



Stella Maris

ILLUSTRATOR ✦ AUTHOR



A LITTLE GUIDE

ON (happily) WORKING TOGETHER

THANK YOU

FOR CONSIDERING ME!

Choosing the right illustrator is hard stuff, I know.

It's a bit like finding the perfect puzzle piece for your story. It's not just about pretty pictures; it's about creating a seamless blend where words and visuals lock into place effortlessly.

If you've scrolled through my portfolio and thought, "Hey, this might be the one," then let's chat about how we can bring your book to life.

I've put together a handy PDF guide to give you the lowdown on how we can make the magic happen. It's not your typical stuffy business talk; think of it more like a roadmap for turning your words into a captivating visual journey.

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1 | MY STORY ... SO FAR

I've studied illustration alongside earning my degree in Ancient Theatre and Classical Languages. My first book was published in 2019, and I've been fortunate to learn from true mentors like Carll Cneut, Stefano Moroni, and Angela Catrani. Since 2019, I've published almost 30 books, with more in the pipeline, set to release or in various stages of production.

CORE VALUES



I think
CREATIVELY

I like to add funny details to my illustrations that are not there in the text. Illustrations and text have to complement each other without being redundant. I prefer to have at least some creative freedom.

I value
COMMUNICATION

Chatting with authors and discussing choices is essential for me to do a good job. I often send weekly updates or even write daily at the end of a project.



I value
TIME

I don't like to be late and mess up deadlines. At some point we might need of course one more week for final touches, but unless something serious happens, I always try to be punctual.



I am
HONEST

If I smell trouble, I'll be the first to sound the alarm. It's not because I have a crystal ball (trust me, I don't!), but because I'm rooting for your book to conquer the world!



SHORT PRESENTATION OF MY SERVICES

What we can do together

I'm fueled by the passion to craft the finest book possible based on your concept and text. Additionally, I'm actively engaged on social media to boost promotion and enhance communication.



CHARACTER DESIGN & COLOR PALETTE

They give a distinct look to your book and make it stand out. Each one of my books has its own palette and atmosphere!

BRAINSTORMING & STORYBOARD

We discuss composition and flow of the story. Up to 2 rounds of modifications included. No changes to trim size when we start storyboarding!

FINAL IMAGES CMYK & RGB HIGH/LOW RES

Ready to be used for print or online marketing/promotion. I can also prepare mockups and Facebook or Instagram graphics.

LAYOUT & BOOK DESIGN

I can design the whole book and deliver a print ready PDF. Choose fonts, place the text and take care of the whole book.

ART DIRECTION

I work side by side with Angela Catrani, who supervises my work and offers precious advice. Art direction included in my quote.

COVER DESIGN

3 sketches among which you can choose your final design. Calligraphy included if needed.

I DESIGN YOUR WORLD

... AND I LIKE TO DO IT AT MY BEST



If you have any doubt or additional question, just pop me a message. I'll be glad to help you find an answer!

WHY WE ALL NEED AN ART DIRECTOR (and mine is a great one)

An **art director** is someone very experienced in his/her field, in this case picture books. It means **they know the market**, they are skilled and trained in visual storytelling, they often have **experience as editors** too and they can offer advice and counselling both on the story and the artwork, so on **the book as a whole**.

All publishers have an art director who oversees all the details and artistic choices. As an illustrator, it's important for me to be able to interact with someone who knows composition, flow, color theories and all the technicalities behind a picture (which is often not an author's area of expertise).

So I've decided to include this service in my bundle.



WHO'S ANGELA CATRANI?

Angela is an editor, literary agent and art director in Italy.

She earned her degree in Modern Literature in 2001 and she immediately started working at "Il Mulino di Bologna Publishing Company". In 2005 she joined the editorial staff of the FMR Magazine, then in 2012 she started a collaboration with Il Mosaico Cooperativa and Bacchilega publisher; in 2014 she became editor for the new Bacchilega Junior series and she received multiple awards. She's now freelance editor for Giunti and Terra Nuova and literary agent for Rottermeier.



She has a great knowledge of the kidslit field, she's well known in Italy and above all she's a kind, generous, hardworking perfectionist.



STEPS TO MAKE A BOOK (what to expect when working together)

1 CHARACTER DESIGN

Your character starts to take shape!

We can decide how they look like, what they're wearing, if they have an animal companion, if they like dragons or spaceships (or maybe both). Every little detail will tell something about your beloved character.

3 MORE DETAILED STORYBOARD

Sketches start to look like illustrations...

