

30. BIENNIAL OF ILLUSTRATIONS BRATISLAVA

Miscellany International Symposium BIB 2025

Topic: How has the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava influenced the form of a picture book for children and youth in the world during the 60 years of its existence? And what is the meaning and sense of the BIB today?

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30th Biennial of illustrations Bratislava - Miscellany
International Symposium BIB 2025

Topic: How has the Bratislava Biennale of Illustrations influenced the form of picture books for children and young people worldwide over its 60 years of existence? What is the significance and purpose of the Biennale today?

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PhDr. Zuzana Jarošová
General Commissioner of BIB
Chairwoman of the International BIB-Committee

The mission of BIB in the world of children's picture books 1967-2025

The 30th edition of the Bratislava Biennial of Illustrations is also a significant anniversary of this prestigious cultural event of international importance. The most important figures from the world of picture books for children and young people from all continents came to Bratislava to pay tribute to this unique phenomenon and celebrate six decades of BIB's existence. The choice of theme for the 30th BIB International Symposium was clear. How has the Biennial influenced the form of picture books around the world since its inception in 1967? What is its significance and meaning today and in the future?

The Biennial has created a unique international platform for finding and comparing the best original non-commercial illustrations for children's and young adult books. In addition to the international competition, the second important and integral part of BIB since its inception has been the International Symposium. Experts from around the world, renowned illustrators, theorists, publishers, curators, and publicists step by step, often in lively discussions, seek answers to the question of what constitutes good illustration. Together, for 60 years, they have been crystallizing and defining

the criteria for assessing high-quality artistic book illustration. In this way, BIB fundamentally stimulated the growth of artistic quality in children's picture books around the world. It should be noted that the Bratislava Biennial truly revolutionized this field. It emancipated children's book illustration as an important form of visual art, which had not been customary in the world until then. Even in the 1970s, the assessment of illustrations in books was summed up in one sentence: it is a good illustration, it suits the text...

As the prominent Italian critic Livio Sossi said, BIB taught the world a great lesson about new visuality, about the new form of children's picture books. Without the Bratislava Biennial of Illustrations, the history of picture books would look quite different. Since its inception, BIB has collaborated with the most important international organizations, UNESCO and IBBY. Today, its main partner is the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). Without these international organizations and other foreign partners who select illustrations for BIB, the biennial would not be a representative showcase of the best from around the world.

However, the BIB anniversary is not only an opportunity to celebrate, but also to recapitulate and evaluate. BIB continues to grow with new vitality and dynamism. The number of countries participating in the competition is expanding, as is the quality of national collections. Today, IBBY has national sections in 86 countries. Therefore, a new challenge is to attract new countries to participate. And to expand the participation of illustrators from countries in the Global South.

The most prominent celebrities, nearly 100 personalities from the world of children's books, attended the celebrations of the significant 30th anniversary of BIB 2025. Three IBBY presidents—current president Basarat Kazim, former presidents Wally de Doncker, Mingzhou Zhang, BookBird president Valerie Coghlan, IBBY executive director Carolina Ballester, member of the IBBY Executive Committee Shereen Kreidih, Nami Island president Fred Minn, many presidents of IBBY national sections, internationally renowned illustrators, publishers, theorists, long-time collaborators and friends of BIB Murti Bunanta, Liz Page, Steffent Larsen, Anastasia Arkhipova, Ellis Vance, Graça Lima and many, many others. We took advantage of this unique opportunity and their precious presence to also perform at the BIB 2025 International Symposium. The contributions, presentations, and memories of these 22 personalities from around the world can be found in this exceptional collection from the International Symposium of the 30th Bratislava Biennial of Illustrations. Each of them is a precious piece in the mosaic of BIB's history.



Basarat Kazim
President of IBBY

BIB is a bridge that connects everyone

Soon after World War II, Jella Lepman reached out to the forlorn children in Germany and brought them smiles through an exhibition of international children's books.

The spectacular success of this innovative project saw the birth of IBBY in 1953, with Astrid Lindgren, Erich Kästner, Liza Tetzner, Jo Tenfjord, Fritz Brunner, Bettina Hürlimann, and Richard Bamberger, joining hands with the visionary Jella Lepman. The mission was to bring books and children together to create bridges of understanding and peace.

In 1967 Dušan Roll was joined by Miroslav Cipár, artist Albín Brunovský and other enthusiasts of children's book illustration to bring to the world the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava. Happy 60th anniversary, BIB.

Since then, IBBY and BIB have worked closely on their shared mission of promoting children's literature and illustration. With IBBY recognizing and celebrating authors and illustrators from its current 85 National Sections through the Hans Christian Andersen Award, and BIB organizing the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), both maintain standards of excellence and recognize work that is trail-blazing and out of the ordinary.

IBBY and BIB focus on the child, and work to provide books with quality text and illustrations to children worldwide. Children need books that provide them windows to look outside themselves, but they equally need books that are mirrors; that talk to them about their environments, their cultures. With cultural diversity as their founding principle, BIB and IBBY have contributed to giving voice to authors and illustrators from around the globe. But so many exquisite tales still lie tucked away in recesses in Asia and Africa. These tales belong to the children of the world and collecting them, as the Brothers Grimm did in Europe, would help make future generations richer. This must remain at the heart of our mission—a beautiful mission indeed! 2025 sees countless children in crisis. As adults we are failing our children, robbing them of their childhood and the basic necessities of life. This is the time when their minds and souls are being nurtured. This is the time they need to be cherished and loved; to be given gossamer strands they can weave into webs of fantasy and imagination; and to be travelling on fairy wings across the borders of confined spaces stepping into the realms of creative exploits and idealism. This is the time they need PEACE.

Since all of us realize the importance of images on a child's mind and the strength of the written word, we need to pledge ourselves to ensuring that books for children must meet the standards of both the realism and the idealism our children truly deserve.

We need to be thinking about and writing those books in which the mind will transcend and the beauties of this world will be heightened. We need to veer our children towards the nobler qualities of humanism, tolerance, empathy and peace.

We need to embellish our books with images that tug at the heart strings and lead the child to dream. Dream about fairness, justice and human fulfilment. And images... soft ones, sensitive ones, vibrant and alive ones, each leave a different mark on the child's psyche. The child needs these images. Only then will the violence and ugliness of war be slowly erased from their minds.

Members of the SK IBBY Committee:

Timotea Vráblová
 Viera Anoškinová
 Martin Kellenberger
 Juraj Martiška
 Beáta Panáková
 Toňa Revajová

MANIFESTO OF THE SLOVAK SECTION OF IBBY

Book production for children and cultivation of reading is only part of the spectrum of culture, but this part has decisive importance for the future form of culture as a whole.

The fates of books are linked inseparably with the fates of human beings. In any given cultural ecosystem, the principal agents are not the only ones that matter. For the quality and dynamism of their symbiosis, they depend on other organisms which create fertile ground and a favourable climate for growth and mutually beneficial interaction. One such organism is IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People.

Not by coincidence, it was after the cataclysm of World War II that the idea emerged of institutionally supporting the dissemination of children's books, as the most efficient means of giving culture to new generations: in effect, as an instrument for the improvement of the world. The founder of IBBY was the German Jewish journalist Jella Lepman. She was one of those public figures who resolved after the war that they would build a cultural space, in Germany and internationally, which would help children and young people to discover ethical values. Conditions had to be created for children and youth so they might develop freely and live their own lives to the full. Jella Lepman regarded the ability to cooperate, in particular, not merely as a skill but as an important value. Similarly she regarded openness, and also esteem and respect between diverse groups, cultures and nationalities. These values, she believed, were the startingpoint for a consolidation of relationships. That was why, in Munich in 1949, she founded the Jugendbibliothek, today a world-famed international library of literature for children and youth, and why in 1951 she founded IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People. Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries to join this organisation. And today, in the spirit of Jella Lepman's legacy, the Slovak section of IBBY publishes its MANIFESTO ON NEUTRALITY.

Neutrality, as we understand it, does not mean ignoring or trivialising the problems of the contemporary world. It is the considered adoption of a position, with a view to being able to face those problems. Because neutrality, based on universal and incontestable values, is not only beneficial but even indispensable, especially in culture devoted to children and youth.

The primary mission of the Slovak section of IBBY is to create conditions for the development of cultivated reading; to disseminate highquality books for children and youth; to support culture that

leads children towards a meaningful life, towards personal development, healthy living, mutual esteem, respect, and appropriation of ethical values. Those are important conditions for human personality to be able to develop. And for that, each individual needs a background of benevolence, trust and peace. Cultural space should not become a battleground, a locus of intolerance, conflicts, manipulation and incitement.

