

Genomic Press and the moon are Flicts: A tale of belonging and innovation

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Finding Our Place: The *Flicts* Story and the Heart of Genomic Press

When Genomic Press started, I never imagined our defining moment would come from a children's book. Yet here we are, finding our soul in the story of a lonely color that could not fit in.

I remember the first time I encountered *Flicts*. I was an adult and a good friend gave me the book with a knowing smile. "Trust me," she said, "this will make sense." She was right, though not in any way I could have anticipated.

Ziraldo: The Godfather of *Flicts*

Ziraldo Alves Pinto (24 October 1932–6 April 2024), known by his first name, Ziraldo, passed away earlier this year at age 91. A giant of Brazilian literature and visual arts, Ziraldo was born in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, my own home state, and got his start as a cartoonist, earning wide notice for his satirical drawings before moving on to write and illustrate children's books. Ziraldo's books, such as the beloved *O Menino Maluquinho* (The Nutty Boy), often combined humor with social commentary.

But *Flicts* was a departure into deeper, more allegorical territory. Penned in the same year that humans landed on the moon for the first time (Apollo 11 in July), *Flicts* evoked a world in which rigidity collided with the fluidity of possibility, in which change was not a welcome visitor but an unavoidable guest. It has since become a cornerstone of Brazilian literature, a story that continues to inspire readers of all ages.

Flicts: A Color That did not Belong

Flicts is the story of a dull, nondescript color that does not fit in. The color *Flicts* shows none of the fiery bravado of Red, the chirpy cheer of Yellow, or the cool depth of Blue. It is an indeterminable color, an undazzling and unremarkable hue, a thing of quiet presence that no one can see, or wants to.

The story tracks *Flicts*'s odyssey through a world where it belongs nowhere. The rainbow, the universal sign of harmony and inclusion, explicitly excludes *Flicts* from its arc of seven perfect bands. Paintboxes, full of infinite colors for painting lively fields and radiant skies, do not contain *Flicts*. Not even nature, with its endless palette, can account for this peculiar hue.

What strikes me most about the story is how painfully specific the rejections are. The rainbow's colors do not just ignore *Flicts* – they actively exclude it. Red smirks that "seven is such a beautiful number," making it clear that there is no room for an eighth color. Blue stands aloof, muttering about having "a name to protect." Even gentle Green talks about being part of a "big family" in a way that makes it clear *Flicts* is not invited.

And yet, *Flicts* persists, but the rejections keep mounting: after checking with all the countries in our vast world, each one made it exceptionally clear to *Flicts* that there would never be anything *Flicts* in their flags—neither in the traditional flags of old countries nor in the flags of emerging countries. Similarly, no maker of colored pencils, crayons, or paint wanted to add *Flicts* to their repertoires.

At some point, *Flicts* starts to realize that nothing on Earth wants to be *Flicts*, and as it does not find a place in this world, *Flicts* departs,

rising higher and higher. *Flicts*'s ascent takes it above the limits of Earth, above the boxes of paint, flags, and rainbows, until it arrives at its natural home—not on Earth but on the moon, where it imparts its unwanted color to that entire cosmic body. Here, *Flicts* changes its function from that of a symbol of exclusion to a symbol of belonging, spreading light on the celestial sea with its quiet glow.

The Color That was not There

Flicts occupies a special place in color theory, beyond the story itself. It is formally categorized as a "fictional color"—a mutant shade that does not actually exist in human perception. A fictional color is defined as a color described in a work of fiction that does not exist in real life and would be impossible to create or obtain. *Flicts* is listed in nearly all inventories of fictional colors worldwide. Many fictional colors are created for alien planets or conceived in speculative biology. Nevertheless, *Flicts* is different: its uniqueness is due not to its impossibility but to its displacement—a color that exists yet will find no place in the ordinary spectrum.

However, Brazilian artist Zukoski was brave enough to transform *Flicts*'s metaphysical identity into pixels, and she gave *Flicts* precise and unprecedented numerical values: Hex D49126 or RGB 212,145,38. Zukoski's muted gold-orange-red shade, quiet but distinctive, captures the ambiguity and singularity that characterize *Flicts*'s identity. For Genomic Press, it was the ideal symbol of our commitment to the unconventional and making space for that which does not exist yet.

Neil Armstrong's Cosmic Connection

Flicts had an incredible twist to its story—the encounter of Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk the moon, with the book in Brazil. Entranced by its message, Armstrong famously proclaimed, "The Moon is *Flicts*." His handwritten note, reproduced in our [Figure 1](#), is now always printed as the last page of the book, and it became part of *Flicts*'s eternal legacy—a poetic metaphor that made its way into people's homes and hearts as something much more universal.

Armstrong's words validated what Ziraldo had imagined—the rise of *Flicts* to the moon was part of humanity's broader quest to explore and find meaning beyond the known world.

I get goosebumps every time I think about that moment. Armstrong's handwritten note, which now appears in every edition of the book, did more than validate a fictional color. It validated the idea that sometimes not fitting in is not a flaw—it is a sign you are meant for something bigger.

More Than Just a Color

What fascinates me most about *Flicts* is that it is not just a story. Among color theorists, *Flicts* poses a beautiful puzzle—it is what they call a "fictional color," but not in the usual way. Most fictional colors are pure fantasy, like trying to imagine a new primary color. However, *Flicts* is different. It exists in that strange space between what we can name and what we can see.