Once it's clear where we are going, I can start drawing better sketches that look a bit like the final product. We can add or lose things, change details or even start all over without incurring in additional costs (2 rounds of mods).

5 COVER DESIGN

Well, cover design can happen at any stage...

Sometimes you need a cover early in the process to start promoting the book, sometimes it's the last thing to happen. I also love to show them in some critique groups on Facebook before finalizing them, you get great advice :)

2 THUMBNAIL STORYBOARD

I share with you horrible little sketches...

But they are fundamental for understanding each illustration's composition and how they flow all together. Images have to work as a sequence, not only by themselves. You probably can't see much in these sketches, I know LOL.

4 COLOURED IMAGES

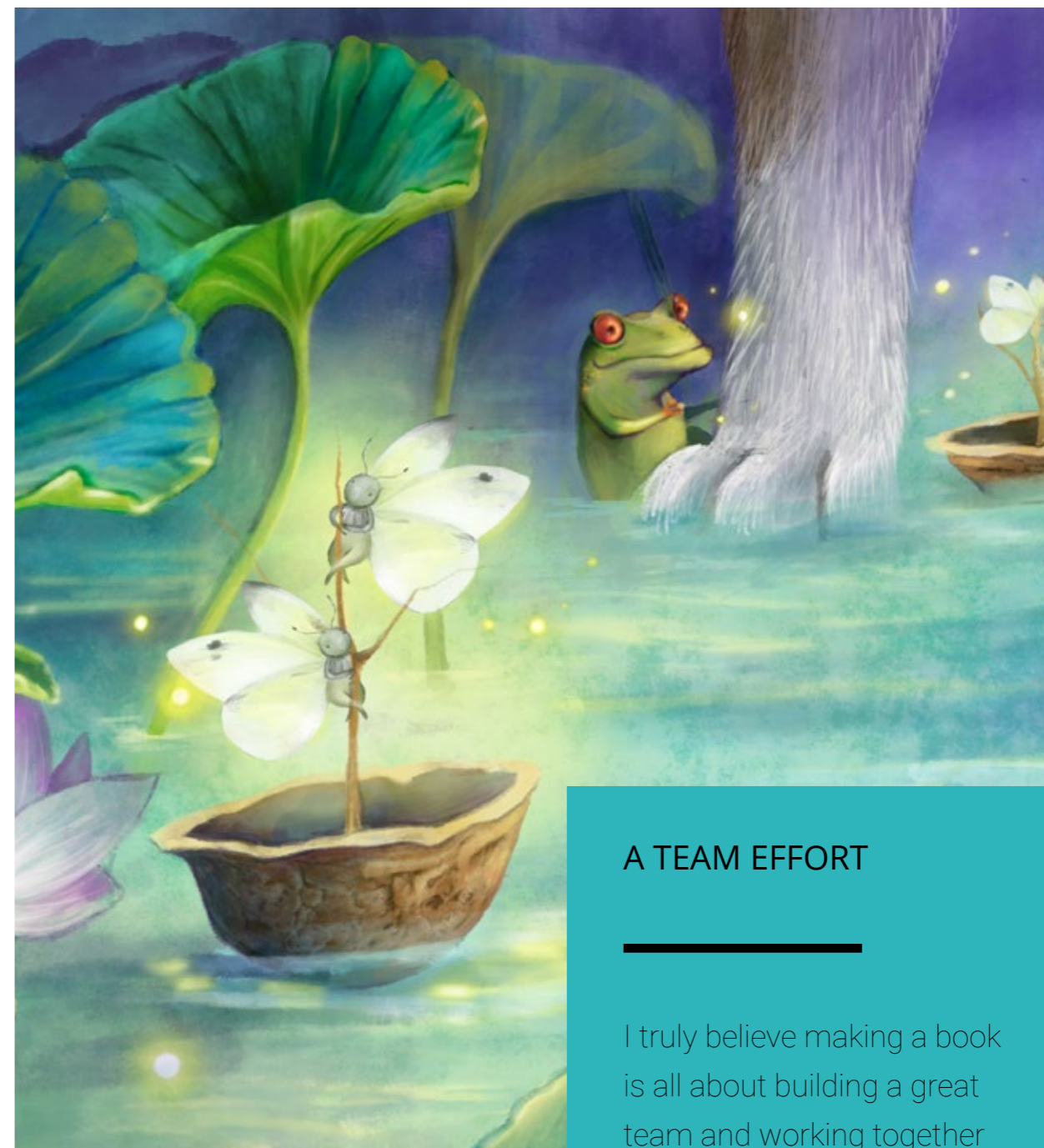
Ah, now you can clearly see what I had in my mind!

