



Interview ▶ Designer and graphic illustrator

ZAIDA
Borrell López

@ZaidaBorrell



Cecília Santañes has worked for 20 years in the world of printing and during her free time she illustrated books and posters, her great passion.

–At what age did you start drawing?

–I started in 1995, a few years ago, at the School of Angel Calvente (it still continues with artistic activity) who is an Andorran artist who has done several works, such as the sculpture of the Lady of Gel with the collaboration of Philippe Lavaill, or the Dallaire of Encamp, which is also his. In this school I started with charcoal, and then I started using pastels and oils, all techniques in general. I outlined with a pastel pencil, marked the drawing and with the pastel chalks and pencils I finished the whole illustration. There I also did a lot of copying and perfected the drawing as much as possible.

–How were your beginnings in the field of illustration?

–I started later, around 2011, buying many books to immerse myself in all the techniques and authors of the moment. At the beginning I copied a lot, and then I started to create, and that's when I made the illustrations for my first book *El gran secret de la vaca Bruna* (The great secret of the Bruna cow), in December 2012 it was published by Aina, the colony house of Canillo

–What inspires you when creating the illustrations?

–The great secret of the Bruna cow came about because I was going through a difficult time and I believe that drawing and painting are very important tools to channel feelings and illusions. At the time I was trying out the whole character thing and I thought an Andorran cow here might do well, and I created the Bruna cow. The other two books, *El tresor de la Maria* and *Bip-bip... marxem al planeta bipolar!*, are based on a text, the scenes from the fragments of the story. I did the illustrations for these three books with colored pencils.

The new character I created with digital art came about during the pandemic when we were confined because I was alone at home and I felt anxious and so I started drawing. Before the pandemic I used paper and pencils, everything I had illustrated was printed and scanned, but as we were lockdown I could not print and my scanner lost a lot of resolution; then, I decided to try digital art and that's when I started with the computer and Photoshop that I already used at work. Using this technique I created a funny character, mischievous, agile, and with a very big head so that it is filled with experiences and learning. I uploaded all the drawings I was making to Ins-

tagram and from there I started to be followed by several users. During the day to day, I was posting what I was doing and moving forward, the character represented my alter ego during the days of lockdown. I have taken advantage of the same character when going through breast cancer to recount my experience in a sweet way and explaining my own experiences in the book *Color in the Darkness*.

The pictures have a lot of color, and the design is also mine, I was sick but when they gave me the news I thought I was in the best hands. The yellow dot in the middle of the darkness that appears in some of the illustrations in the book represents the point that guides us, a point of hope, it gives me the point of departure in the darkness because having cancer is scary. Friends and family also make dots for you, in other colors, and you go with these colors to the magnetic resonance imaging, to see the oncologist. Afterwards, the illustrations are already in color because in the end it starts to become a routine, even if you have cancer you enter into a habit; one day you go to chemotherapy, the next, to the doctor, and I used the character to make the book and the exhibition that ended yesterday.



«The new character emerged during the pandemic when we were lockdown at home, it helped me overcome anxiety»

–Apart from illustration and drawing, have you practiced any other art?

–At the school where I did the exhibition in 2001, I learned engraving, design and ceramics. I went to the drawing school in Encamp, and I also have a ceramics course at la Bisbal.

–Was it difficult for you to go from drawing with pencils to doing it on a computer and later on the tablet?

–The method is different but like everything it is a lot of practice and making a lot of drawings. At first it is difficult and you have to practice a lot, but it is similar in a way to Photoshop with some differences but much more agile. I cheated a bit, I created the drawing with a black marker, scanned it and then worked on it with the colors in Photoshop. Later, I met an illustrator who explained to me how she worked, with the tablet and the Procreate program, then I bought the tablet and downloaded the program to start working like that. And it was very good for me because during the illness I could do the drawings lying down, because at that moment when you



Cecília Santañes

illustrator

«Illustration helped me overcome the cancer I suffered»

have no strength you take advantage of the leisure time to take care of your mind. Drawing helped me channel the emotions of fear, which can paralyze or make my body take more energy, to be more empathetic with you and with the disease. The doctors devoted themselves to the disease, and I to being good with myself. You can take the tablet everywhere, and that makes it very easy for me, since I couldn't take my computer with me.

