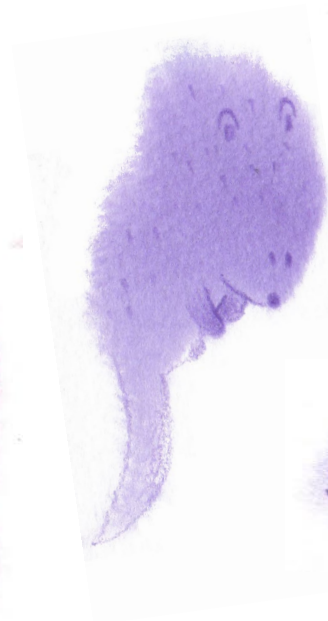


# Emma Lidia Squillari

picturebooks  
and illustrations



Hi! My name is Emma Lidia Squillari and I'm an illustrator. I live and work in Bologna, but my mother is originally from the US, so I have a mixed background. Some of my most exciting childhood memories are these huge boxes of books from my grandparents overseas. That is how I first fell in love with some of my favorite stories, like Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* series, or a particularly fantastic cassette tape of Maurice Sendak's *Nutshell Library*. I had no idea these were famous artists, until my studies at Bologna's Fine Arts Academy!

I was very lucky and grew up with a lot of great books, and even though children today may live in a very different environment from my own countryside childhood, I am still firmly convinced of the value of good books.

I love using traditional media, and I usually make my illustrations with a mix of pen and ink drawings and watercolor. Books made with a lot of irony, attention to detail, and great storytelling have always been my thing and through my work I hope to be able to bring alive the same joy that I felt when picking up a book when I was little.

My book *Dans L'oeuf* (Seuil Jeunesse, 2019) was winner of the Prix Atout Lire 2020 and Shortlisted for the Prix Bernard Versele 2021.

This spring I was selected for an artist residency organized by La Marelle, Association Les Tours, and Dracénie Provence Agglomération. I spent three months in Draguignan (France), working on my books, painting, and doing readings and workshops with local schools and libraries. Now I am back home in Bologna, still painting, still organizing activities with libraries, and just as excited as ever to be doing this work that I love.

In the next few pages you will find a collection of my more recent work and some illustrations from my published books.

I hope you enjoy them!

*Emma Lidia Squillari*







Sketches for sample illustration.



“A mouse story”  
(unpublished samples, 2022)







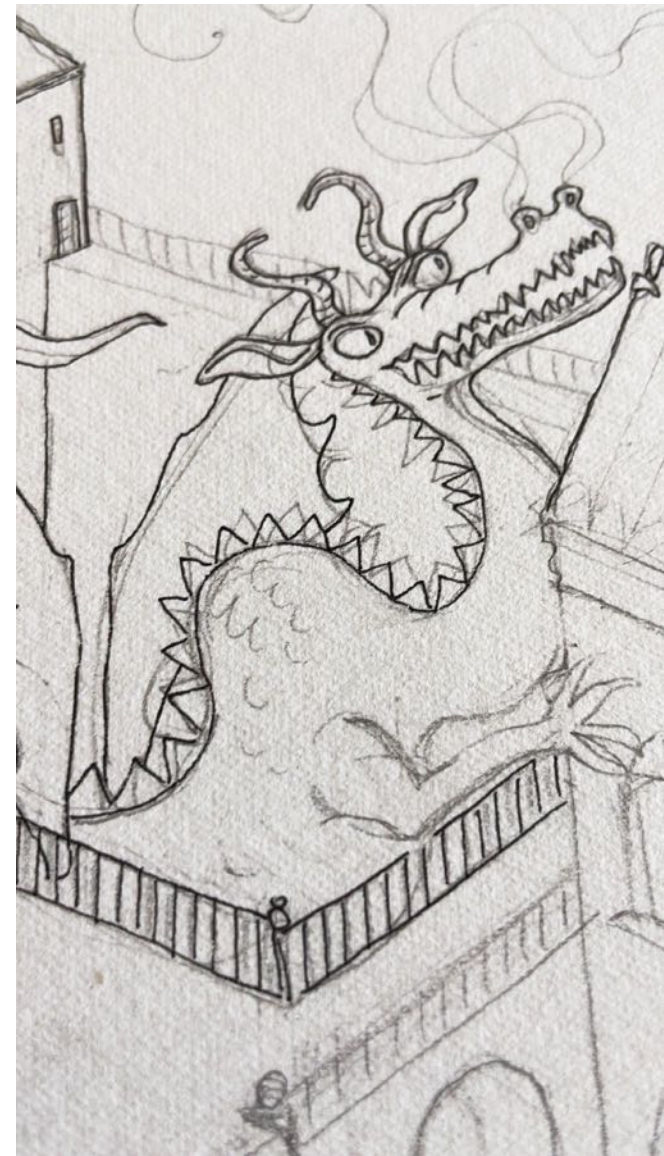
*From sketch to watercolor painting.*



Italo Calvino, "Fiabe Italiane"  
(unpublished, 2022)







*I designed the castle thinking of an Escher-like construction, but ended up removing the surreal elements so as not to overload the illustration.*







“The Playdate”  
(unpublished picturebook, 2022)





*I only used pink and green to paint these illustrations. The brown tones are obtained by mixing the two colors, resulting in different shades of the same palette, resulting in a pleasant cohesion of color.*



Charlie said  
"We need a castle!"