Our manifesto is a response to the sustained attitudes of malice, the fanning of passionate hatreds in the name of ideological and political war, and the deplorably conducted power struggles, which are harming the country and above all the young generation. They lead to dehumanisation and social degeneration, they devastate culture, they blunt creativity and responsiveness. It is disturbing to imagine what impact this destructive behaviour may have on the children and youth who witness it.

The Slovak section of IBBY wishes to continue creating a community of the friends of children's books and forming a space of understanding, tolerance, cooperation and inspiration. A space that under all circumstances will be neutral territory, with all of the corresponding privileges and obligations. We will continue conducting our activities with this aim in view. Our wish is to be a platform for the cultivation of values that are universally human and timeless. We want to contribute towards a revival of the culture of relationships. Children and youth should be able to freely find their orientation, seeking and formulating their own opinions without being pilloried or intimidated; they should be able to develop their abilities and build their selfconfidence, preparing themselves for an independent life.

Our stance is based upon feelings of responsibility for everything positive that our predecessors created. We can draw upon rich traditions, and we feel a duty to continue in their spirit. Projects of world significance have had their genesis in Bratislava: BIB (from 1967), BAB (from 1983), Bratislava IBBY Institute (from 2014). Those are undertakings which have won international renown for this reason above all, that they guarantee a high artistic and professional level, multiculturalism, and neutrality. They do not deserve to be threatened by inappropriate ideological, political, or commercial interventions.

The Manifesto of the Slovak Section of IBBY also expresses our consistent attitude towards partners at home and abroad. We subscribe to the initiative set in motion by the extraordinary general assembly of the IBBY countries on November 4, 2023. Based on the voting of a large majority of the member countries, it was resolved that despite military conflicts, the mission of IBBY is incompatible with a policy of blockade. Culture for children should be a space for the full flourishing of life.



Kazim Basarat, BIB 2025



BIB 2025



Kazim Basarat and Timotea Vráblová, President of SK IBBY, BIB 2025



BIB 2025



BIB 2025



Ellis Vance, Timotea Vráblová, Kazim Basarat and Angela Lebedeva, BIB 2025

ANASTASIA ARCHIPOVA (RUSSIA)



Anastasia Arkhipova (born August 8, 1955, in Moscow) is a Russian illustrator and graphic artist widely recognized for her interpretations of classic fairy tales and children's literature. A graduate of the Surikov Moscow State Academy of Fine Arts, she began her career in poster design before devoting herself to book illustration.

Arkhipova has illustrated numerous works by Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, and other authors, with her books published and exhibited internationally. Her distinctive style combines fine art technique, expressive character design, and rich, atmospheric detail, rooted in the traditions of Russian illustration.

A member of the Russian Academy of Arts and an Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation, Arkhipova has received many national and international distinctions. She has also served as a jury member for the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) and continues to play an active role in promoting contemporary book illustration in Russia and abroad.

The influence of new technologies on illustration

The International Biennale of Illustration in Bratislava is a truly unique event. For 60 years already, the best illustrations for children's books from all over the world have been exhibited here. An international jury of experts and artists selects the most talented illustrators and awards them prizes. Why are such events especially important today?

The 21st century has introduced a large part of the world's population to a new communication system. The Internet began to replace real space. It became possible to meet people and look for partners, make purchases, receive information, take training courses, listen to music—all without leaving the couch, all instantly. You can virtually

visit the Sistine Chapel or the Prado Museum. You can fall asleep to the sound of rain, the singing of a nightingale, or the cries of seagulls. Everything is available to those who have access to this vast new space. And, of course, one can also read literary works on a screen without resorting to the services of a traditional paper book. Increasingly, there is talk that the paper book is “dying.” If the sole function of a book were simply to deliver text to a reader, then perhaps it would indeed be faster and more convenient to obtain it online. But in fact, that is only one of its functions. A paper book is a complex object, the result of the work of many contributors besides the author of the text. What makes this object truly unique is the work of the artist—something especially valuable.

Every year, more and more students apply to study book illustration and design in our department at Stroganov University, where I teach. In the past, for an illustrator to gain recognition, establish a reputation, and join the ranks of professionals, it was necessary to be published. Today, the situation is completely different. For a young artist who has even modest digital skills, it is enough to post works on popular online platforms for them to become visible. Easily finding fans and admirers, they exchange “likes” and compliments. What once took years now happens very quickly. A novice author can also find online any material that previously had to be searched for in books, as well as discover what style is currently fashionable, in demand, and better paid for. As a rule, however, this is far removed from what they are taught in an educational institution.

On the one hand, having a broad outlook and access to global trends is beneficial. On the other hand, the situation requires that young artists learn to distinguish between truly talented, style-defining personalities and mere imitators following current fashions. The information they absorb is often incomplete and superficial.

Another change in the concept of book illustration is that, in the modern world, artists often switch to digital graphics instead of traditional materials—watercolors, ink, gouache, and printing techniques. This speeds up production and is convenient for publishers, but at the same time the original illustration disappears—something we have always regarded as one of the forms of graphic art worthy of exhibition. For students to experience the richness of traditional materials, it is essential to show them real masterpieces. Contact with the originals of talented masters is very important.

Despite having access to vast amounts of information, students often do not know where to look or what to look for, clinging instead to the latest passing trend.

That is why it is so important to show them truly valuable works, and why events such as the Biennale of Illustration in Bratislava are becoming increasingly indispensable—not only for specialists, but also for the new generation of professional illustrators.

FATEMEH PARISA BEHABADI (IRAN)



Fatemeh (Parisa) Behabadi is a writer, researcher, and critic of children's literature and illustration. She is an active member of the Children's Book Council of Iran (CBC). Her work focuses on fiction and picturebooks. She also designs museum-based educational programs and public read-alouds, and has published on Iranian picturebooks, children's fiction, and translation.



Farshid Mesghali — Honorary Diploma, 1969

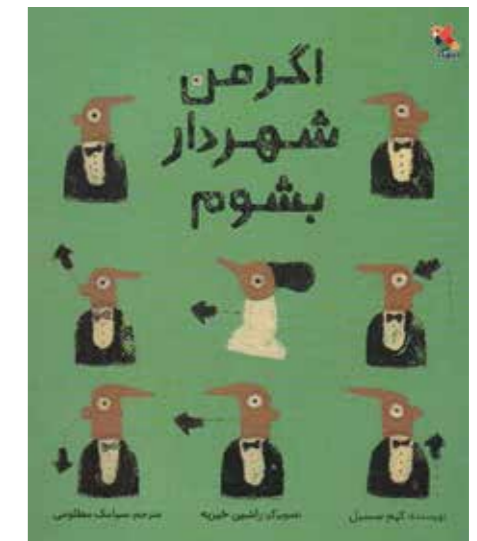
In subsequent decades, illustrators such as Rashin Kheiriyeh (Golden Apple, 2011), Narges Mohammadi (Golden Apple, 2017), and Hassan Mousavi (Grand Prix, 2019) — among others — showed how Iranian visual storytelling combines depth with global resonance.

The Bratislava Biennale of Illustrators (BIB) and the professional development of Iranian illustrators

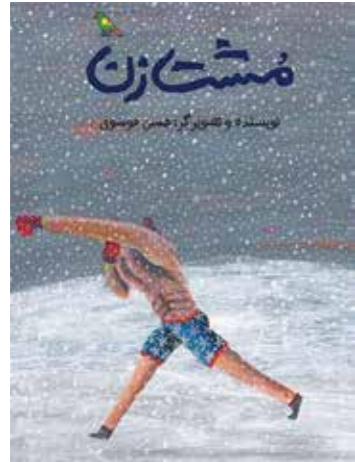
In the world of picturebook illustration, the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) holds a distinctive place. For more than half a century, this event has been more than an exhibition or a competition—it has been a meeting point for cultures, visual languages, and artistic philosophies. It is where illustrators discover how images speak across borders, and where meaning is shaped through the shared act of looking.

For many artists, BIB has marked a turning point in their professional lives. This presentation draws on a qualitative study that explores the lived experiences of six Iranian illustrators—awardees, nominees, and officially selected participants—and examines how taking part in BIB influenced their professional development, artistic language, and career trajectories. Setting the Stage

Since BIB's earliest years, Iranian illustrators have been part of the global conversation. In 1969 Farshid Mesghali received an Honorary Diploma for *The Little Black Fish*, a picturebook whose gray-toned spreads, following a small fish through a dark, symbolic river, became an emblem of resistance and freedom. That moment placed Iranian illustration on the international stage and began a long relationship between Iranian artists and BIB.



