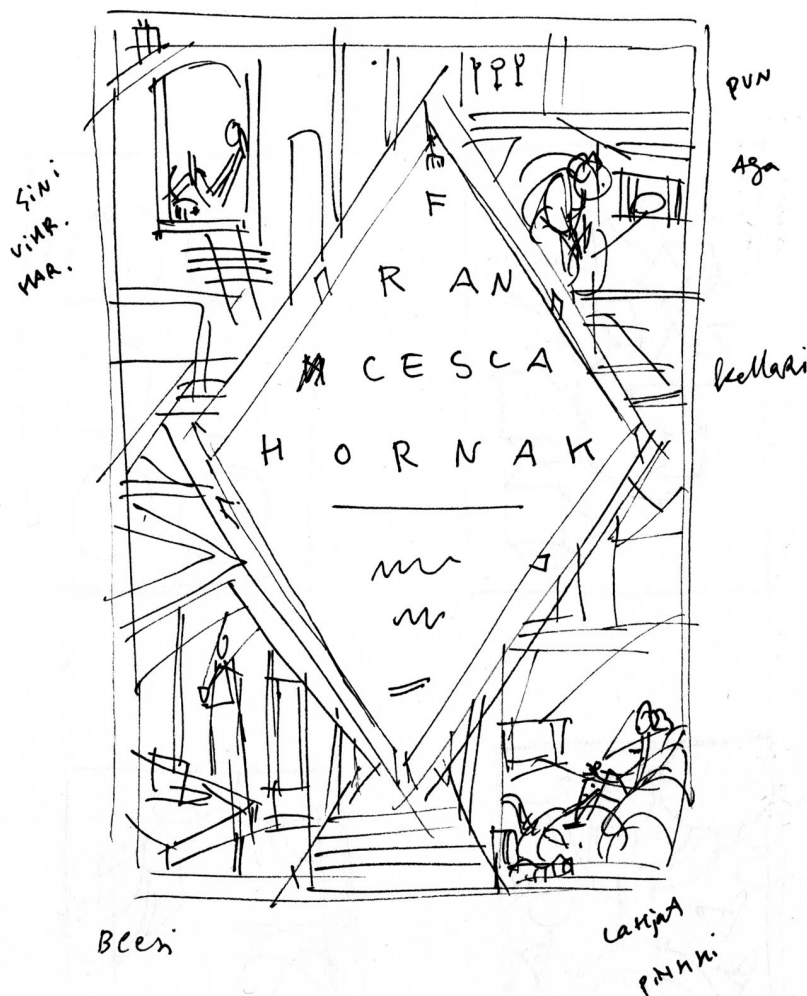




Ilja Karsikas



What was the commission?

I was asked to design and illustrate the cover for the Finnish translation of Francesca Hornak's book "Seven Days With Us" for the publishing house, Tammi.

The book deals with complicated relationships, when one family has to spend a whole Christmas holiday in quarantine together, in an old English country house.

What was the biggest challenge of this assignment?