*The book is all about the fluidity of gender roles and the freedom of childhood. I wanted the reader to focus on what the children are doing without being distracted by too much colorful clothing, toys, etc. That is also the reason why I used unisex names for the characters. Interpretation is left to the reader!*

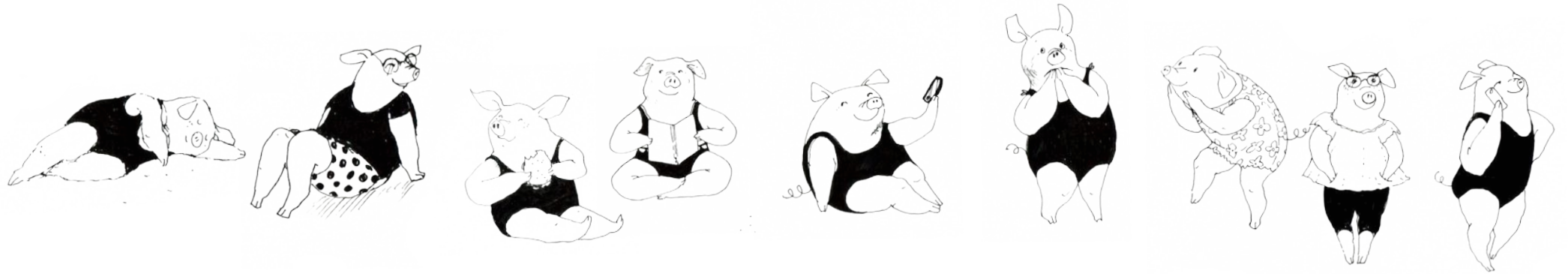
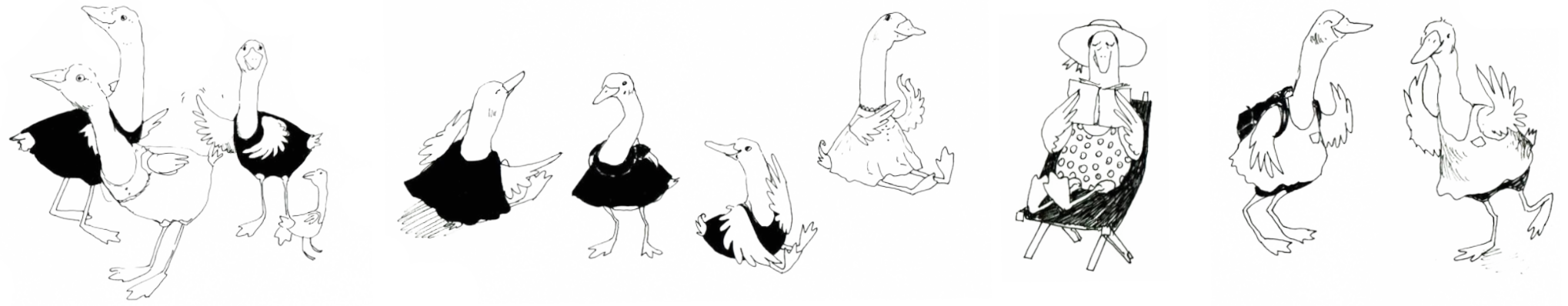






