

Interview with a Bookstore: The Wild Detectives, uniting books and beer

A bookstore bar started by two Spanish civil engineers, The Wild Detectives has been heralded as a pioneer in Dallas's burgeoning literary scene

Interview with a Bookstore from is part of the
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The Wild Detectives Photograph: Literary Hub

Literary Hub

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The Wild Detectives is the result of the enthusiastic talk over the years – and around the beers – of two Spanish civil engineers, Paco Vique and Javier García del Moral: long time friends, who were crazy enough to make that conversation a reality. In February 2014 they opened a bookstore-bar-venue that has since invigorated the local cultural

landscape and it's perceived by many as the catalyst of what some are starting to call the Dallas Literary Scene.

In a TEDx talk they gave this year at the University of Texas in Arlington they highlight the need for spaces to encourage conversations in these smartphone times. "Conversations and human interaction, those are the raw materials stories are made" they say. If books can be the perfect icebreaker, this bookstore bar may as well feed some great literature coming from Dallas in the following years.



The Wild Detectives Photograph: Joseph Haubert

What's your favorite section of the store?

Andrés de la Casa-Huertas (Brand Director): Local authors. Well, it's not really a section per se; all the authors are mingled on our shelves, Ben Fountain is preceded by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Louisa Hall is followed by Jim Harrison and so on. But these guys are people we know, authors who've been presenting their books in the bookstore, books we've read and enjoyed. We feel very proud of our writers and it's great to see when their books are selling well.

If you had infinite space what would you add?

Andrés: That would be nice—our space isn't very big and curation is key. It would be great to have more translations because there is so much great international Literature out there. We'd also like to have more non-fiction.

What do you do better than any other bookstore?

Andrés: Cocktails!

Who's your favourite regular?

Andrés: It's not just a person. We're very lucky to be part of an amazing community that is deeply involved in promoting culture and in making it accessible for everyone. Some of our regulars, like John Bradley or Kelsey Capps, have become collaborators, sharing their articles on our website. Our friend Vicky Sanz helps us by moderating our Spanish language events and also writes on our website. Another friend, Lauren Smart, joined us last May to program a

month of events to bring visibility to women in Literature and the Arts. Will Evans, the man behind Deep Vellum, has brought some of his book presentations to the shop. There are also people like Katherine Bourne from Shakespeare in the Bar, Fatima-Ayan Malika Hirsi from Dark Moon Poetry, Courtney Marie, Leah Tieger, organizations like WordSpace, collectives like Bonehouse or House Party Theatre, Josh Kummner from Bar Politics – and we're sure we're missing some – they bring their projects to our space. They are the real reason why we have become a cultural landmark in Dallas. We couldn't be more grateful for that.

What's the craziest situation you've ever had to deal with in the store?



Photograph: Katy Tran

Andrés: When we had to hire security because Merritt Tierce was doing a reading in the shop. In 2014, a local newspaper ran the story of how she got a \$2000 tip from conservative talk show mogul Rush Limbaugh when she was a waiter at a high-end Dallas steakhouse and gave the entire thing to an abortion rights fund. The story didn't sit well among pro-life supporters, who felt the need to threaten Tierce's own life. Quite a paradox, don't you think?

What's your earliest/best memory about visiting a bookstore as a child?

Andrés: The more vivid memory I have about books is actually from my hometown library back in Spain. Probably because I'm in essence a lazy person, I used to think about how cool it would be if my brain could vacuum all the content in those books at once. I'd become the smartest person alive! I guess I'm also a bit megalomaniac.

If you weren't running or working at a bookstore, what would you be doing?

Andrés: I'd be reading more for sure.

What's been the biggest surprise about running a bookstore?

Andrés: Definitely it's been people's reaction to our initiative, how they've embraced it and become part of it. We've been very lucky with the local media who's written great pieces about us and helped us promote our events. Dallas has treated us well. We're nothing but grateful.

The staff shelf

What are The Wild Detectives's booksellers reading?

Blackout: Remembering the Things I Drank to Forget by Sarah Hepola (2015). Andrés recommends: "Sarah Hepola's drunk stories are dark-humored, quite enjoyable and endearing (it's impossible not to root for her), bittersweet sometimes, but it's the second half of the book, in which she shares her experience after quitting and coming to terms with herself, that becomes an insightful and poignant manual to fight bare hands the "complete inability to tolerate the moment."

Stoner by John Williams (1965). Paco recommends: "In addition to a profound display of knowledge about the human condition, Stoner is an irresistible exhibition of command of the Art of Literature resulting into one of last Century's top masterpieces. In this time and age it is really hard to think what interest if any could be found in looking into your inner self, that part of your person of which you cannot take any selfies; this novel clears the matter up."

The Story of my Teeth by Valerie Luiselli (2015). Carlos recommends: "Those who have been following the young Mexican author's writings will find this a departure from her almost avant-garde cosmopolitanism to a

warmer and evocative style, much in the tradition of Borges' and Marquez' magical realism. But, the "magic" is in the characters and scenarios she creates and how "real" she can make the preposterous and outlandish seem. Unique, funny, a little off, but will definitely leave a lasting impression.

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