

ALYSON RICHMAN

BIOGRAPHY AS OF MARCH 2016



Alyson Richman is the #1 internationally bestselling author of five novels, including "The Lost Wife" and "The Garden of Letters". Her sixth novel, "The Velvet Hours", will be published by Berkley/Penguin in September 2016.

(She is the daughter of an abstract artist and an electrical engineer, and graduated from Wellesley College with a degree in art history and Japanese studies. She herself is an accomplished painter, and her novels combine her deep love of art, historical research, and travel.

Richman's childhood was spent in both Long Island and Japan. She later returned to Japan during her Junior year abroad from Wellesley, where she lived in the ancient city of Kyoto. There she apprenticed herself to one of Japan's few remaining mask carvers for the Noh theater, a form of performance dating back to the 14th Century where the actors are dressed in richly embroidered kimonos and wear intricately carved wooden masks. Richman spent nine months carving a single mask from a block of cypress wood using centuries-old techniques.

These experiences became the foundation for her first novel, "The Mask Carver's Son," which tells the story of a 19th Century man born into an esteemed family of Noh mask carvers, who eventually leaves his home in Tokyo to pursue his lifelong dream of studying with the Impressionists in Paris. It was praised by *The New York Times Book Review* as "a meticulous profile of a man struggling against his native culture, his family, and his own sense of responsibility."

For her second novel, "The Rhythm of Memory" (previously published as "Swedish Tango"), she again returned to themes of outsidership and artistic pursuit against a foreign landscape, in this case chronicling the harrowing saga of a Chilean family who flees the brutal Pinochet regime to find refuge in Sweden. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, "The cry of every refugee,

the eerie sense of being transparent, dispensable, irrelevant, emerges powerfully from Alyson Richman's intricately plotted and touching narrative."

In her third novel, "The Last Van Gogh," she recreated the last seventy days of Vincent Van Gogh's life, as seen through the eyes of his final muse, Marguerite Gachet. She was the young daughter of the infamous Doctor Gachet, whose controversial treatment many believe may have contributed to Vincent's suicide. The novel was nominated by Booksense as one of the most notable books of 2006.

Her fourth and fifth novels, "The Lost Wife" and "The Garden of Letters" were both national and international bestsellers. "The Lost Wife" centers around a Prague couple separated during WWII, both of whom spend the next 60 years under the mistaken impression that the other died during the war. In addition to conveying their tragic romance, the book incorporates the true-life experiences of several Jewish artists who undertook their own form of resistance in the Nazi concentration camp of Terezin before they ultimately perished in Auschwitz. The novel was awarded the 2012 Long Island Reads award, and was also chosen as one of the best books of 2012 by the Jewish Journal of Books. It is now in development as a major motion picture.

"The Garden of Letters" portrays a young cellist who becomes drawn into the Italian Resistance against the tumultuous backdrop of WWII, and the grief-stricken doctor who offers her shelter from her Nazi pursuers in the idyllic seaside town of Portofino. The novel was a bestseller in three countries, and has also been optioned for film.

Her most recent novel, "The Velvet Hours", explores the mystery surrounding a Paris apartment once owned by the elusive courtesan, Marthe de Florian. Upon Marthe's death at the onset of WWII, her granddaughter shuttered the apartment for unknown reasons, and it remained that way, untouched, for close to 70 years. When the apartment was finally opened up in 2010, a magnificent portrait of Madame de Florian by the 19th century painter, Giovanni Boldini, was discovered hanging above the mantel, along with love letters from Boldini in de Florian's vanity drawer. The painting later sold for over two million euros at auction.

Ms. Richman's novels have been published in eighteen languages. She has toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe in support of her work. She lives in Long Island with her husband and two children, where she is currently at work on her seventh novel, "The Family Cloud."