

Interview with Naomi Franquiz

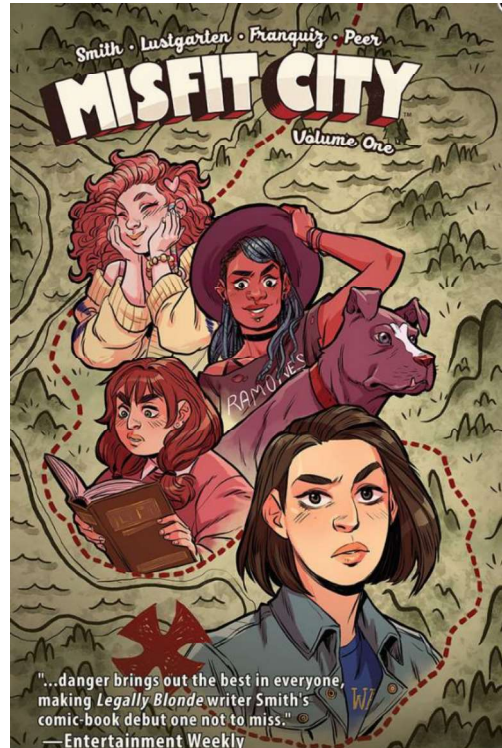
Ridley Thomas

Naomi Franquiz is a freelance illustrator and comic book artist working out of Florida. More of Naomi's work can be found at her website: <https://naomifranquiz.wixsite.com/illustrations>

1. How did you first start drawing comics? Who or what inspires you and your art?

I used to make comics out of printer paper and sketchbooks as a kid, and when I got older and got out of college with my Bachelor in Fine Arts I decided I wanted to tell those kind of stories again. So I made some small, short comics to share online and started using platforms like Tumblr and Twitter to network and meet other artists. I submitted my work to art anthologies and comic anthologies (*Power & Magic: A Queer Witch Anthology* was the first). An editor from BOOM! Box saw my work on Twitter and had me do test pages for a couple of different series. I didn't get those jobs, but they were familiar with my work and I was starting to get noticed by different editors online. When I did character designs for *Misfit City*, they hired me on to draw the short series.

I get inspired by other artists and comics a lot, most of all creators that I've befriended and worked with. Getting to know your peers in the industry is a great way to build a support network not just for yourself, but others. I also draw a lot of inspiration from animation and cinema storyboarding, because I love comics that carry a scene strongly. "Show, don't tell," is my mantra when setting a scene. I'd rather have my story carry strongly through visuals and not dialogue.



Misfit City (Volume 1), by Kiwi Smith (Author), Kurt Lustgarten (Author), Naomi Franquiz (Cover Art, Artist), & Brittany Peer (Colorist).

2017. BOOM! - BOOM! Box.

112 pages. Softcover or digital download.
ISBN: 9781684150274

2. What are you currently working on?

I just finished work with Marvel's *Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*, written by Ryan North, and I'm currently writing and illustrating a short story for another anthology (*ELEMENTS: Earth*, the second anthology to the Eisner award-winning *ELEMENTS: Fire*). It's a fantasy anthology series created entirely by creators of color. I've also got some work ahead of me for a book, but I can't say anything just yet about that. Surprises!



The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl #41: Enter Ms. Quizzler, by Ryan North (Author), Erica Henderson (Cover Art), & Naomi Franquiz (Artist). 2017. Marvel. 24 pages. Softcover or digital download. Rated T. ISBN: 5960608340

3. What do you find most exciting about working in comics? How does it compare to other mediums?

The part of creating comics that always makes me want to keep working with them is how accessible they are. I come from a background of fine arts and illustration where the emphasis was to create work to display in galleries, to make conceptual work that comes with a whole lot of thought and baggage that people need to unpack. That's fine and wonderful, but it's not always accessible and digestible by the everyday person. Comics are a narrative that everyone is familiar with in some way, even if they say they're not "that big into comics." It's as old as cave art: sequential images that tell a story.

There's such a broad range of stories you can tell in comics, and there's so much you can do with comics as a medium that you can't really do in film or animation or sculpture and painting. In comics, everything is a tool to tell the story: the illustrated characters, the dialogue and letters, the sound effects, the panels and gutters. All of it can be used to strike a mood and leave a reader with an image and a feeling they can't forget.

4. What would you like to see more of in comics, in terms of queer representation?

I would love to see more queer stories that aren't about queer struggles. I'm tired of sad lesbian love stories where everything is *Blue is the Warmest Color*, or where every gay boy in a story has to first go through the dangerous coming out gauntlet before the story ends with him maybe finding a boyfriend. Not to say these stories don't have their importance, especially in queer communities of color (*Moonlight* was groundbreaking for that exact reason), but I want comics and media to show the world that queer people aren't a sad monolith. We are capable of being happy, having a fantasy adventure, or getting into nonsense shenanigans because Jeffrey's bachelor party went out of control and nobody tell his husband-to-be that any of this happened! My favorite queer story quite recently has been a short comic called *Full Court Rush* by Hannah Blumenreich, because it's literally just a really cute story of two girls with a crush. It was a warm, healing balm to my tired gay heart.

5. Do you have any LGBTQ+ comics recommendations or favourites?

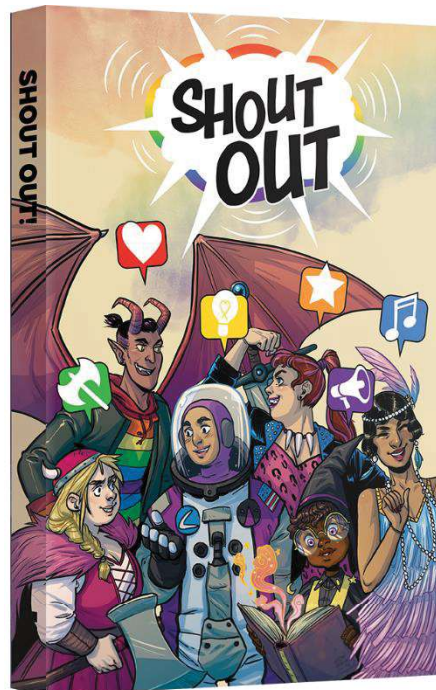
Please go check out Power & Magic Press, an independent publisher based out of Portland, Oregon. They have *three* anthologies out now by LGBTQ+ creators with amazing queer stories for everyone to enjoy. The *Queer Witch Anthology*, *Immortal Souls*, and *Heartwood: Non-binary Tales of Sylvan Fantasy*. Outside of that, *Bloom* is a graphic novel by Kevin Panetta and Savannah Ganucheau. It's a bakery love story between two boys that will make you want to bake so you have something to eat your feelings with.

6. Do you have any words of wisdom for teens interested in becoming comic artists?

Make comics!! Do a quick journal web comic! Draw comics in your sketchbook! Post four-panel shenanigans on Tumblr or Twitter! Make that story that you keep telling yourself you're not good enough to make yet! *Make comics!!* I guarantee you, it's the fastest way to improve, and also the best way to find an audience and attract potential employers.

Also, make a portfolio website! Pick a clean, easy Tumblr layout to use if you must, and make that link easy to access. Editors don't like to go hunting for your work because they don't have that much time. Make it easy for them to see what kind of work you make, and what kind of work you want to make.

Tell your stories!



Shout Out (A Queer Comic Anthology for Teens). Cover art by Naomi Franquiz. 2019. TO Comix Press. 216 pages. Softcover or digital download. Rated YA. ISBN: 9780994937476 http://tocomix.com/?book=shout_out