Rashin Kheiriyeh — Golden Apple, 2011



Hassan Mousavi — Grand Prix, 2019



Narges Mohammadi — Golden Apple, 2017

Despite this strong presence, most Persian-language coverage of BIB remains descriptive—announcing results rather than probing professional and artistic implications. This presentation addresses that gap. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and a qualitative reading of artists' reflections, it considers what changed for six illustrators—before and after BIB—professionally, artistically, and personally.

Key Themes Emerging from the Interviews

1. International Visibility and Professional Networking

All six illustrators emphasized visibility as the most significant impact of BIB.

One artist noted, “BIB was the first time a Japanese publisher contacted me.”

Another said, “On the day the finalists were announced, I received messages from Europe and South Korea.”

Such visibility not only expanded their international connections—leading to exhibition invitations, jury memberships, and collaborations—but also enhanced their standing in Iran. Local publishers began to view them as internationally credible artists, improving their ability to negotiate contracts and royalties. In Bourdieu's terms, BIB functions as a field that produces symbolic capital—prestige that can be converted into social and economic capital.

2. Transformation in Artistic Style

Four illustrators described changes in their artistic approach following exposure to the diversity of global illustration. Seeing works from Eastern Europe, for instance, prompted some to move from ornamental and detailed compositions toward minimalism and restraint.

As one participant recalled: “Before BIB, my works were full of ornamentation. Eastern European minimalism taught me simplicity.”

Another reflected: “I realized I no longer used Iranian motifs. I wasn't sure if it was artistic growth or detachment.”

This tension—between growth and loss, local and global—runs through the narratives of many artists. In some cases, exposure to international aesthetics risked eroding the visual distinctiveness of Iranian illustration. Yet examples from other cultures suggest that such negotiation can lead to creative hybridity rather than homogenization.

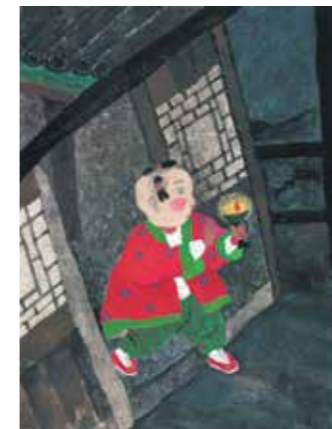
Chinese artists Zhu Chengliang (*Don't Let the Sun Fall*) and Cai Gao (*Bao'er*) have maintained strong cultural identity through their use of traditional color palettes and compositional balance, while still being widely appreciated on the global stage. Their success demonstrates that authenticity and universality need not be opposites.

3. Professional Confidence and Recognition

For four participants, BIB provided a new sense of legitimacy and self-assurance.



Don't Let the Sun Fall, illustrated by Zhu Chengliang



Bao'er, illustrated by Cai Gao

One said: “When my name appeared next to European illustrators, I felt recognized as part of a global standard.” Another added: “After that award, colleagues who had never taken me seriously now wanted to collaborate.” Such experiences can be read through Axel Honneth's theory of recognition: professional confidence arises not merely from individual talent but from being socially acknowledged. For women illustrators and those working outside Tehran, this recognition carried particular significance—it allowed them to transcend structural marginalization and to assert a stronger professional voice within Iran's art community.

4. Institutional Inequality and Cultural Homogenization

Several illustrators pointed to challenges in access and participation. Entry into BIB often depends on networks of publishers and institutions centered in Tehran, making it harder for independent or provincial artists to reach the international stage. This reflects what Bourdieu calls “institutional capital”: talent alone is insufficient without access to legitimizing structures.

At the international level, artists also spoke of aesthetic pressure—the sense that certain “global” visual languages dominate juries and festivals.

One illustrator put it succinctly: “Everything is turning into one international visual language; we are forced to follow.”

This concern resonates with Edward Said's critique of Western-centered universalism and with Homi Bhabha's notion of the “Third Space,” where artists negotiate between authenticity and global readability. Iranian illustrators, too, find themselves in that in-between zone—balancing local roots with international expectations.

“Good Text”: The Dialogue between Word and Image

One of the most revealing comments from the interviews came from an illustrator who said:

“I never had a good text to work on. Publishers either didn't pay or there wasn't a suitable book to submit. Only those who had a serious publisher or someone to recommend them could reach BIB.”

This remark raises a critical question: in the context of BIB, where the illustration is judged independently, what is the role of the text? Can the visual be fairly evaluated without the verbal narrative that gives it context and rhythm?

Several Iranian illustrators noted that the scarcity of strong picturebook texts in Persian has sometimes limited their chances to participate internationally. The remark about the “good text” underscores a deeper truth: in picturebooks, meaning arises from the interplay of words and images. The text initiates the world; the image makes it tangible. To assess illustrations without acknowledging their textual counterpart may risk overlooking a crucial dimension of artistic intent. The question of whether BIB should consider this dynamic more explicitly remains open—but it invites important reflection about how we define excellence in the art of the picturebook.

Fatemeh Parisa Behabadi

Seeking Balance: Lessons from Global and Local Voices

Across BIB's history, many artists have found creative equilibrium between rootedness and openness. Figures such as Marian Murawski from Poland—with his poetic surrealism and folkloric undertones—and Albin Brunovský from Slovakia—with his intricate textures and emerald palette—show how cultural identity can coexist with modern form. Among Iranian artists, Rashin Kheiriyeh's humorous visual tone, Narges Mohammadi's intimate sense of space, and Hassan Mousavi's philosophical symbolism all demonstrate similar strategies of negotiation. Each embodies what might be called a "third path": neither imitation nor isolation, but dialogue between tradition and modernity.



Marian Murawski — Selected Works

Conclusion

Over more than five decades, the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava has become not only a showcase for artwork but a space of dialogue—between cultures, between text and image, between the local and the global. For Iranian illus-



Albin Brunovský — Selected Works

trators, BIB has consistently been pivotal: it offers visibility, confidence, and professional connection; at the same time, it tests the resolve to preserve an authentic visual voice amid the homogenising pull of one "international visual language" and uneven institutional access outside Tehran.

This study suggests that BIB's significance extends beyond competition. It is a living conversation about artistic identity and cultural exchange, where prestige can travel—and sometimes local textures risk being smoothed away. The recurring "Good Text" problem underscores that no image is complete in isolation, just as no text can fully live without imagery; the most honest judgment lies in the breath between word and picture. For artists working outside Tehran, the path remains double-edged: doors open to global audiences even as pressures toward stylistic conformity intensify.

The future of illustration depends on negotiating that interspace where rootedness meets readability—supporting stronger pipelines for quality texts, widening institutional access beyond metropolitan hubs, and valuing hybrid visual languages that stay Iranian while speaking globally. In this sense, Bratislava is less an endpoint than a beginning: a demanding doorway that invites step-through without sanding down the accent that makes a voice its own.



Murti Bunanta is the first person to receive a Doctorate degree from the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, using research in children's literature as the topic for her dissertation in 1997. She is the founder and president of The Society for The Advancement of Children's Literature or Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak up to date (established in 1986), a non-profit organization

that pioneers various activities to develop children's reading in Indonesia. She also established INABBY (Indonesian Board on Books for Young People) a national chapter of IBBY in 1990 and is the president up to now.

She served as executive member of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) in 1992-1996. Since 2010 she is on the board of advisors of Asian Festival of Children's Content (AFCC-Singapore) and the Advisor of Singapore Book Council 2018 up to now. Murti has written a number of essays approx 250 and given numerous lectures on children's literature, nationally and internationally; among others in Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Australia, Thailand, South Africa, India, China, Macau, Denmark, Spain, Laos, Iran, Korea, England, Germany, Sweden, New Zealand, Slovakia, Greece, Indonesia, Brunei and Russia. She has written two books on children's literature studies (1997 and 2004). Murti also writes books for children where 52 books have been published (Books for early readers and folktales books). Her books have been translated into five languages: Japanese, Mongolian, Korean, German, English. Two of her books has been converted in two Braille books by the Indonesian Department of Education and distributed free for schools for children with special needs. All together she has received seven international recognitions for her books for her dedication to promote quality children's literature at national and International scale and through children's literature diplomacy of friendship to the world.

Murti also served as international jury for several competitions abroad and she was the president jury of BIB (Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava) in 2011 and 2013. She was the nominee for reading promoter for Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA-Sweden) 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020, 2021 the world's largest prize for children's and young people literature.