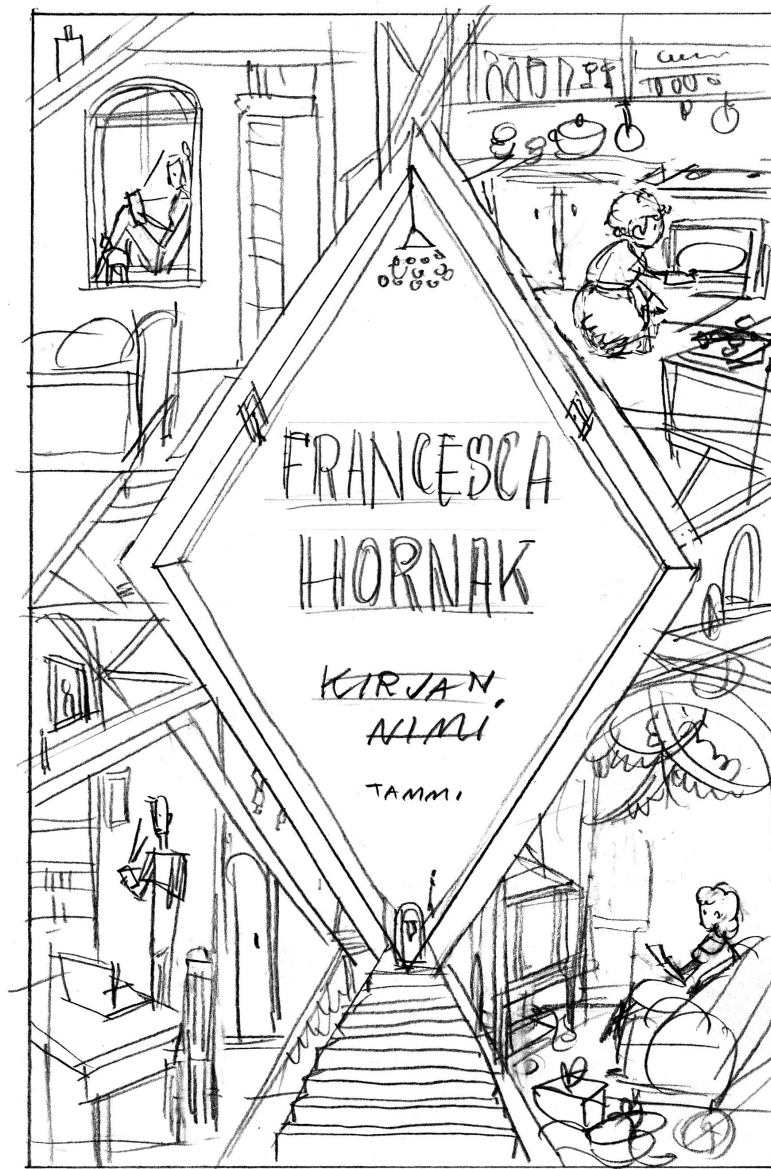
This English country house plays quite a big role in the book, but I didn't know anything about them or their usual interior. So I had to do quite a lot of research to figure out how it should look on the cover.

What is the first thing you do when you receive a commission?

In this case I had to read the book – the original English version of it, because there wasn't Finnish version available yet.

Describe your sketch process.

While reading the book I made a lot of rough idea sketches. After reading the book, I made three different, more precise sketches based on my idea sketches. I sent the sketches to Tammi, to the AD Markko Taina, and luckily Markko and the editors liked the same idea that I felt was the best, too.



IWA 3.9.2017

Did the finished work turn out the way you thought it would?

The idea in the first rough sketch was so strong and clear and captured the atmosphere of the book so well, that in the end, everything turned out quite the same for the final work.

Did you have to go outside of your “comfort zone” in this commission?

I felt a bit of uncertain if I'd manage to capture the right feeling in the cover, but I think I did.

What was the feedback you were given?

Everyone at Tammi seemed to like my idea and thought that my style worked well in the cover. After I had sent the first version of the illustration, Markko thought that the colours could be a little bit more bright. I had had the same idea in mind, and with the bright colours the cover worked much better. I also made many different kinds of typographic versions. First I tried a few with a quite classical typography, but also made one with a bit more playful and handcrafted typography. And then, finally, I ended up with the final cover!



What did you learn from the process of this commission?

I kind of started to trust myself even more – I now know that I can make a good cover for this kind of book, too.

What inspired you to make the commission the way you did?

The book itself was really inspiring. The story and the relationships between characters were all quite fascinating. The way the story was written (from the different points of view of each character) made me think of the composition – the surface that would be divided into different parts, like the different rooms in the building, and with the hall (diamond shape) in the centre, where they all will finally meet.

Was it a good brief?

Of course. I got some input from the publishing house at the start of the project but that didn't affect things as much as the book itself did.

What skill helped you the most with this commission?

I think I have the ability to catch the right feeling. I'm quite an emotional guy and I can deal with quite sensitive subjects. I also take all the tasks seriously – if I am asked to create the cover for a book or a record or to make an editorial illustration.