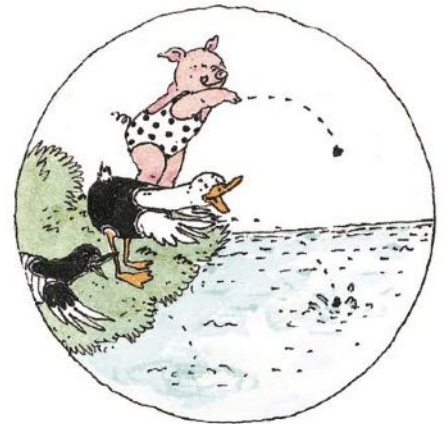
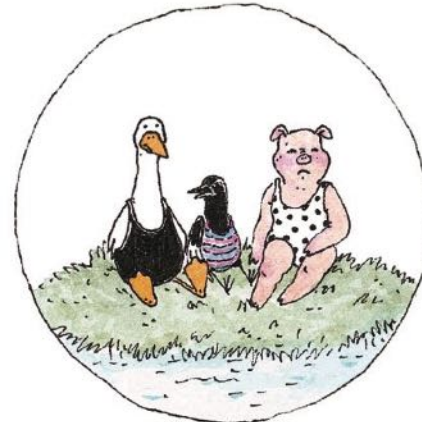
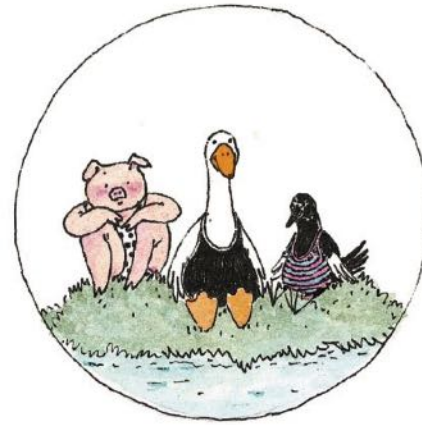
“La Baignade”  
(Grasset Jeunesse, 2021)





*Preliminary sketches for the three main characters. They are inspired by my own personality (Goose) and that of my two best friends.*





*What's hiding at the bottom of the pond?*



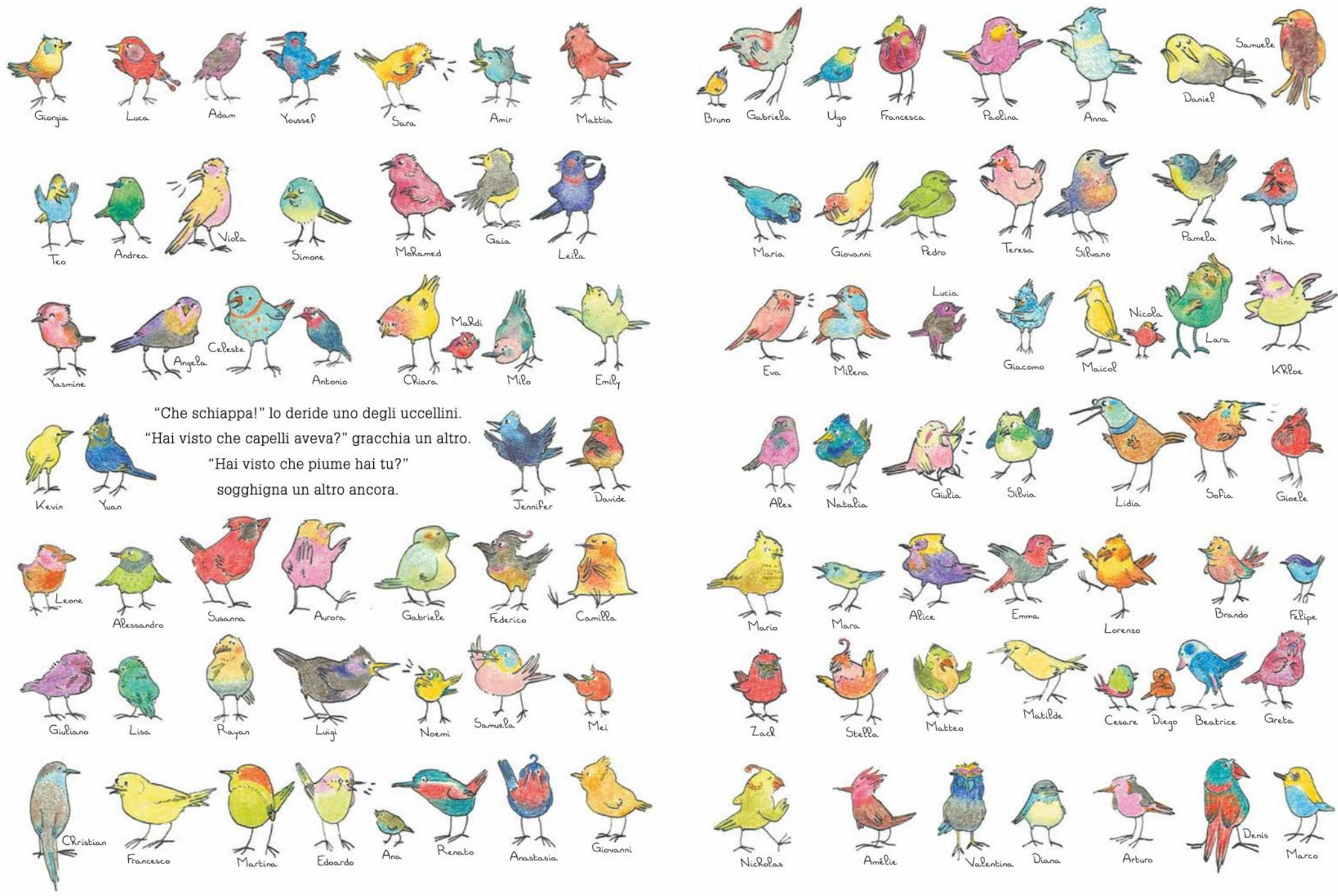


*Final painting and sketches.*









"Che schiappa!" lo deride uno degli uccellini.  
 "Hai visto che capelli aveva?" gracchia un altro.  
 "Hai visto che piume hai tu?"  
 sogghigna un altro ancora.