At this stage, though, any modification starts to take time and a lot of work. That's why it's important that you don't change your mind, or story, or character!

6 LAYOUT BOOK DESIGN

Usually, I start layout as soon as we have a storyboard

Layout includes choosing a font, placing the text, finding creative ways to make the text and the illustrations interact, adding a copyright page with all the information you need, planning a title page, bio page, activity page if you need any.



A TEAM EFFORT

I truly believe making a book is all about building a great team and working together towards the same goal: an awesome product!

You need a whole village to raise a child, they say.

You need a good team to win a championship. And you need a good équipe to make a great book too!

Finding your tribe is all about shared values and goals, so be sure to find someone who feels

right for you, not only for illustrations, but also for editing your text, designing the book and printing it!

PICTURE BOOK BASICS

(you can skip if you're experienced)



HOW MANY WORDS FOR A PICTURE BOOK?

500-1000 words

Typical picture books usually settle between 500 and 1000 words (but the less the better at the moment!) so if your book exceeds this word count, you should consider either editing it or making it an early reader/chapter book.

There are of course notable exceptions!

There's also a technical reason behind this (apart from a kid's attention span): illustrated spreads with a heavy text section can look busy and cramped. Chapter books can have slightly fewer illustrations and longer text sections.



HOW MANY PAGES FOR A PICTURE BOOK?

24, 32 or 40 pages

When you publish with traditional publishers (the standard is based on them), the page number has to be a multiple of 8. This has to do with how offset printers print and cut the pages. When you self publish, you are more free.

But you should keep in mind the standard and try to work around that. Very few picture books reach 40 pages, the most typical book has 32 pages. To have no white pages at the end of your book in KDP, you need 23 or 31 pages.



HOW TO COUNT PAGES?

Check Brooke Vitale's blog for great advice!

When you count your pages, you have to start with a right page (check your books!). This is usually either the title page or a dedication page. Then you have a copyright page (on the left) and another page you can use as title or dedication.

<https://brookevitale.com/blog/childrens-book-layout>

Or it can be the first page of your story (in this case you'll have a single page illustration on the right). When printing with KDP or Ingram, the very last page (on the right) has to be blank for their barcode.

