



# Windows into Illustration: Fabi Santiago

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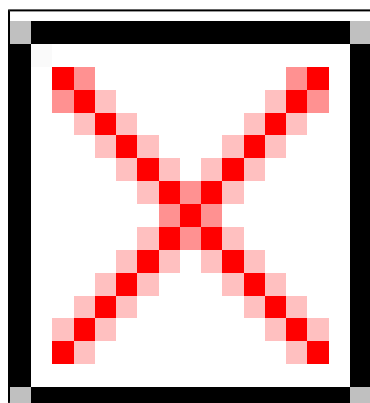
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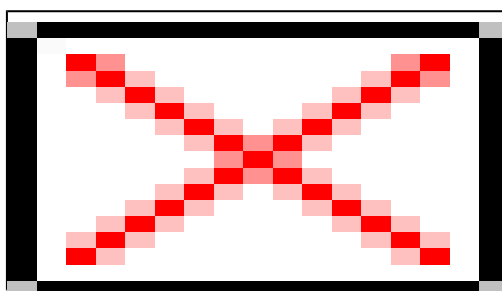


Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Fabi Santiago first caught our eye with **Tiger in a Tutu**, which was shortlisted for the **Waterstones Children's Book Award** which is typically full of movement, and colour. Fabi is a graduate of the MA in Children's Book Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art, from where she graduated in 2014. Here she explains her process and the creation of her new book **I Really Want That Unicorn**.

I haven't got a clear and defined process for my pictures, and because I both write and illustrate, it's hard to separate the two things. The good news is that I always approach a new book from a fresh perspective and there's always something new to discover and a different thing to try.

It mostly starts with a character. Most of what happens to my characters come from them being themselves and their responses to any challenges thrown at them - if I get to know them well, then finding out what sort of trouble they could get into and what kind of adventures they could have is easy.

In **I Really Want that Unicorn**, the main character is Chloe, a sassy girl croc who's good at all sorts of things (like dancing, performing, baking etc) and who joins a talent competition to get the much coveted Mellow Yellow Unicorn. But then, there's Veronica, who's really, really good at all those things too. The story comes from their determination to get the unicorn toy, competing against each other.

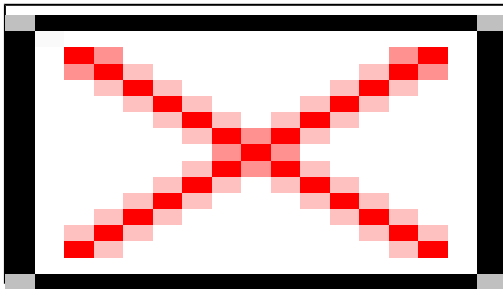


This is the spread where I introduce Veronica. I like that it says so much in one illustration. We see Veronica 'nailing it' at hula hooping with a crowd of impressed kids around her, and we immediately know she's the most talented kid and

also the most popular. We also establish the competition between the two by showing Chloe looking grumpy, with her arms crossed.

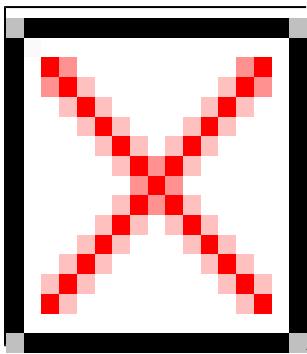
In terms of technique, I like to work by hand and I always screen print my illustrations. I can experiment and make mistakes, something I wouldn't get working digitally. Each colour I use means a different layer - the more layers I create, the more work I have and the longer it takes - so I try to work with no more than 6 colours. I would be terrified if I had all the colours available at the click of a mouse, it's hard enough to make design and layout choices, so the limitation imposed by screen printing is actually very welcome.

One thing that's a constant in my work is using colours freely, without pre-conceived ideas such as 'the sky is blue, the grass is green'. I fell in love with the modern painters at university and I just love it that you can have a pink tree, a yellow sky, a purple grass? why not?



This is the last double spread, when (spoiler!) Chloe and Veronica find out they have a lot in common, including their mutual dislike of Fabrizio (who scooped the unicorn prize) and decide that being friends is better.

It took me ages to get it right. First, because I wanted to show a bird's eye view of their town and the theatre where the competition took place. I wanted to show Veronica's castle, the two characters being friends, and Fabrizio going away with the prize, flying to the moon in E.T. style. That was a lot to fit in one illustration, plus, I'm not the best at drawing perspectives! In the end I gave up on the perspective and just drew a section of the castle very big in the foreground and it worked. I'm happy at how it turned out and I still love this illustration.



**I Really Want That Unicorn** is published by Orchard Books, 978-1408336915, £6.99.

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