"I Dispettosi"  
 (Terre di Mezzo, 2021)





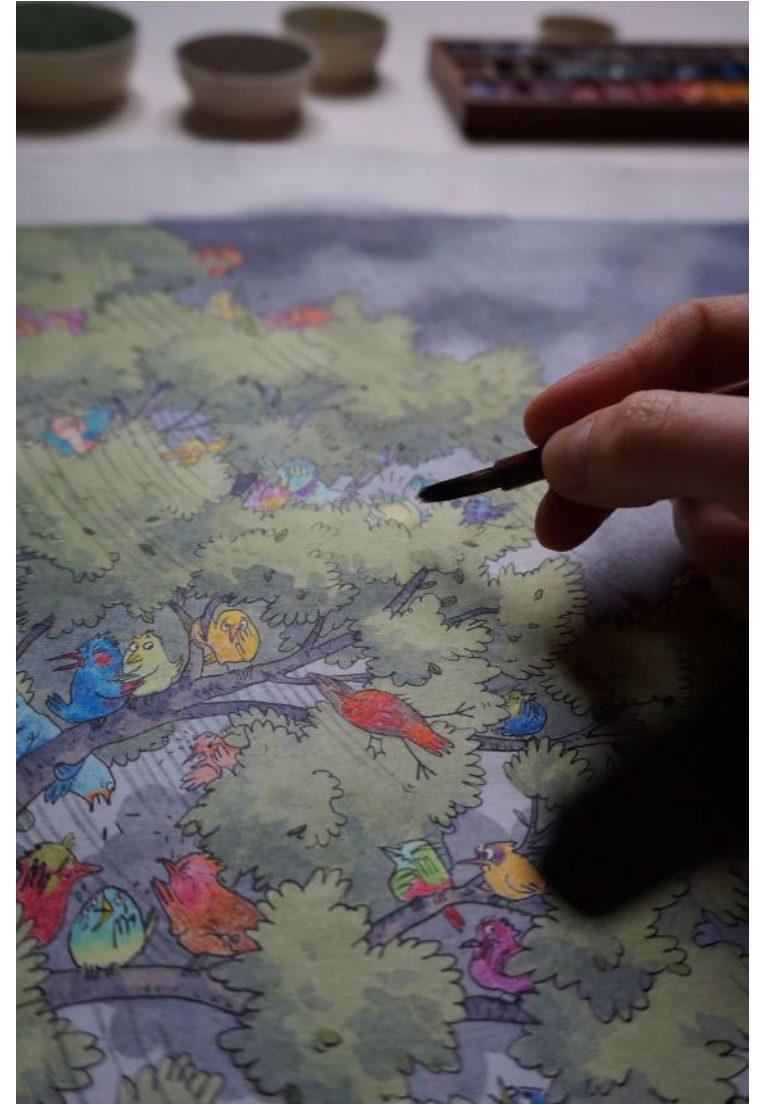
*I practiced copying real birds  
for quite a while before the book.*





*There were a number of different iterations of the tree before its ideal shape was decided.*













*During the Covid-19 lockdowns, I spent a lot of days making 100 tiny sculptures of the birds: I made the 200 little legs by bending wire, faithfully painting each one following the colors from the book. The result is a gorgeous mobile installation of colorful little birds that has been exhibited in several different locations.*





“Devo dirti una cosa”  
by Eshkol Nievo  
(Salani Editore, Novembrer 2022)



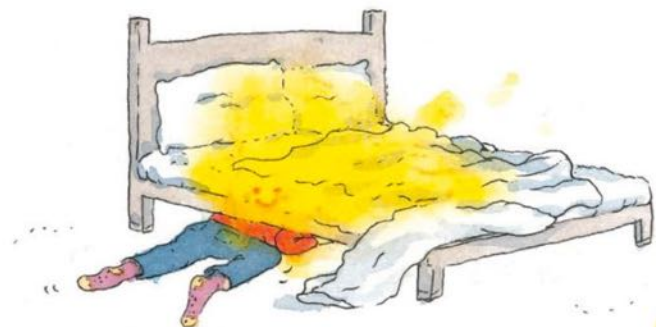


Non aveva idea di come si conservasse un pensiero.  
Men che meno un pensiero importante.

Se lo portò in camera e lo posò sul tavolo,  
perché lo trovava un po' pesante.



