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**Acclaimed Author of Novels for Young Readers
Draws on ‘Quilting Life’ to Pen First Book for Adults**

DURHAM, N.C. (June 1, 2016)-- From **Frances O’Roark Dowell** -- bestselling author of *Dovey Coe*, *Trouble the Water*, *The Secret Language of Girls*, and other “beloved books for tweens and teenagers” (New York Times Sunday Book Review) -- comes ***Birds in the Air***, her first novel for adults.

In the tradition of Marie Bostwick and Jennifer Chiaverini, Dowell combines her deep connection to the quilting life and her love of storytelling to create a novel about the abiding friendships that bind together a community of women who share a passion for making quilts.

While Dowell is best known for her award-winning novels for middle grade readers, over the last six years she has also hosted “The Off-Kilter Quilt” podcast, amassing hundreds of thousands of downloads and making friends with fellow quilters around the globe. It was these new friends she had in mind when she decided to write a novel about quilting.

“When you love something as much as we love quilting, you want to immerse yourself in it,” Dowell says. “For me as a writer, the idea of telling stories about quilts and the women who make them is just irresistible. Not only do I get to make quilts, I get to make up stories about quilts! And I’ve had incredible support from my friends to do just that.”

Birds in the Air introduces us to Emma Byrd, who’s just moved into the house of her dreams in the small mountain community of Sweet Anne’s Gap, where

she knows that making friends may prove to be her biggest challenge. Her husband loves his new job and her kids are finding their way at school. But Emma — no natural when it comes to talking to strangers — will have to try a little harder, especially after the sweet, white-haired neighbor she first visits slams the door in her face.

Luckily, a few of the quilters of Sweet Anne's Gap adopt Emma and she soon finds herself organizing the quilt show for the town's centennial celebration. But not everyone is happy to see the job go to an outsider, especially one who has befriended an outcast pursuing her own last best chance at redemption.

With ***Birds in the Air***, Frances O'Roark Dowell (winner of the Edgar Award, the William Allen White Award and the Christopher Medal) has created a warm, funny novel about fitting in, falling out and mending frayed relationships one stitch at a time.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Frances O'Roark Dowell is the bestselling and critically acclaimed author of *Dovey Coe*, which won the Edgar Award and the William Allen White Award; *Where I'd Like to Be*; *The Secret Language of Girls* and its sequels *The Kind of Friends We Used to Be* and *The Sound of Your Voice, Only Really Far Away*; *Chicken Boy*; *Shooting the Moon*, which was awarded the Christopher Medal; the *Phineas L. MacGuire* series; *Falling In*; the critically acclaimed *The Second Life of Abigail Walker*; *Anybody Shining*; *Ten Miles Past Normal*; and most recently, *Trouble the Water*. She lives with her husband and two sons in Durham, North Carolina. Learn more online at **FrancesDowell.com** and **OffKilterQuilt.com**.

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Q&A with Frances O’Roark Dowell

Why did you decide to write about quilters?

There’s a rule of thumb for writers: Write the books you want to read. I’m so happy whenever writers like Jennifer Chivavirini, Marie Bostwick and Sandra Dallas come out with new quilting novels—I wish more quilters wrote books! So it makes sense that if I love reading books about quilting, I should write one.

What draws you to quilting?

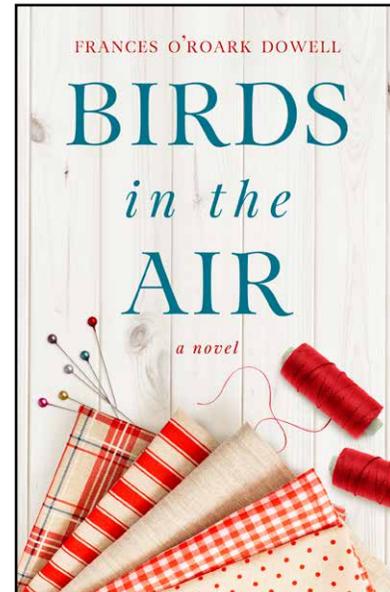
I’ve always loved quilts. For many years I was convinced that I’d never be able to make a quilt (I’m math phobic, for one thing), and when I finally realized I could, quilting became my new passion. I recently interviewed novelist Marie Bostwick for my blog and asked her why she made quilts. Her answer: *Because I can’t paint*. I totally got it. Making quilts satisfies my artist soul (the one that can’t paint, alas).

How are quilting and writing similar; in what ways do they differ?

With both quilting and writing, I revise a lot. I find this especially true now that I’m designing more of my own quilts. I mess up a lot in both endeavors, but find that sometimes my failures lead to good, unexpected places. Neither books nor quilts always end up being exactly what you intended them to be -- for better and for worse. One thing that’s different about making quilts is that you’re constantly in motion, going from the cutting board to the sewing machine to the ironing board and back again. It’s great to move while I’m making something instead of just sitting in front of a computer.

How did the “Off-Kilter Quilt” podcast come about?

I’d been making quilts for a few years when I discovered quilting podcasts. For the most part, these podcasts were homey and conversational, and I loved listening to the hosts talk about their projects and guild meetings, and hearing about the books they were reading and what they were having for dinner. For me, starting a podcast was like joining an ongoing conversation with other podcasters, which then became an ongoing conversation with my listeners, who leave comments, send me emails, and sometimes even come through town and have a cup of coffee with me. It’s a really wonderful, supportive community. ■



BIRDS IN THE AIR

A Novel by Frances O’Roark Dowell

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