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Disney

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# SKETCHBOOK

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Samantha Vilfort**

*Story Artist, "Mirabel"*

**SAMANTHA VILFORT** most recently served as a storyboard artist on Walt Disney Animation Studios' acclaimed 2021 animated feature, "Encanto," where she was part of the team that shaped the story and defined the character of Mirabel and the other members of the Madrigal family. Born and raised in the Bay Area city of Danville, Calif. (along with her twin brother), Samantha started drawing as a kid, consuming reams of printer paper which her parents steadily supplied, and capturing everything in view (from images on VHS tapes and movies on TV; "Oceans 11" was a favorite subject). Another big influence on her early ambitions was a "Mulan" how-to-draw book, which provided detailed model sheets and lots of inspiration.

At age 16, while attending art classes at the Academy of Art in San Francisco, she first realized that a career in animation was a possibility, and discovered an interest in story from a variety of blogs by working story artists at Pixar and Disney Animation. Their digital sketchbooks inspired her to get out and draw, and she fell in love with the process of shaping stories and characters. She printed out hundreds of animation drawings from these sources, and made a huge collage on her dorm wall. Samantha went on to a four-year program at University of Southern California (USC), from which she received a BA in Animation and Digital Arts in 2017. Her experience during this time included a 2016 summer internship working at Laika on story for the stop-motion animated film, "Missing Link," and several freelance projects.

While still working on her thesis during her senior year at USC, Samantha was selected for an apprenticeship in the story department at Walt Disney Animation Studios, where she was mentored by several top story artists and directors. This led to a full time position with the Studio starting in 2017. Among her credits at Disney Animation are "Ralph Breaks the Internet" (story artist) and "Frozen 2" (story apprentice).