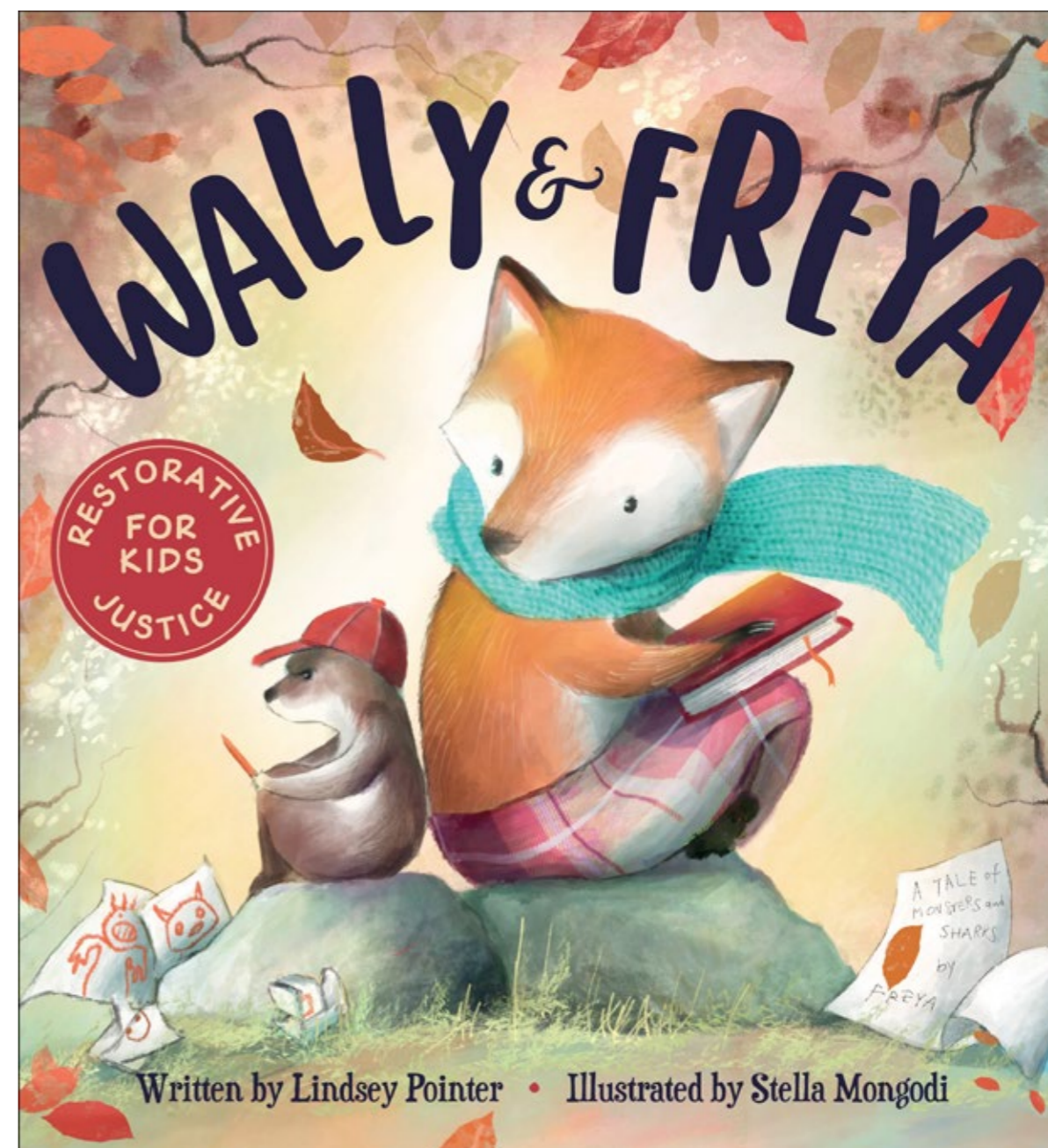


ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO A BOARD BOOK?

Beware: they are expensive

At the moment there are no POD services for board books, which means that you have to do a print run and costs are quite high. Also, check if your target is right: board books are usually meant for babies.

3/4/5 years old kids could consider a board book too simple for them.



LETS' TALK

3

SPECIFICS

Budget might not be the most important factor in deciding who to hire, but it's still something to take into account. I typically provide **project-based quotes** but here you'll find a breakdown of my prices, as well.



PAGINATION

An average picture book is typically 32 pages: dedication, copyright page, title page, **13/14 spreads** (26 or 28 pages) for text and illustrations.

I usually suggest skipping bio pages (they're not really interesting for kids!)



BUDGET

The range for a typical 32 page picture book is about **8000/8500 USD**. This includes:

- illustrations (main and front matter)
- book and cover design
- art direction
- formatting for different POD platforms, printers and types of file



TIMELINE

A full project usually takes 3 to 4 months from start to finish.

I book a limited amount of time slots during a year so I can focus on single projects (that's why I'm usually booked out a year or more in advance).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

all you want to know



DO YOU NEED TO READ THE MANUSCRIPT?

Yes, I need to read your entire story. It is essential for me to assess the complexity of the art, the color palette, the style and what type of illustrations would work best. If it makes you feel safer, I can sign a Non Disclosure Agreement, but know that a professional illustrator would never steal your story: not only it's wrong, but his/her career would be excruciatingly short!

WHAT ABOUT COPYRIGHT?

I'm not keen on selling the copyright on my illustrations and you probably don't even need to own the copyright, unless you want to sell merchandising, publish more books with the same illustrations or use them for other projects. The best solutions for me is licensing: you'll have the right to use the illustrations forever and all over the world for publishing the book and promoting it.

INSTRUCTIONS OR FREEDOM?

I must say I prefer being given at least some freedom and I'd love you to trust me enough that I know what I'm doing haha. I don't like when pictures and words describe the very same scene, it's such a waste of possibilities! I'm a very imaginative person and you might find it's nice to be surprised ;)

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO FINANCE MY BOOK?

You could try a Kickstarter! It's a common way to crowdfund before the book is fully done. You will still need, IMO, a great cover, some spreads to show and a lot of marketing and promotion work, so check some FB groups and free resources before committing!



DOES MY BOOK NEED TO BE EDITED?

Yes, absolutely, and it must be done before we start working. It's important because an editor will help you develop your story and you might want to switch sequences, cut some scenes, change the ending etc. Illustrating before some rounds of editing means changing the storyboard and possibly some final images, which is time consuming, expensive and...not necessary at all!

CAN YOU HELP ME WITH KDP AND INGRAM SPARK?

Of course I can. I can upload all the files for you if you need! I'd love to check the printing quality of colours before you publish the book and make some adjustments where needed. I often get sent a proof copy.

ARE THERE ROYALTIES TO BE PAID?

No, I usually sign a flat fee only agreement, which means I won't get any royalties.

