

Born in Cartagena, Columbia, Maria Ibarra (FERU is her artistic name) has, since 1999, called Canada home. She has lived in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, and currently resides in Guelph, Ontario. Writer, painter, sculptor, and Illustrator, Maria explores many media and is currently passionate about an expressive form most of us remember with fondness: plasticine. It dominates her current work and inspires her creation of a fantasy world. She has worked in plasticine since she was very young, finding the material the perfect match for her storybook illustrations and themes.

The meaning of happiness, the small details in life that make the difference, childhood dreams, all those things we forget as we lose our innocence, and the unstoppable goodbye of childhood, are the predominant themes of her work. These themes come alive through thousands of colourful dots on a board, each worked by hand with patience and care for the right detail, like a fine work of jewelry.

For Hillside, Maria wanted to convey the sense that the summer festival is bursting with life and hope, and so she created two large trees, full with green leaves, set against a pulsating sky and rolling lake.

As an emerging artist, Maria hasn't wasted any opportunities to learn about new materials and techniques. She has studied art in Colombia, Canada, the U.S., and Spain—and each country has shaped her contribution to the arts as a naïve artist.

Her most profound influences are the post-impressionist Vincent Van Gogh and also Henri Matisse for their intense use of colour and light. Also she likes the pointillism of Seurat and the colours and imperfect, organic, and aquatic forms of Hundertwasser.

She has held more than 25 individual and collective exhibitions. And she has been a tireless art teacher, spreading the word about the life-altering powers of art.

You can follow Feru on Instagram at [feru200016](https://www.instagram.com/feru200016)