MURTI BUNANTA (INDONESIA)

BIB and the world of children's books in Indonesia Long-term partnership 1991-2025

How I have known Dr. Dusan Roll

I founded the Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak (KPBA), or the Society for the Advancement of Children's Literature, in 1986. This organization holds the distinction of being the first in Indonesia to focus its initiatives on promoting children's reading and enhancing the quality of children's books. My initial participation at the IBBY World Congress took place in Norway in 1989, where I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Dusan Roll, who was then the President of IBBY. Inspired by his encouragement to join the global network, I went on to establish the Indonesian section of IBBY in 1990. A collaboration between SAACL/KPBA and BIB commenced shortly thereafter, in 1991. Dr. Dusan Roll is truly a figure who thinks globally in his efforts to unite the world through children's books.

Long-Term Partnership

We are proud to have successfully organized BIB exhibitions and children's book seminars during our initial years of collaboration, specifically in 1991, 2000, and 2002. Notably, in 2000, we also hosted the Biennial of Animation Bratislava (BAB), which featured the screening of numerous European films. It is important to mention that the first three BIB trainers we invited were Peter Uchnar, Igor Piacha, and Joseph Tassies. This collaborative relationship has been sustained effectively from its beginning and continues up to the present day in 2025.

Cultural Diplomacy and Exchange

This 34-year-long partnership highlights the relationship between SAACL and BIB as a significant act of cultural diplomacy for both nations. All events were enthusiastically attended by key figures in children's literature, with significant coverage provided by the press. From the earliest years, BIB events have received consistent support from Indonesian Ministers and the Slovak Ambassador to Indonesia. To date, nine young Indonesian illustrators have participated in the prestigious Albin Brunovský Workshop. Dr. Murti Bunanta served as the Jury President in 2011 and 2013, and numerous Indonesian

illustrators have continually participated in BIB competitions and exhibitions.

Murti Bunanta and BIB - Receiving Awards

Dr. Murti Bunanta has been the recipient of several distinguished honors from this partnership. In 2003, she was recognized with the BIB Honorary Plaque. Following this, the Murti Bunanta Foundation received an honorable mention in the publisher category in 2005. Further recognition came on September 4, 2013, when Dr. Murti Bunanta was awarded the Ľudmila Podjavorinská Plaque by the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic. Just five days later, on September 9, 2013, H.E. Mr. Stefan Rozkopal, the Slovak Ambassador to Indonesia, presented her with a recognition from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Miroslav Lajčák.

Ongoing Engagement

Recent years have demonstrated continued engagement through digital platforms and collaborative events. For example, a webinar on the Albin Brunovský Workshop was successfully held in December 2020, with an opening address by H.E. Mr. Jaroslav Chlebo. More recently, in October 2023, a sharing session on BIB was organized in collaboration with a government institution in Jakarta, featuring the opening remark by the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, H.E. Mr. Tomáš Ferko. The 30th anniversary edition of the BIB in 2025 will particularly spotlight Indonesian leadership, with Dr. Murti Bunanta as the Honorary Guest of the International Symposium, Amanda Iriawan serving as a jury member, and Emilia Nazir joining the International Committee.

What is the significance of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava in today's world

The Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) is far more than a prestigious international competition for children's book illustrations. It functions as a vital platform where participants can appreciate and learn about global cultures through the powerful medium of illustration. Furthermore, BIB serves as a crucial meeting point for experts, academics, publishers, illustrators, authors, and enthusiasts to exchange expertise and knowledge within the children's book industry. Additionally, the Albin Brunovský Workshop offers an invaluable opportunity for young illustrators from the Global South to develop and refine their illustration skills.

Armed with new skills and knowledge, these illustrators are empowered to make a positive and substantial contribution to the children's book industry in their respective countries.

Conclusion

The sustained partnership between BIB and Indonesian children's literature organizations has profoundly fostered cultural exchange, professional development, and international recognition. The collaborative journey from 1991 to 2025 is a powerful evidence to the impact of sustained global engagement in advancing the field of children's literature and illustration.



Opening remarks by the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr. Tomáš Ferko



Opening address by the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr. Tomáš Ferko

Reception by the President of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Rudolf Schuster, September 4, 2003



Webinar on the Albin Brunovský workshop, presented by young Indonesian illustrators. The opening remarks were delivered by His Excellency Mr. Jaroslav Chlebo on December 12, 2020



Discussion meeting on BIB in collaboration with a state institution, Jakarta, October 24, 2023



Ľudmila Podjavorinská Plaque (2013)



It was attended by the former Indonesian Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr. Toro Purbo.



Award presentation by His Excellency Mr. Štefan Rozkopal, September 9, 2013



Murti Bunanta, BIB 2025 Symposium



Timotea Vráblová, Zuzana Jarošová and Murti Bunanta, BIB 2025 Symposium



Fatemeh Parisa Behabadi, BIB 2025 Symposium



Murti Bunanta and Zuzana Jarošová, BIB 2025 Symposium



Timotea Vráblová and Murti Bunanta, BIB 2025 Symposium



Fatemeh Parisa Behabadi, Park Hyun Min, Sahar Tarhandeh, Felipe Cavalcante, BIB 2025 Symposium

VALERIE COGLAN (IRELAND)

Valerie Coghlan



Valerie Coghlan is an internationally respected scholar, lecturer, and writer specializing in children's literature, illustration, and visual narratives. She is currently President of the Board of Bookbird, Inc., the organization responsible for publishing Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature. Her research and writing focus on

the role of visual storytelling in children's books, with a particular emphasis on the picturebook as an art form and its cultural, educational, and aesthetic dimensions.

Her most recent publication is a chapter on Visual Narratives in the Routledge Companion to Young Adult Literature (forthcoming). She has contributed numerous articles, essays, and chapters to international journals and edited volumes on topics ranging from illustration studies and the history of Irish children's literature to representations of identity in contemporary youth culture. A passionate advocate for children's reading and literary culture, Valerie is a founding member of both IBBY Ireland and Children's Books Ireland, serving as President of each organization. She has also been an active member of the Board of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSL), contributing to the global conversation on research and practice in the field.

Valerie frequently lectures at international conferences, universities, and cultural institutions, and has served as a consultant, editor, and reviewer for a wide range of literary and academic publications. Her work continues to bridge scholarship and practice, promoting children's literature as both a vibrant field of study and a cornerstone of cultural expression.

Taking Flight with BIB and Bookbird

The best picturebooks are works of art. And where better to understand that but here at BIB, in Bratislava. As many of us

who work in the area of children's literature, and particular with picturebooks, will know that when explaining what we do to non-children's book people the response will often be strictly in terms of a discourse related to the pedagogical aspects of picturebooks. And of course, access to a wide range of picturebooks should be an essential aspect of early childhood development, encouraging amongst other facets of childhood experiences, the development of visual literacy, not just in terms of skills, but also an innate appreciation of visual art in its many forms. But, picturebooks are not only for babies, they are for everyone at all stages of life. Looking back at winners of BIB awards over the years this is wonderfully evident in the range of artistic techniques applied to the picturebook form, the variety of themes the form can accommodate, and the ways in which it can create meaning and prompt emotional responses.

Picturebook expert Barbara Kiefer emphasizes the importance of understanding 'how meaning is expressed and understood' in picturebooks, emphasizing the polysemic elements of visual narratives, citing art critic E.H. Gombrich's view that the visual image is most effective in evoking emotions.

And she states

On the other hand, when considering how meaning is expressed, verbal and visual art have much in common. Both the author and artist have elements that convey meaning. The author uses sounds and words, the phonetic and morphemic systems of language. The artist uses line, shape, color, value, and texture, the elements of art. ... Art may more readily evoke our emotions, and its elements are more readily understood across cultures and places.

And such understanding is reached through the awards and presentations of BIB. For English speakers who have access to the output of publishers in North America, the United Kingdom and other Anglophone zones, BIB shines a great big light on works from outside English – and especially from small publishers whose productions we might never otherwise see. Personally, I wonder when – or even if – I might otherwise have come across books by Iku Dekune, Frédéric Clément, and of course, Slovakia's own Dusan Kállay, all notable BIB awardees, and indeed many others also.