When Brazilian artist Zukoski finally gave *Flicts* a digital identity, Hex D49126 or RGB 212,145,38, she was not just picking a color code. She



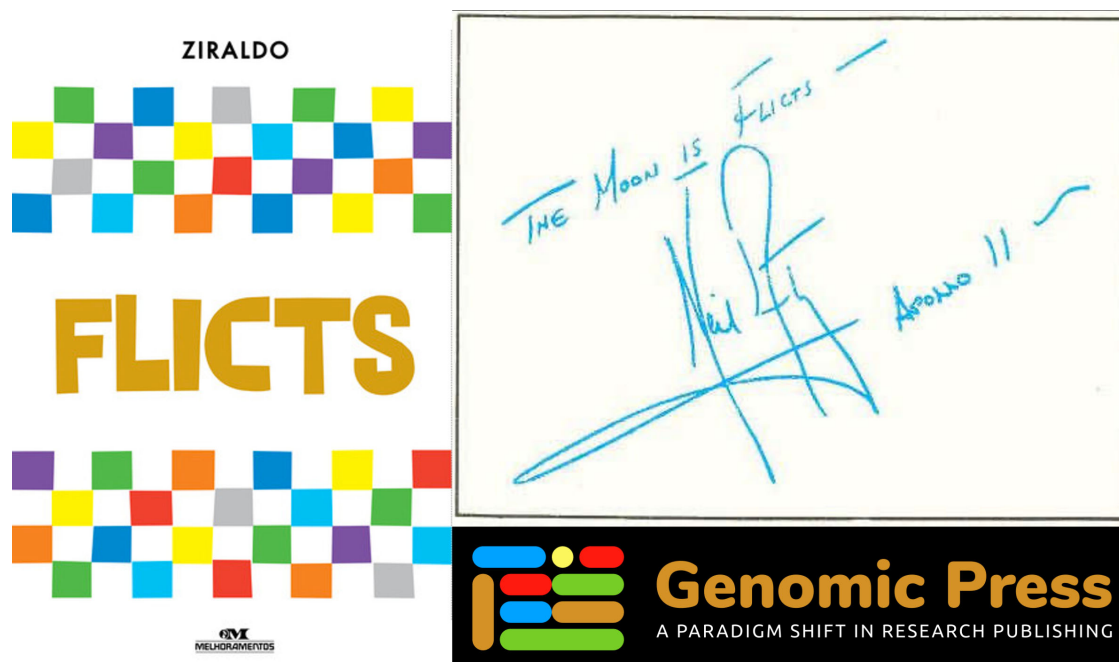


Figure 1. The journey of *Flicts*: A visual representation of Flicts's story and legacy. (Left) The original cover of Ziraldo's *Flicts* (1969), depicting its unplaceable identity with a metallic golden shade that, paradoxically, could not be the true Flicts – a color deemed impossible to reproduce when the book was published. (Top Right) Neil Armstrong's handwritten note, affirming "The Moon is Flicts." (Bottom Right) The Genomic Press logo, utilizing Zukoski's compelling digital interpretation of Flicts (Hex #D49126), which has become one of the most resonant modern visualizations of this historically elusive color.

captured something between categories and made you question how you classify things.

The Heart of Genomic Press

This is why Flicts became more than just our brand color at Genomic Press (see Figure 1). It became our philosophy. In our journals—*Brain Medicine*, *Genomic Psychiatry*, and *Psychedelics*—we are looking for research that, like Flicts, might not neatly fit into traditional categories.

We have seen it happen over and over: the most groundbreaking papers are often the ones that make reviewers at traditional journals uncomfortable. Not because they are flawed but because they exist between established fields, asking questions that do not fit neatly into our current boxes.

Think about it: what color is consciousness? What color spectrum contains the intersection of genetics and mental health? Where in the traditional rainbow do you file research that bridges neuroscience and psychedelic therapy?

Beyond Traditional Boundaries

Every time I look at that quirky Flicts shade in our logo, I think about the researchers who come to us with work that has been rejected elsewhere. Like Flicts being told there is no room in the rainbow, they have often been told their work is "too cross-disciplinary" or "does not fit our scope."

But just as Flicts found its true home in an unexpected place, these researchers often discover that their work is not too strange or too different – it is just reaching for something beyond our current horizons. Sometimes, like Flicts, you must leave Earth entirely to find where you belong.

Conclusion: A Philosophy of Belonging

The story of Flicts reminds us that innovation often comes from the margins, from the spaces between established categories. When I share this story with others in scientific publishing, they sometimes smile at the idea of taking such inspiration from a children's book. But then I show them Armstrong's note, and something shifts in their expression.

Because that is the thing about truth – it does not matter where it comes from. A Brazilian artist writing for children identified something about the moon that resonated with the first human to walk on its surface. That is not just a coincidence; it is a reminder that insight can come from anywhere, and breakthroughs often happen when we look beyond our usual categories.

Fundamentally, *Flicts* teaches us that displacement is not a failure—it is often the precursor to ascension. Just as Flicts found its home on the moon, the ideas that seem out of place in conventional frameworks often hold the key to innovation and progress. At Genomic Press, we are inspired by this lesson. Our mission is to create a space for the innovative, the groundbreaking, and the transformative.

When you see the distinctive shade of Flicts across our journals and platforms, know that it represents more than a branding choice. It is a declaration of purpose: to rise above limitations, to embrace the overlooked, and to illuminate the extraordinary potential that exists beyond the boundaries of the ordinary. Like Flicts, we believe that true belonging is not about fitting in—it is about finding or creating the place where you truly shine.

As we continue building Genomic Press, we carry this lesson from *Flicts*: sometimes, the ideas that do not fit anywhere else are precisely the ones that help us reach the stars.

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