All'improvviso però gli sembrò  
poco sicuro e lo trasferì sul letto.



Ma nemmeno quello gli pareva  
abbastanza sicuro, perché a volte, la notte,  
lì ci si arrampicava sopra,  
così rischiava di schiacciarlo per sbaglio.



Allora cercò una scatola in cui metterlo.

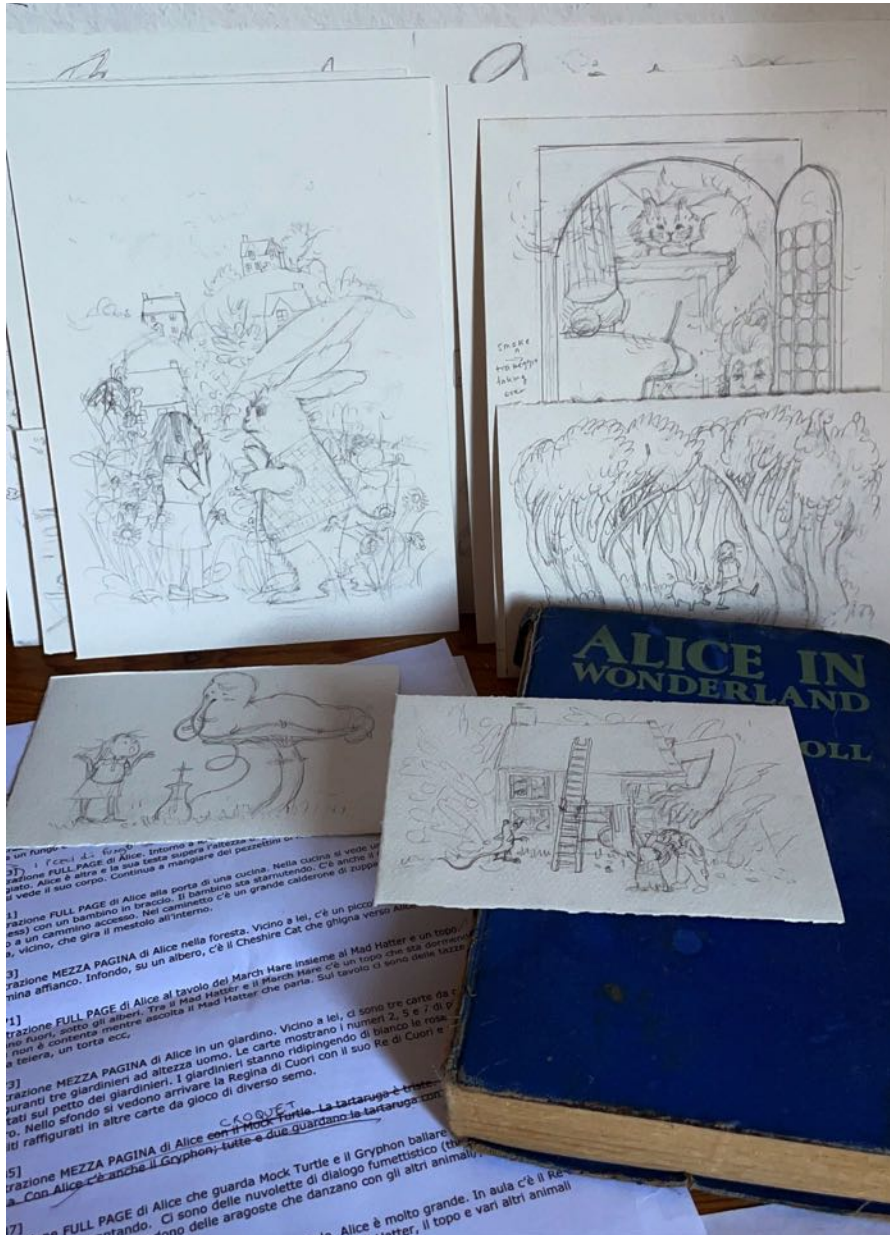


*“Devo Dirti una Cosa” is a sweet story about patience, parenting, and the power of imagination. This was a fun book to paint because of the way I decided to represent the imaginary characters: using freeform watercolor shapes was a such challenge and a new thing for me, compared to my usual style. It took patience and LOTS of mistakes to get it right!*









