



Karen Domitzu Medrano Barajas

Graphics Design/Marketing Manager, The Lake Chapala Society

Domitzu always liked to draw. As a precocious three-year-old, she often expressed her creativity in crayon on the walls of her grandfather's house in Chapala. Like a tiny graffiti artist, she filled the lower part of the walls with her inspired scribbling, which crept higher up the walls as she grew.

Domitzu's father and mother liked to watch her, beaming with happiness. They already knew she had talent. Her dad, an electrical engineer by profession, had wanted to study art and design as a young man. He was thrilled that his daughter shared his passion and interests, as did her older brother and younger twin sisters.

"My family is very open minded," said Domitzu. "They supported all of us, me and my brother and sisters, in our art."

A voracious reader by age 12, Domitzu's dad took her to the International Book Fair in Guadalajara which changed her young life. *"There was a special room for kids books decorated with giant illustrations of monsters and octopuses. I fell in love with children's book illustrating right then!"* she said.

Inspired by this new world of commercial design all around her - from the illustrated books she enjoyed to the T-shirt designs in her family's clothing store - Domitzu chose the college track at the Regional Preparatory High School in Chapala, run by University of Guadalajara, where she studied the fundamentals of design for three years.

After high school, Domitzu enrolled in a post-secondary program for Graphic Design at the University of Guadalajara. It was going to be challenging for her family with four kids to cover the costs of books and materials, transportation, rent and food for five years. That's when the Lake Chapala Society's Student Aid Program stepped in to help.

Since 1994, the Lake Chapala Society Student Aid Program has made it possible for hundreds of local Mexican students to pursue their dreams and improve their lives through post-secondary education in diverse fields like business, medicine and architecture. The program helps to cover part of the costs of tuition, books, lab fees, supplies, transportation and any other necessary costs.

The Student Aid Program assisted Domitzu each semester of the five-year program. Many of her teachers were top professional graphic artists and designers in Guadalajara who challenged her with high expectations. Domitzu was determined to excel, even teaching herself to use Adobe Creative Suite, the professional standard software for graphic designers.

Her favorite class was Design 5, Editorial Design for book publishing and magazines. Domitzu loved her teacher who worked in book publishing and taught her crucial project management skills, a discipline Domitzu always found difficult.

"I finished my final thesis project one week before it was even due, that amazed my teacher!" she said.

Domitzu chose for her final thesis a subject near and dear to her heart. She created a book of illustrated poetry for children with a collection of poems from great writers, *"...really good poems, from as long as 100 years ago. My goal was for the illustrations to bring children closer to this very profound poetry,"* she said.



Her book impressed prospective clients in Guadalajara where Domitzu began to freelance after graduating in July 2017. One day, Diana Ayala, who runs the Student Aid Program for Lake Chapala Society, called to ask if she was interested in doing some pro bono work for them. Domitzu eagerly said yes, happy to give back to the program. The LCS staff liked her work and asked if she was interested in the full-time Graphic Designer position.

“When I interviewed with the staff at LCS, I felt very comfortable. When they called with the offer, I was so happy...I love the ambiance, the beautiful gardens, meeting and working with all of the different volunteer teams. This is a fun place to work,” she said.

Since January, Domitzu has been designing all of the graphics for the programs, events and initiatives from signs, brochures and ads to the website and social media. She creates visual imagery as well, serving as the photographer to bring the great work of LCS to life, in such programs and events as the Children’s Art Program, annual ESL classes and graduations and the diverse array of events. The 2019 Membership Directory awaits her.

Recently, Domitzu created the new logo and branding for the 2018 Annual Giving Campaign, running September through December. Community members can look forward to Domitzu’s fresh new design for this important annual LCS fundraiser on the website, in print and on Facebook.

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