BIB was founded in 1967 and not long before that Bookbird: a Journal of International Children's Literature came into being. It was established by Jella Lepman, founder of IBBY, as a means of promoting a project which she was working on with the Rockefeller Foundation, UNESCO, the American Library Association and IBBY. The objective of this was to encourage countries in Africa, Asia and South America to develop libraries and set up courses in children's literature in their universities. In order to promote and inform people about the project, Lepman established a bulletin in 1957 which literally took wings and after some initial hiccups it became Bookbird, IBBY's journal, which continues to this day. From a modest pamphlet Bookbird has grown into a substantial quarterly publication which adheres to the founding principles of IBBY. Bookbird is a peer reviewed journal which has some additional sections, often related to practical aspects of children's book use with children and book

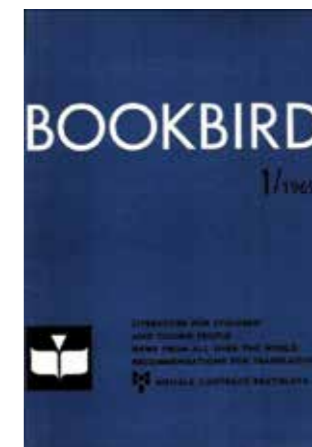
promotions. In common with BIB, a strong aesthetic presentation is important for Bookbird, and I am very proudly stating that our covers in themselves are works of art.

As Bookbird grew in scope and size during the 1960s and 1970s its appearance assumed even greater importance. BIB was established in 1967 under Dusan Roll, also an IBBY activist. Niilo Visapää, who became President of IBBY in 1970 consulted Dr Roll on aesthetic aspects of Bookbird relating to illustration and the appearance of Bookbird. BIB had a regular information section in Bookbird for some years and during the 1970s and 1980s the biennial fall IBBY Executive Committee meetings were held in Bratislava. Bookbird has had strong links with BIB and was influenced by the high standards in illustration upheld by BIB.

Sending greetings to BIB, in a letter published in Bookbird No. 1, 1969, Jella Lepman wrote,

The Bookbird has long since come into the world of children's literature. It is a well known publication, a pet, we could not miss anymore. And now a new venture will make it even more important, there will be a special section for the BIB, the "biennial of Children's Book Illustration, Bratislava".

The BIB which held its first meeting in 1967 was an immediate roaring success. I have not been there, but I heard the accounts ... the BIB had inspired people all over the world, it had been a wonderful demonstration of the progress which had been made in the illustration of children's books. A growing number of first rate artists had dedicated themselves to the illustration



Valerie Coghlan

of children's books, their success had been stupendous. ...

And she finishes

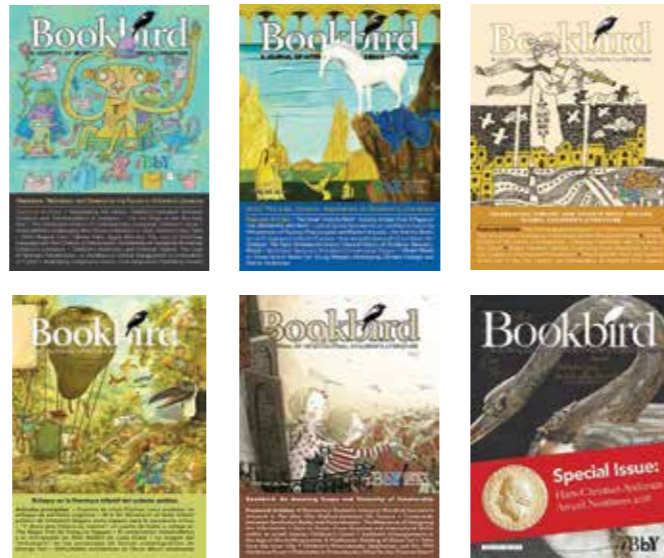
Good luck to you Bookbird and BIB! We shall follow your flight with the greatest interest, we are opening our windows to welcome you.

Articles on picturebooks and their creators have featured regularly in Bookbird. In fact, it is unusual for an issue of Bookbird not to have at least one article on some aspect of picturebooks and illustration and often there are several more. Bookbird features the best illustrators internationally, including in its special biennial Hans Christian Award nominees issue, and with articles about the winning and short-listed HCA Award illustrators and authors following the announcements of these at the Bologna Book Fair.

Both Bookbird and BIB uphold the highest standards in children's books, introducing us to a wide pan-national range of picturebooks through their awards, events and articles. However, the variety of styles and content in picturebooks has been somewhat eroded in the 21st century by the necessity for publishers to ensure that their books will be available in co-editions acceptable to an international market, meaning that sometimes very fine submissions are not published due to concerns that they will not sell and the publisher will lose money.

At one time it was relatively easy to make an educated guess about the regional origin of a picturebook, now that is a bit less so, due to the internationalization of publishing and of a degree of stylistic sameness in output. It also affects content. For example, northern European regions and some Asian countries see nothing amiss with nude figures in their picturebooks while for some English-speaking countries this is a complete no-no. And something similar goes for picturebooks featuring death, especially when death is personified, and I am sure you can think of lots of other examples which can complicate co-publishing across different regions.

As far back as 2006 when Siobhán Parkinson and I edited Bookbird, we published an article by British illustrator and picturebook expert, Martin Salisbury, highlighting such issues. Salisbury asked if, in a global publishing market, what a picturebook artist may and may not represent, stating



the picturebook market has become polarized – an “all or nothing situation” where everyone is chasing the next big seller... and the mid-list titles are squeezed out. It is a situation that lends itself to imitative commissioning and caution in relation to new ideas.

On the more positive side, however, this is being addressed somewhat as in some countries small independent publishing houses are producing books that might be described as risky –too arty – in style, or potentially controversial in content. BIB and Bookbird both give a focus to picturebooks such as these, books that are artistically excellent and sometimes challenging in theme. Here at BIB such books often receive awards, their originality and sophistication recognized as important milestones in the picturebook form, the best of which may truly be counted as outstanding works of art.

These are books which the children and adults of the world need and which enrich all of us who are lucky enough to have access to them.

WALLY DE DONCKER (BELGIUM)



Wally De Doncker is an author and a children's literature specialist. One of his main aims is to bring children and literature closer together. Wally again and again tackles themes that are scarcely touched upon in contemporary children's literature. Several of his books have been translated and adapted for the theatre, as well as musicals, film animations and dance films.

He served as president of the world organization IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) from 2014- 2018. As the president of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), Wally De Doncker made significant contributions to promoting children's literature and literacy worldwide.

In 2013 and 2017 De Doncker was Short List Nominee for the prestigious Belgian SABAM Awards for Children's and Youth Literature. The film 'Us Three / Nous Trois' (2019, Blauwhuis productions, Ghent) was inspired by his book 'Ik Mis Me' and was awarded as 'Best Film' at the 'Fic Autor Filmfestival' in Mexico 2019 and the Bronze Award at the 'Queen Palm International Film Festival' 2019 in Florida (USA). Different international museums draw attention to his books: The Children's Museum Labyrinth (Berlin) has focused on 'Ahum' and the Dutch Children's Books Museum on 'It Starts Somewhere'. 'I miss myself' was focus of attention in France during many national exhibitions and philosophical conferences. In 2020 his book 'Nian and the Boy' received the Outstanding Work Award ' by the Chinese Institute for Picture Book Research' and the Fu Lanya Picture Book Museum. He has been a guest speaker at many literary events around the world.

International collaboration of the writer with illustrators

BIB is the largest non-commercial event in the world in the field of children's illustration and probably the most important international event in Slovakia. It is a “home jewel” and a

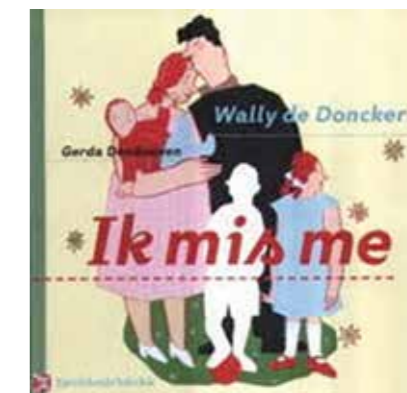
“unique” that Slovakia has. The first year of BIB took place in 1967.

In 2015 I was asked as IBBY President to give a speech in the Opera House for the 50 years of partnership between IBBY and BIB. Now it is already 60 years. Time is running... In that speech I underscored the necessity of working together on a global scale. “We must present a front against the increasing commercialisation of children's and youth literature. We must refuse to consider young readers as commercial products. We want to cherish them by giving them quality literature and illustrations. BIB and IBBY take children seriously. Not to earn money, but because only the best is good enough for children.”

It was not only my mission as IBBY President but now also as a writer. I will give you an overview to my personal path how I try to take children seriously. Several books were selected for BIB. During my career I was confronted with different interpretations of my picture books in different countries.