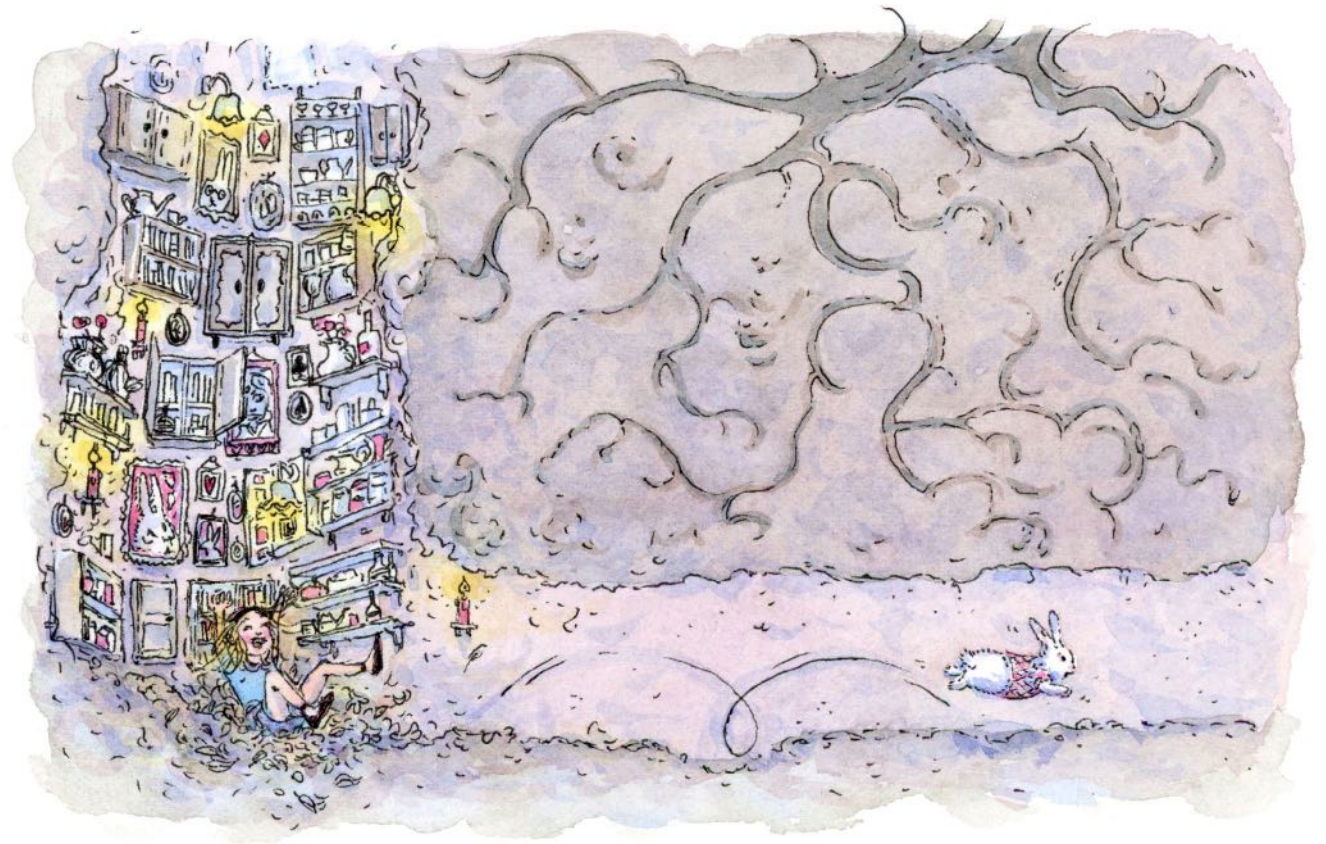
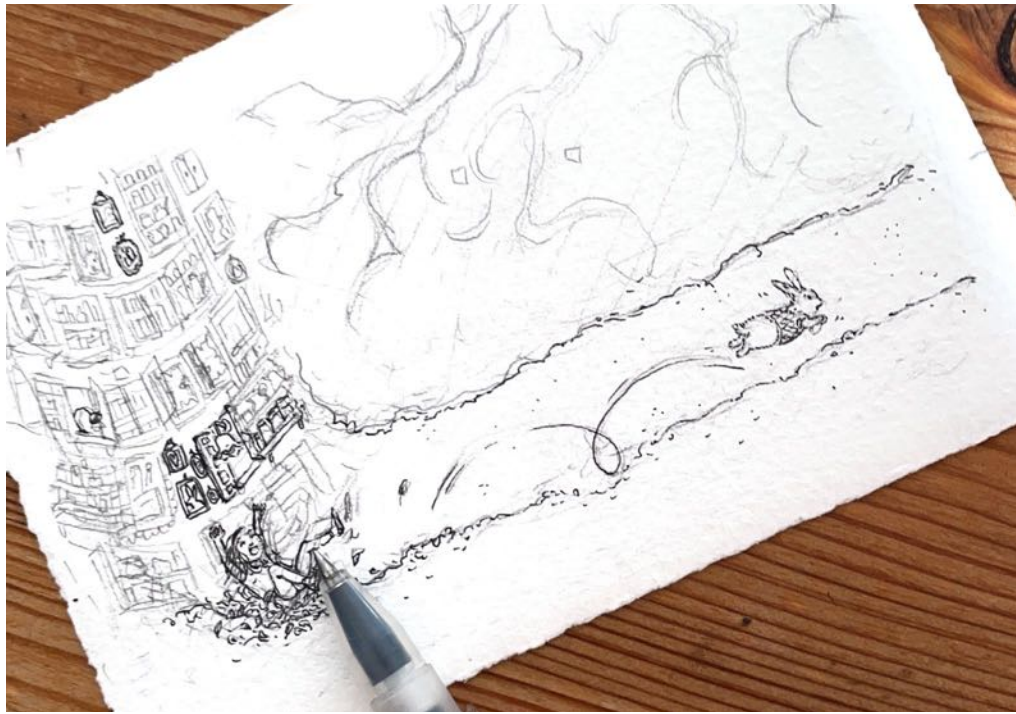
“Alice in Wonderland”  
(ELI Greenwich, spring 2022)