–What was your first professional project?

–I have always considered illustration as a secondary thing because my

profession was pre-printing and design, and when I entered this job I was captivated and I began to submit myself to various poster competitions. In 1997, I won my first poster, painted with the pastel technique, and like the first one I framed it. Afterwards, I entered competitions, such as the one for the Christmas poster, given by the Unió Proturisme of Escaldes Engordany; I also won first prize for the Andorran Cuisine Autumn Days poster, donated by the Cercle de les Arts i les Lletres d'Andorra, a second prize for the Brossart poster, donated by Xarxanra, and a first prize for the 18th Gastronomic Show of Andorra in Or-

dino, among others.

– Has there been any job that you consider particularly important in your career?

–The three books I've done plus *Color in the dark*, which in addition to being a work is personal, and puts me in the foreground because I've always been behind my illustrations, and with a completely new technique than what did until now I had a lot of time for the character to have a consistency and help me express myself.

– Is there anything that serves as a source of inspiration for you when

you have a creative block?

-I usually get creative blocks when I am asked to do something specific, then I have to think a lot because what I imagine may not be the drawing I would like to do. The point is when something happens and it motivates me a lot, it can be good or bad, and those emotions cause me to immediately draw and find the illustration. It is not obvious to find it at the first moment, the image comes to your mind, but that does not mean that it will work in reality later. You have to do many tests until you find the image you were thinking of. You must always be drawing, that is to say, I draw if not every day, almost every day, I make notes, ideas and lines well above. On my Instagram I publish the images of the final drawing, and then the video of the process in very fast motion, where you can see that many times the first idea is nothing like the final result.

-Who are your references, who inspire you?

-From the country, Carrie on art, she explained to me how she worked (she is now in Italy), she is a very good illustrator, and Jordi Planelles. The illustrators, Eva Armisen, Agustina Guerrero, Pilarin Bayés, Roser Capdevila, Sara Fratini, Agustí Guer-

rero, and Raquel Riba.

-What advice would you give to young people who want to enter the world of illustration and design?

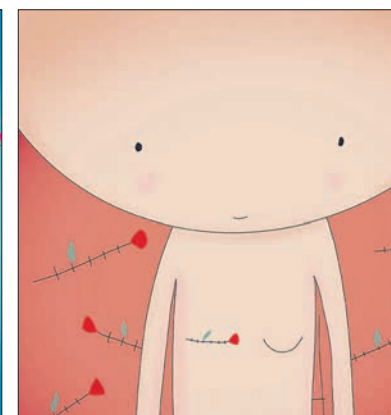
-First, that they have consistency, a lot of work, and above all that they train if they can. I didn't leave Andorra and I didn't have the means, and besides, I was very shy. I studied administration but I was very determined that I liked drawing. When I left work I studied and entered competitions. There are people who achieve success immediately, who have gone to study at university, not me, I have supplemented it with effort, perseverance and other subjects such as theater to be able to speak in public. Illustration is a very lonely job and then maybe you have to go and present it and you don't have the tools, that is, to communicate the cultural arts with each other, so that they help you express as best as possible all the concepts that you want to present.

-The exhibition Color in the Dark ended on Wednesday, what has been the feedback from the public?

-Well, fortunately I liked it a lot, and from what people are telling me and go to see it, they are taken aback at first because there is a lot of color

and it is talking about very hard subjects, therefore, the way having expressed it gives a feeling of impact and at the same time pleasant to the viewers. It went very well and I am very happy, I am looking forward to being able to take her to another parish, and I would like to take her out of Andorra. Surely many women have felt represented by the exhibition because it explains the disease of breast cancer, they see the process and understand it much more than a person who has not suffered from it. I guess there are women who won't be able to visit it because each person and each process is personal, and it's respectable how it happens, but if the exhibition and the book help to pass cancer better to other people who suffer from it, I will feel quite wrapped up and happy. I think both the exhibition and the book are a help as a tool to express myself better and keep going. The book has little text so that the person can put their words. ≡

WWW.
QR code on the interviewee's Instagram.



►► Several illustrations by the author.

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad

Don't miss any special editions of **El Periòdic!**