In 2003, Kim Reynolds invited me to go to the University of Roehampton to give a talk about my literary work to leading international authorities on children's books. The philosophical and surrealistic nature of my picture books had already drawn the attention of a number of such experts. To this very day, the interest and encouragement I received there from literary scholars like Kim Reynolds, Lissa Paul, Rod McGillis, and Lynne Vallone continue to serve as an inspiration to me as a writer.

I Miss Me/ Ahum/ Clouds in the Sand



My picture book "I Miss Me" is about a boy who looks at himself in the mirror.

He asks himself what the world would be like if he had not been born. What would his mother be like? What would the house be like? His cuddle? Would the walls miss him? The film version of the book ("Nous Trois", Blauwhuis Productions, Gent, Belgium, 2018) follows the same track and shows how we all influence each other just by our existence. It indicates which traces we leave in our life and the life of others.

'I Miss Me' was successfully tested at American universities, but the book turned out to be too philosophical for American publishers. American children do not philosophise, they said. And that could be true. Maybe they are now suffering the consequences of it? The same book was interpreted in three film versions. It was also the inspiration source for a succesful Flemish theatre play with the same title. The book was republished with the stills of the last movie 'Nous Trois'. The film 'Us Three / Nous Trois' (2019, Blauwhuis productions, Ghent) was awarded as 'Best Film' at the 'Fic Autor Filmfestival' in Mexico 2019 and the Bronze Award at the 'Queen Palm International Film Festival ' 2019 in Florida (USA).

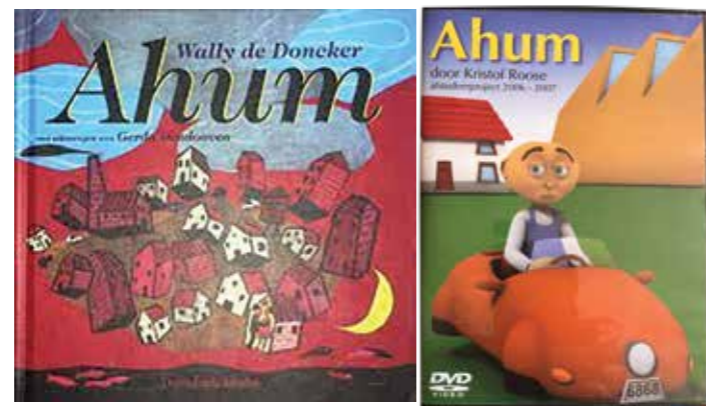
AHUM



Contents: Toesjepa must be a great country, since everybody owns a big house. And each Toesjepan can drive around in his own car. Nobody's jealous. Everybody is only concerned with himself. The Toesjepans have everything, and nevertheless they miss something. There are also a man and a woman living in Toesjepa. They aren't real Toesjepans. No, actually nobody knows where those two come from. They really talk with each other. They even live together. And they touch each other. Imagine that! They are so different, so ahum, the Toesjepans think.



An American publisher was interested in the book on condition that the last pages with the kissing couple were deleted. Of course we did not accept that. This book was also adapted as an animated film. Different international museums draw attention to my books: The Children's Museum Labyrinth (Berlin) has focused on 'Ahum'. 'The book I Miss Me (French title 'Vivre sans moi, je ne peux pas' was focus of attention in France during many national exhibitions and philosophical conferences.



I WISH I WERE A DOLL

In 'I wish I were a doll' I looked through the eyes of the old Pros at the world, as if through a puppet theatre. The people are in a hurry, have no time and do not feel like having a chat with the old man. He lives in another world, coloured by his memories of a more quiet time, of the trees in his street, of the time together with his wife. Harmen van Straaten made quiet, sepia illustrations that remind you of old postcards. The environment of the old man, who slowly got isolated, is depicted in a touching way. From the start I applauded the unique initiative of CCPPG in which authors and illustrators from different continents collaborate on universal themes. It is a big step to publish a Chinese artist who has illustrated a story by an author from a different culture, or to publish the works of Chinese authors with illustrations by artists from different continents.



BILLIE'S FACTORY

Billie's Factory is an autobiographical story. BIB 2015 selected by China. My father owned a small contracting firm. He spent a lot of his free time in his hangar.. If you were looking for him, you were certain to find him there. Many years after he died, the hangar burnt down. I witnessed it. Within the flames, I saw the memories of my childhood. The building was burnt to ashes but the stories of my father live on through this book.

Xu Kaiyun's illustrations show perfectly how a collaboration between artists from different cultures can be enriching. He

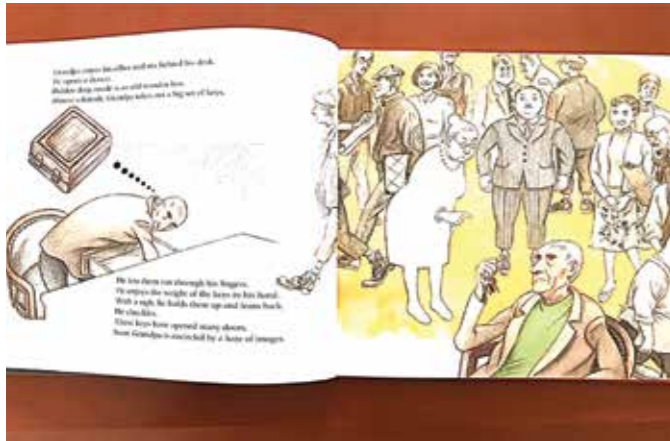


asked me for pictures about old factories and familiarised himself with street scenes in Belgium to create mental images of the setting. He used a lot of warm colours to make the artwork child-friendly and to illustrate the heart-warming effects of nostalgia. The book attracted the attention of many Chinese magazines. It has become an international success. After the original Chinese version it has been (or will be) translated into English, Dutch, Arabic and Indonesian. The different interpretations of the book are interesting. You can clearly see the difference between the Chinese and American versions. In





the original version, grandpa smokes a cigar. In the USA, smoking is prohibited in children's books. In the other versions, it is allowed. Following the success of Billie's Factory, CCPPG asked me to deliver a new manuscript, this time inspired by a traditional Chinese story. This was a challenge. I read many differ-



ent classic Chinese stories and eventually I chose to work on the story of Nian. While reading the story of Nian in different Chinese versions, I was faced with some difficult questions and thoughts. In my previous books I was always looking for the why of things.

NIAN AND THE BOY

This book is a tender story that tells the story of the monster "Nian" who often comes into conflict with people because of

his love for the cherries on his land. The boy solves the conflicts with the power of love, friendship and understanding. I tried to explain the why of things in "Nian and the Boy". BIB 2021 selected by China. It was something I did not find in the traditional versions of Nian. I also tried to empathise with the emotions of Nian. Why is the Nian monster so vindictive? How would I feel if my living space was taken away from my parents and me? How would I react to that? How do certain traumas extend into a life? Why does Nian want to destroy the villages in a bloodthirsty way? In the traditional Nian story the old man emerges as a Deus Ex Machina. How does the old man know



that the monster is afraid of the three elements: fire, noise and the red color? This knowledge must come from somewhere. Why is the old man in solidarity with the monster that destroys the villages? There must be a deeper cause for this.

Everything happens for a reason. Everything has a ground. Sometimes it's easy to explain or to find out. Sometimes we have to go back to our deepest selves: to our unconscious. I tried to search for the answer within myself. I think that the old man and the monster had met before. There was a certain unspoken connection between them. I found the explanation in the shared childhood of the old man and the Nian monster. Xiong Liang interpreted this story in a very special way. He mixes modern and traditional style elements. The longer I looked at his illustrations, the more I started to love them. The intervention in playing with the text style is also a fantastic idea. He not only enriches the book with his interpretation of the story, he also adds an artistic way to play with the style and size of the font. I think the reader is very spoiled with this book. It is a breakthrough with the way in which a traditional Chinese story is viewed. There is the surprising way by a writer of another culture looking for the why of things. Xiong

Liang enhances the richness of the story in a particularly artistic way, which encourages the reader to think and look further. As a writer, I am very pleased with his somewhat insane approach. I love stubbornness. It is often the cause of art. The book got a lot of attention. It has been reviewed and praised by many reviewers, including in my own country. During my lecture tour in Belgium, I read Billie's Factory aloud whilst projecting the illustrations on a big screen. I could experience how my Flemish readers reacted to this cultural teamwork. The surprising illustrations by Xu Kaiyun were welcomed with open arms. Although in Belgium, our young readers are confronted with many different styles of illustrations, this book was different for them. The biggest difference was the way in which the Chinese characters were depicted. Some of the faces of the employees looked East Asian to them.