*My very messy desk while painting Alice. The illustrations were really tiny !*





“And what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?” —Chapter 1, Down the Rabbit-Hole





*I just loved building my version of Alice in Wonderland. The richness of Carrol's world made it incredibly easy to bring the characters to life, and I had a blast working on all of the small details.*

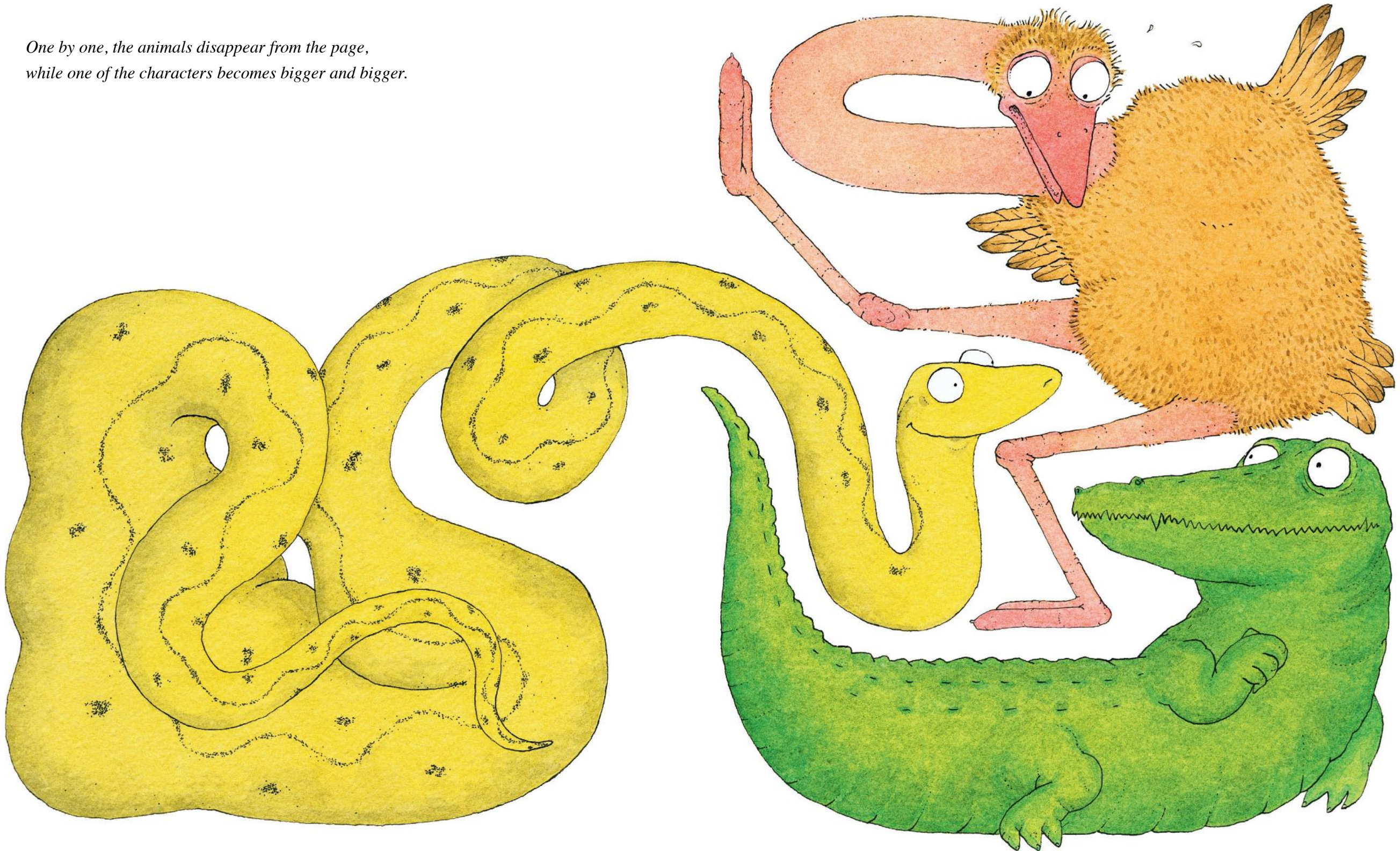




“Dans l’Oeuf”  
(Seuil Jeunesse, 2019)