The only exception could be if a publisher picks the book up: in that case I will discuss royalties with the publisher himself.

WHAT IF I WANT TO TRY TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING?

In this case, I would advise not to have your book illustrated! Publishers prefer working with their illustrators, so just send your manuscript and wait for their answer. It might take a while and sometimes no answer will come, though.



CAN YOU SEND ME SOURCE FILES?

I can send you the InDesign file with book layout, but I won't send my illustrations' source files.

The only reason you would need source files is to modify the illustrations (which is what I want to avoid) and you would need an Ipad, anyway, with Procreate software on it.

HOW ARE PAYMENTS DIVIDED?

I usually set a 30% upfront non refundable payment, then a payment midway and a final one just before delivering the final files.

But, apart from the first one, if you prefer, we can set payments differently.

WILL YOU USE MY ILLUSTRATIONS?

No, not unless it's specified on the agreement that I can. I'll only use your illustrations to promote the book or for my portfolio.

DO WE SIGN A CONTRACT?

Yes, of course. I'll send you a template before we sign.

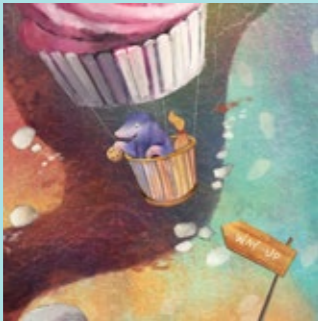
CAN WE DO A TRIAL ILLUSTRATION?

Of course we can. You can check the price breakdown page to decide what kind of trial you would like to do.

If you then decide to hire me, and we've already developed a spread, its cost will be deducted from the final quote.

PRICE BREAKDOWN

all you want to know



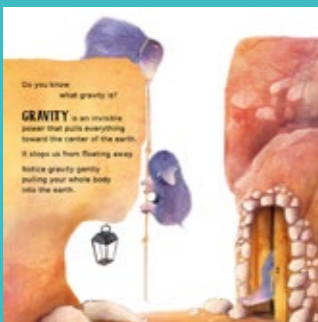
ILLUSTRATIONS

- double spread: USD 550
- single page illustration: USD 450
- spot illustration: USD 275
- cover illustration: USD 700
- cover illustration + design: USD 1000
- character design: USD 300



DESIGN AND LAYOUT

- creative book layout (including cover design) for a picture book: USD 950
- book layout for middle grade (including cover design): USD 800
- book layout for middle grade with cover illustration and cover design: USD 1400



CONSULTING (with me and Angela)

- art direction consulting: USD 45/30 min
- art direction consulting for a whole project:(no calls, email only): USD 140



4 | THEY SAY ABOUT ME



DEBORAH STEVENSON

Aside from her considerable artistic talents, Stella is a joy to work with in all regards. She is professional, accommodating, and I trust her 100% to deliver a quality finished product within the agreed upon time and budget.



ANNARELLA MOREJON

I personally love working with her, I really trust her sensitivity and her work. Stella is always open to discussion and new solutions. I know that a project in her hands can only improve and grow.



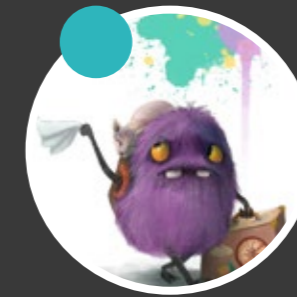
JACQUELINE HYACYNTH

Stella is a star! The way she weaves light and color is genius. From start to finish I felt a deep sense of trust. She is patient, committed and detail oriented. A true partner in co-creation as she brings her whole self to the project.



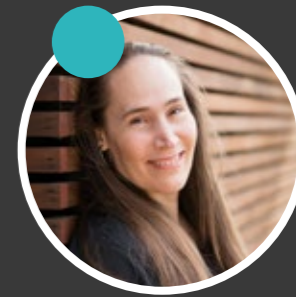
ANGELA CATRANI

I met Stella a few years ago: multifaceted artist with great talent, author of short stories, creator of jewels and clothes. She has hands of gold and a patient nature, always willing to work and experiment, with humility and humor.



BARBARA BAIN

Stella implemented my suggestions very well, and made wonderful suggestions as well that resulted in a more child friendly story!! Stella is not only an extremely talented artist, but also a true professional and coach.



TERREL LEFFERTS (ONCE UPON A DANCE)

Each image is a beautiful work of art with small details and a masterful use of light and shadow to finesse the gorgeous life-like illustrations. As a thoughtful collaborator, Stella brings ideas to the table and helps with promotion.



5 | MY BOOKS
TOGETHER

