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**Pino se viste solo.**  
(*Pino Gets Dressed by Himself*)

illus. by Teresa Novoa. Spain: Edelvives, dist. by Urano. 2007. unpag. ISBN 978-84-263-6160-8. \$9.95.

PreS-K—On a cold, wet morning, Pi-

no's mom wants to bundle her little penguin up, but he insists, "I can get dressed by myself!" He begins decisively but ends up with a sleeve hanging off, boots on his wings, and gloves on his feet. When finished, he can't move...until mama penguin saves the day. Children will relate

to Pino's misadventures and find the colorful watercolor illustrations appealing enough to carry the story through some flat moments. Regional terms like *cazadora* (jacket) and *chubasquero* (raincoat) will be foreign to Hispanics in the U.S. Includes a fine audio CD with narration. Recom-

## Never-ending Imagination

Consider, for just one storytime moment, what you think a children's book can do. That might just be enough to convince you of OQO Editora's singular concept: picture books as art books, stories as "never-ending tales," books as beautiful objects, all with kids directly informing a rich creative process. The

two-year-old independent kids press is based in Pontevedra, a small Galician city nestled in a corner of Spain just above Portugal. The name OQO comes from the Galician *oco*, meaning hollow, as in a space to be filled with imagination. Cofounders Eva Mejuto (international promotions), Editor Marisa Núñez, and Designer Belén García fashion themselves a collective of like-minded kids-book fans. "We don't like to emphasize names," says Mejuto. "The real protagonists are the books."

### MAXIMUM CREATIVITY

OQO's art is always distinctive, and often a dash daring. It taps established illustrators and first-timers better known in the art world, working in styles ranging from the surreal, painterly compositions of *¡Sígueme!* (p. 33), to the austere lines and patterns of Elena Odriozola's *La princesa que bostezaba a todas horas* ("The Princess Who Yawned All Day Long," 2005; *Críticas*, 12/06) which took home a Spanish Cultural Ministry award for illustrations (also by Odriozola: *Tres hermanas ladronas*, p. 33).

"We try to allow our illustrators a maximum of creativity, with no limitations as to technique," says Mejuto. Some even use sculpture, as does *La princesa de Trujillo* ("The Princess of Trujillo," 2006; *Críticas*, 2/07), where Javier Solchaga animates the traditional

cumulative tale of the thieving magpie with just the kind of bric-a-brac the bird would coo over.

Each book is printed on thick, matte, high-gamma paper, to capture the broadest possible spectrum, and bound in boards. "We're betting on offering the youngest readers quality materials," says

Mejuto, "so that they can be future readers, future thinkers capable of enjoying distinct sensibilities." Sometimes people tell OQO its books seem too difficult. "But that's a

prejudice on the part of adults," explains Mejuto. "Often we're surprised by what a four-year-old sees in a book...winks' that an illustrator makes, which to an adult eye are very difficult to pick up."

Such details reward multiple readings, as in *Chocolata* (2006, *Críticas*, 2/07), where illustrator Helga Bansch adds a story apart from the text, of a little bird which first parallels, then diverges from the main story of the hippo. And for all their richness, the illustrations are often adorable, particularly in early readers like *Mariluz Avestruz* (p. 33).

### "TELL IT AGAIN!"

Mejuto is herself the author of five children's books, and Núñez has penned more than 15, including *Chocolata*. Beyond that, Núñez is a preschool teacher of over 20 years, experience that allows her, she says, "to remain alive to...what delights them, and recover a vision of the world through a child's eyes."

All of OQO's books go through rigorous field tests, and through every step of the process they're open to young critics'

modifications. "You can't fool children," says Núñez. "If they don't like something they reject it right away, and if they like it they ask to hear it again."

### NEVER-ENDING TALES

No matter how much the art does, the story's the thing, whether in outlandishly original yarns like *¡Sígueme!*, about an elephant with purple moles who falls for an ant with a wasp waist, or in adaptations of traditional tales, which the publisher looks to for about half its books.

The OQOistas see their work as the diffusion of "never-ending tales," tapping into universal sentiments, and conserving the oral tradition.

They've adapted stories from as far as Burkina Faso, Mongolia, Russia, and Brazil. *El sultán y los ratones* ("The Sultan and the Mice," 2005) was discovered by author Joan de Boer when, traveling in Iran, he saw an old storyteller in a public square captivating an audience of all ages.

Right now about half the company's sales are in Spain, and half outside, the better part of both to libraries. Initially having published simultaneously in Spanish, Galician, and Catalan, OQO has since expanded into Portuguese and French. English is next—for a start, look for *Chocolata* (*Chocolata*) and *The Teeth Gnashing Witch* (*Bruja Rechimadientes*, 2005) at BookExpo America.

To get the word out OQO has done some inventive marketing, with creativity workshops, readings, and audiovisual shows for kids, as well as workshops for parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers on how to read images as text—to open minds to the possibilities of picture books, and to get them into people's hands. "People who like one of our books...tend to like them all," Mejuto says.

OQO plans to stick with 20 new releases per year, in order to maintain quality and to make each book unique, while expanding through translation. Says Mejuto: "The stories keep crossing borders as in their day folktales once did, going from one country to the next."

For more on OQO, visit [www.oqo.es](http://www.oqo.es).  
—Jonathan Mindes, *Críticas*