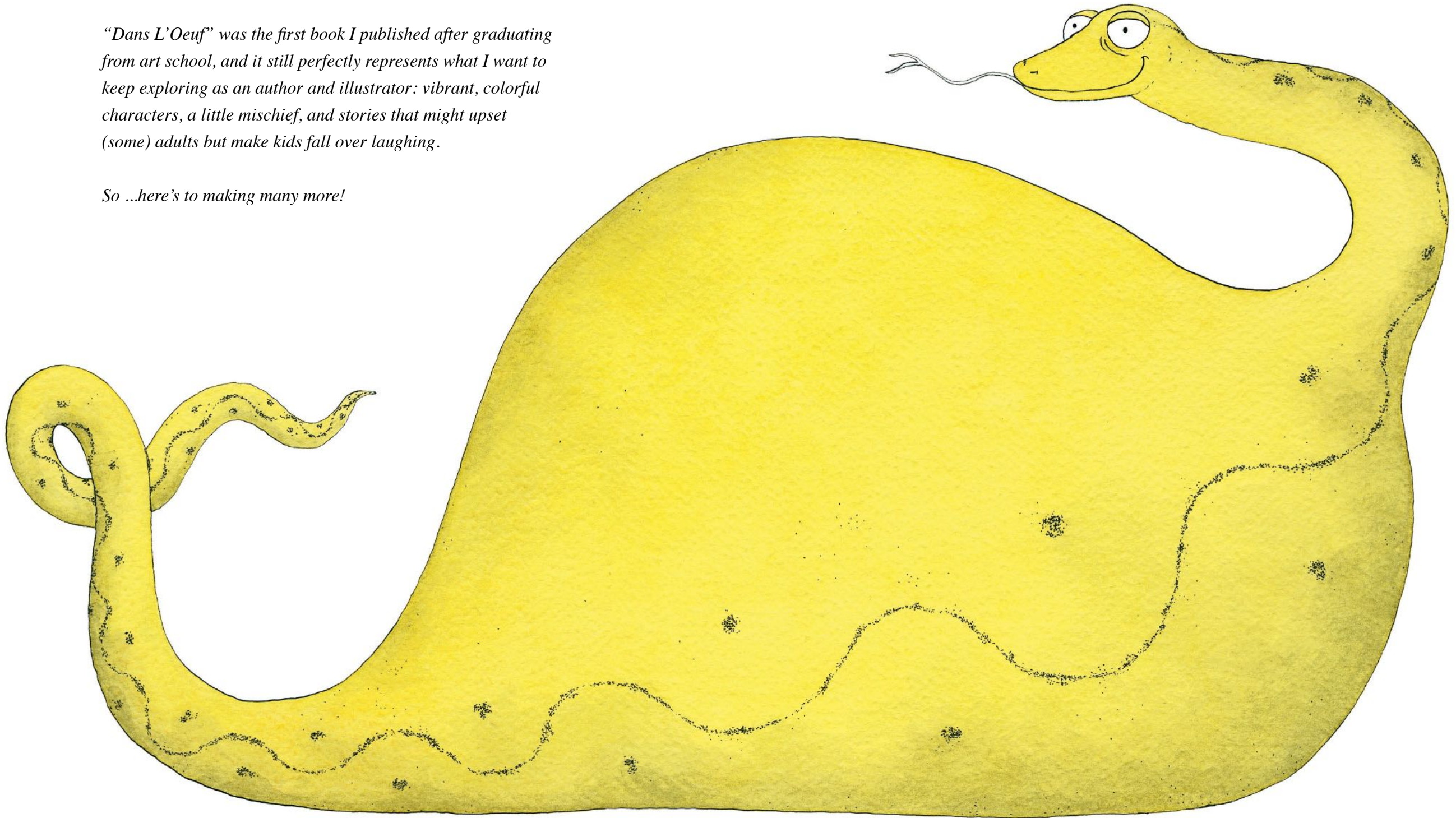
*One by one, the animals disappear from the page,  
while one of the characters becomes bigger and bigger.*





*“Dans L’Oeuf” was the first book I published after graduating from art school, and it still perfectly represents what I want to keep exploring as an author and illustrator: vibrant, colorful characters, a little mischief, and stories that might upset (some) adults but make kids fall over laughing.*

*So ...here’s to making many more!*





# bibliography

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Find out more on my Instagram page!

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Thank you for  
your time!

