

Mily (Emília) Possoz was born in Lisbon, in 1888, to a Belgian couple living in Portugal, a cosmopolitan family who would visit Paris, and family in Liège and Antwerp, on a regular basis. At home, several languages were spoken. As in many privileged families of the time, Mily was taught piano as a child, and it was through her teacher, Alexandre Rey Colaço, that she met Alice, his daughter, with whom she maintained a strong friendship throughout her life and would later collaborate artistically. Studying for a period in Paris, she travelled extensively in Europe until 1909, when she returned to Portugal and immediately began participating in both collective and individual exhibitions (one of the few female artists of the time to exhibit individually).

Following her father's death, in 1912, it was necessary for Mily Possoz to support herself financially, and so, as with many of her contemporaries, her practice would include graphic arts. In 1914, she designed the cover of the book *O Jardim das Mestras*, by author Manoel de Sousa Pinto. Later, in 1922, she designed the cover of the book *Adventurous travels by Felicio and Felizarda to the North Pole - First Episode* by the author and well-known feminist activist Ana de Castro Osório, where she not only made the drawings, but also dealt with all the typography. We must highlight the problematic representation of the Arctic inhabitants on this cover, as well as the content of the text inside (on this subject, see the captions of these objects, where Rita Carvalho discusses these matters in more detail), problematic representations that would be repeated, in a different context, in the book, also from 1922, *The Disgraces of a Persian family*, by the author Jane Bensaude. For this book, Mily Possoz again created the main cover and the interior typography, but also the frame that holds the whole the composition; a motif that is repeated through the book and that defines the core design, a device that she would revisit in the book *As Bonecas*, also by Jane Bensaudel.

Throughout the 1920s, Mily Possoz exhibited collectively with her friend Alice Rey Colaço [see ERRATA-02], with whom she also collaborated on editorial projects. The book *Zilda* by Alfredo Cortez—whose cover was designed by Alice

Rey Colaço and where Mily Possoz contributed with illustrations to the interior, as well as working with Alice Rey Colaço and Jose Barradas on the poster and set designs for the theatre production—is a particularly beautiful example of their collaboration.

Mily Possoz returned to Paris in 1922, where she also made some illustrations for books such as *Caderno*, by Valéry Larbaud, in 1927, and *La Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, by Prosper Mérimée, in 1928, and would continue to create illustrations for books throughout the 40s, 50s and 60s.

Despite being a prominent modernist artist, reflections on Mily Possoz's person and work are generally reductive, concentrating on her supposed sweetness and docility, both in her manner and in her paintings. A journalist who visited her studio described her as a 'woman of golden hair and light blue eyes that show kindness to children'. The insistence on linking childhood or domestic subjects in the work of women like Mily Possoz with the ascribed 'femininity' of their creators—to the detriment of considering the work on its own merits—is a persistent problem for illustrators of this period (and continues) to this day. For Mily Possoz, it is also a falsehood. While some of her work would feature sweet or childish subjects, as noted by Emília Ferreira (whose research on Mily and other female artists of the beginning of the century Errata is deeply and gratefully indebted to), '(...) in Paris, Mily didn't just paint girls (although she sometimes did). For most of her stay, she records mostly young women (her generation) who take the city by storm. (...) this is a world in which cats are frequent, but men are rare, reduced to decorative, occasional elements; secondary characters in an urban, modern, bold and feminine world'. The women and girls Mily Possoz portrays are independent; where domestic spaces are the setting, they are not housewives, they occupy workspaces, studios, and when on the street they are confident, they dance in the parks, go shopping. Her subjects are far from being nothing but sweetness and docility, and so too was she.

*Isabel Duarte, 2021*