opinions.

Kwon signs her books with a "dojang," a stamp of her Korean name, 권오경 (Okyong), cherishing her cultural heritage despite the challenges of pronunciation in English.

Her literary tastes reflect diverse influences. She has been revisiting works by queer Korean writers such as Alexander Chee and others. Recent reads include "Cursed Bunny" by Bora Chung, which elicited laughter, and William Thackeray’s "Vanity Fair." Upcoming reads on her list are Jokha Alharthi’s "Silken Gazelles," Adania Shibli’s "Minor Detail," and the works of Ingrid Rojas Contreras, Jenny Zhang, and Vauhini Vara.

For a hypothetical literary dinner, Kwon would invite Anne Carson, Sappho, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, a testament to her admiration for pioneering and inspiring literary figures.