I AM LOTS OF LOVE

Special story. Cooperation with the Belgian based Portuguese illustrator Fatiha Ramos. BIB Collection 2019. Where do I come from? Who was there before me? What of them do I have in me? These are just some of the protagonist's questions featured in this philosophical picture book. Luna's parents were deeply in love and that's why Luna was born. But what would have happened if her father and mother hadn't ever met each other? Probably she would be quite different from what she is now. And what aspects of her grandfather and grandmother are part of her? And what of generations long ago? Maybe she has a knight as an ancestor, or a real prince. This is a philosophical and at the same time light-hearted story told in poetic language about family, love, and the question of how former generations remain part of us. The dreamy illustrations in warm autumn colours possess a surreal radiance.

MISSING HURTS

The Chinese girl Yena misses her mother who is on a business trip to Europe. She is staying with her grandparents in Beijing. Despite the loss, she enjoys her stay with her grandparents. Through a dream, an even deeper loss emerges. This story is based on the feelings of my youngest granddaughter. The Chinese publisher 'Tiandi Press' indicates that cultures differ but that both Chinese and Western children experience 'loss' in the same way. The book is called hopeful for anyone who has to deal with loss. This new picture book was illustrated by top illustrator Liu Hao. He is internationally known for his art picture books about Vincent Van Gogh, Camille Monet, Michelangelo, etc. I am particularly pleased with the artistic way in which he interpreted my story.

BIB

Creating a quality picture book starts with a good story that is picked up by a good professional publisher. In collaboration with the author, the illustrator is chosen and discussed. What is expected of an illustrator is that he/she enriches the story and not just illustrates it. BIB has been proving the importance of quality that goes beyond borders for 60 years. In these turbulent times, the importance of international cooperation and tolerance is more than important. We have to give children the best stories and the best illustrations. It is our duty to reach beyond mediocrity, there is more than enough of that already.



Valerie Coghlan, BIB 2025 Symposium



Valerie Coghlan, BIB 2025 Symposium



Timotea Vráblová, BIB 2025 Symposium



Wally De Doncker, Zuzana Jarošová and Katerina Dermata, BIB 2025 Symposium



Wally De Doncker, BIB 2025 Symposium



STEFFEN LARSEN (DENMARK)



He studied history for several years and worked as a children's literature reviewer for a leasing Danish paper beginning in 1972. After serving as a newspaper-critic of childrens books for fifty years I quit last year. It has been a never ending privilege to write (and speak) freely and passionately on all aspects of books

for children and young adults. Holding hundreds of lectures on schools and libraries too. These were golden years in my country. I have written a few books myself. The last one came in 2024 and was a personal recommendation of about 78 books in every genre. Books that put a mark on me. He gave numerous presentations on children's literature for librarians, teachers and other experts. I never finished my History studies at the University of Copenhagen, but I had four children.

Here is the magic (or The Way We Were)

I arrived in Bratislava for the first time on what must have been Thursday September the 7th 1989. Two months later the world changed with the fall of the Berlin Wall. I arrived in my old Lada de luxe and was immediately detained while visiting the Roman "limes" and the ruins in Devin. I stood there overlooking the river and wondering why there had to be three rows of barbed wire between me and the water, as I was stopped and held back by some "limes" guardians. They set me free me after an hour or so. And I have been to every BIB since then. I love BIB. Just look at this older photo from the good old House of Culture. On my knees for the BIB.

The world changed. But BIB did not change. That is perhaps the real secret of how it was possible to stay young and cu-

rious – almost innocent - for so many years. With the help of Dusan Roll – may he rest in peace – BIB has learnt to navigate and stay fresh and cool with an attitude of seriousness and a smile. On one hand: "it is only for children." On the other is a message to the world of visions: "Come and be our friends. Let's dream dreams together." BIB has never to my knowledge tried to be modern like collecting "likes" or engaging in busi-



House of Culture, Bratislava



Dušan Kállay

Steffen Larsen

ness adventures or bad sponsors. And I thank you for that. Decency is your nickname.

So the BIB gave the world of illustrators a lesson and were able to maneuver in it. A non-political forum was created and it presented to the world, what can be told in pictures. This happened in many of the former communist countries like Poland or the Soviet Union itself. Illustrators had a kind of a free space. Right!? But it had to have a BIB for the together-

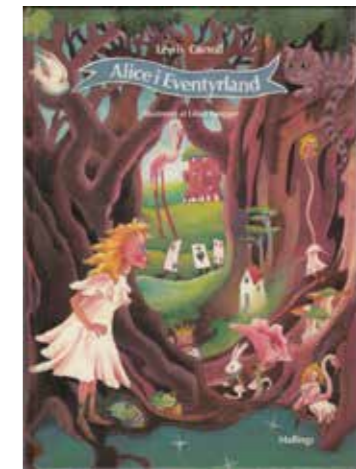


ness also. A place to meet. World-leaders don't have time for Alice in Wonderland or Pippi in her long stockings. They don't care – before it is too late.



The second unpredictable aspect of BIB and its local artists is that – to my knowledge – it has never resulted in a flood of translations. At least not in my country, Denmark. It is unbelievable, but not one single book by my hero Dusan Kallay has come out in Denmark. As far as I know he is only represented there with a front page to a small booklet produced by one United Nations agency. And it is many years ago.

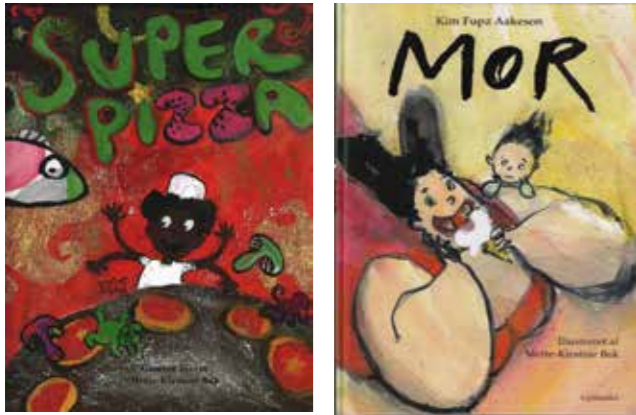
So is this language that I like to name the "soft Slovakian surrealism" totally unknown in my country? The answer is: NO. On the contrary. It has slipped into the eyes and the minds of many, many pupils from (mostly) the School of Design in



Steffen Larsen

the town of Kolding, that had a program of exchange with the Bratislava school, and has thus created a Danish version of this gentle language which is so proudly influenced by Mother Nature herself.

I think the first one to take up the “Slovak spirit” must be Lilian Brøgger who is well known in (and to) the BIB. She has been in the jury and received herself an apple in 2005. Lilian Brøgger published an illustrated version of Alice in the mid-eighties



that became a leading lantern for many of our illustrators. Later on she came into stormy weather with her own version of “Sandman.” But I guess she liked it. And she continued her way and helped as a teacher to shape artists at the Kolding school, artists like Cato Thau-Jensen, Mette-Kirstine Bak, Charlotte Pardi, Helle Vibeke Jensen, Kamila Slocinska, or Signe Kjær.

Look at the works of Lilian Brøgger. She adopted the energy and seriousness and turned it into her very own style. She did not stay there all the time. She likes to experiment, but you can always recognize the soft and gentle central European spirit filled with a longing for harmony and silent snow for Christmas. It is no coincident she did her own Alice. Like Dusan Kallay did. It is – so to say – the hole many illustrators have to dig into if they want to find their own inner rabbit. She is – by the way – the only illustrator who dared make a picture of God – so close she could come.

So Lilian Brøgger inspired a generation of illustrators. Among them Cato Thau-Jensen who is less edged and more colourful. Look at his works and you will wonder and be happy. Together they did the Bible for children. Working for weeks mingling their visions into one another, so that it is impossible to see where one begins and the other ends. And who actually painted the palm tree. Cato Thau-Jensen did one work which I think



could also have been made in Slovakia. It is the illustrations to a heartbreaking rather biblical story by our great writer Bent Haller: “Lidt har også ret” (a Danish proverb meaning “even the smallest thing has a value.”) It is a fairy tale about a mother who sacrifices herself for her starving children by cooking soup on herself. He could not have expressed himself in such a way had it not been for the BIB. That is my point.

From the first generation of BIB-influenced illustrators I will mention Mette Kirstine-Bak who brought with her home from Bratislava a desire and courage to make her own figures. She introduced in Demark a kind of “brutalism”, like in architecture. I love her.

Signe Kjær is a unique “Slovakian”. She also spent a semester with Dusan Kallay at the Academy of Arts. And she likes to quote his saying, when walking up and down commenting on the pupils works: “Where is the magic?” She never forgets it. Normally she paints like “a good pupil” like her version of the Bible, but in this small book for young people about sexual abuse at a gymnasium party she throws the happy paintings away and goes into a world of strange figures and forms as a way of coming out of the darkness.

Charlotte Pardi brought back home just another memory from Dusan Kallay. He said: “Be aware where to finish the line.” These two pieces of advice is worth taking into world of illustration. And we must conclude, that Bratislava teaches one to be one self. To be self-confident. Charlotte Pardi is – together with the beforementioned Signe Kjær – among the most productive illustrators in Denmark. She did the Bible too.

So these were two reasons for an BIB influence: the first one is its uniqueness in a world of commercialism, the second is the ability to inspire rather than teach. Here comes the third that takes its past into modern times. To continue showing the world that even in countries with dark and one-eyed leadership – and perhaps in these countries particularly – the power of children’s books is shown at its mightiest here at the BIB. You know what I mean. No names mentioned. And illustrations mostly go undetected by authorities. Until it is too late.

And to comment on the world wide discussions about gender and other woke’ish things, and burst a little about Danish liberalism, I want to show you some pictures from “Grandmam-

Steffen Larsen

ma and Grandmamma”, a sweet and gentle story of a child with two of this kind. This is Charlotte Pardi illustrating again a text of Rebecca Bach- Lauritsen.



The BIB 2025 Children’s Jury Award was won by Chiaki Okada for the illustrations for the book Two Red Mittens

So the BIB gives life to a lot of personal questions. You can look at pictures and put something into them that is not there. And you can walk pass an iconic picture and not recognizing it. Never have I felt any direction or guiding. Twice have I served in the jury and it is some of the best things you can do, to confront yourself with images trying to describe feelings you normally don’t speak about. You learn a lot about yourself walking the empty floors of an exhibition before everybody else comes in. You are kind of a guardian on behalf of the world’s children, and as you know: they never have chosen the same artist as the adults do. That is a good sign.

I have always loved the BIB. From the first hours in the former Hotel Kyiv in 1989 you realized here was a world of its own filled with nature, fantasy, optimism, magic and stuffer’s nose. All together exhibited in the dear old House of Culture. And you could go and see Jan Svankmajer’s “Alice” in the cinema afterwards. I have been here every time since. I became an addict. And I was never arrested again. Just a few parking tickets. So here is 1001 congratulations from me and a girl called Alice.

So please stay the way you are. This is your greatest strength.

ANGELA LEBEDEVA (RUSSIA)



Angela Lebedeva was born in Moscow, Russia. She graduated from the Moscow State University of Culture and Arts (MGUKI) with a specialization in Children's Literature and Library Science, and later earned her Master's degree and PhD with the thesis "Children's Initiation into Reading Classics as an International So-

cial and Pedagogical Issue."

She worked as a Senior Lecturer at MGUKI and at the Faculty of Journalism of the Sholokhov Moscow State University for Humanities (MGGU), where she created the course "International Cooperation in the Field of Children's Literature."

Since 1995, Angela Lebedeva has been a member of the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSL) and, since 1996, of the Russian National Section of IBBY. She has participated in all IBBY World Congresses since 2002, served on the H. C. Andersen Award Jury (2002–2006), on the IBBY Executive Committee (2004–2008, 2012–2016), and chaired the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award (2014–2016).

She was among the main organizers of the 37th IBBY World Congress in Moscow (2021) and coordinates the international project Days of Russian Children's Books Abroad, held annually since 1998 in many countries.

Angela Lebedeva is the author of over 50 professional publications and serves as a correspondent for Bookbird magazine.

BIB as a model of excellent artistic taste and precision in selection

The significance of the Bratislava Biennial is complex and invaluable: first of all, it is a unique platform for professional and international recognition of illustrators from all over the world. BIB is a place for an exchange of experience between

artists, promotion of the best examples of children's book illustration, development of international cooperation in the field of children's literature and, of course, support of new trends in the art of book graphics.

The uniqueness of BIB as a large-scale and reputable cultural project lies in its comprehensive and multifaceted approach. In addition to the competition part, the program includes international symposia on children's book design, educational workshops from renowned illustrators, exhibitions and presentations, meet-and-greet sessions, and other cultural events.

The scale of the competition is impressive: over the years of its existence, more than 6,000 artists from over a 100 countries have participated, and the number of submitted works has exceeded 50,000. All prize-winning works are stored in a special depository.

In the present day, the Biennial remains a crucial tool for the development of the international professional community of book illustrators. It is important to note that the BIB organizers and experts do not follow the passing fashion, but defend the priority of the inimitable and unique personality of the artist, thereby contributing to the development of the art of book graphics in general.

Starting from the first day of the BIB foundation, Soviet and Russian book artists have been actively participating in its work. This became possible thanks to the then Soviet IBBY section created in 1968, which was headed for almost half a century by the Soviet children's literature classic Sergei Mikhailov. Mikhailov and the creator of BIB Dusan Roll were allies and good friends. It is the section that has always selected, through a competition, the original illustrations of Russian artists to be sent to Bratislava. Over 60 years of IBBY, the Russian IBBY section has looked through illustrations for more than 1,300 books sent in with the aim of being seen and assessed by the authoritative IBBY jury, foreign colleagues and the general public.

Throughout the history of IBBY, Russian artists have received the following awards: one Grand Prix (awarded to Nikolay Popov in 1975), 16 Golden Apples, and 14 Plaques. Artist Nikolay Ustinov received the IBBY Children's Jury Prize. Detskaya Literatura, Russia's legendary publishing house, received the Honorary Mention Certificate in 1972.

Soviet and Russian BIB laureates of the older generation are the aces of aces of children's illustration: Boris Diodorov, Lev Tokmakov, Gennady Kalinovsky, Viktor Chizhikov, Nikolay Ustinov, Mikhail Fedorov and others. For illustrators of the middle

generation, BIB was a ticket to a new stage in their professional life. Some of those are: Victoria Fomina, Yulia Gukova, Vera Pavlova, Ivan Alexandrov and others.

On the eve of the BIB anniversary, I asked some of our laureates and members of the international BIB jury the following questions: What does BIB mean for you? How has BIB influenced your professional life?

IGOR OLEINIKOV

HCAA laureate, Jury member for BIB-2019

The Bratislava Biennial is a crucial part of the world of book illustration. It offers a chance for artists to take in others' art and display their own. If I may, BIB is an integral part of the international illustration blood circulating system — its oxygen exchange, no less. It provides a possibility to come out of one's shell and stay on board with the modern-day tendencies in the world book illustration. Thus, alongside with the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the Bratislava Biennial is a vital part of the book illustration system in the world.

ANTON LOMAEV

Golden Apple BIB-2019, «Lullaby for the Little Pirate»

This year, the great Biennial of Illustration of Bratislava celebrates its 30th anniversary. It was established in the turbulent times, when the post-war Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain; and through these years BIB served as a meeting point for cultures and a place where mutual understanding was



nurtured. In our equally turbulent times, when many international sports and cultural organizations give up their independence in favor of political preferences, BIB continues to be a crossroads of cultures, showcasing the best children's books

Angela Lebedeva

and illustrations from all over the world. I sincerely wish the Bratislava Illustration Biennial prosperity and independence — for the benefit of children's books, children, and therefore, our common future.

VIKTORIA FOMINA

Golden Apple BIB-2003, «Mozart: The Great Names»; Jury member for BIB-2017 and BIB-2021

I am absolutely thrilled and feel immensely lucky to have received the BIB Golden Apple — for it means my work is needed! And it is a great honour to learn the news from the great masters of the Art of the Book, the BIB jury.

Bratislava Biennial's Golden Apple award is my lifelong token of good luck and a strong incentive to continue growing as an illustrator.

An even greater honour is to have served in the jury twice. To see Bratislava, to dive deep into the best examples of book illustration from all over the world, to discuss them with the other jury members, to have disputes, to search for the best, the most emotional, the most unique, lively and original illustrations.

BIB is about meeting new fantastic people, meeting new friends, enjoying exhibitions, and falling for the magic of the



historical city of Bratislava. I really hope to return there one day!

IBBY Russia and its patron, the Raising Readers Association, extend their best wishes to Bibiana for a long and prosperous life and international renown, and new discoveries of dazzling new stars in the galaxy we call Children's Books.

GRAÇA LIMA (BRAZIL)



Graça Lima (born in 1958 in Rio de Janeiro) is one of the most prominent Brazilian illustrators of children's literature. She studied Visual Communication at the Escola de Belas Artes of UFRJ, where she now also teaches as a professor. Lima has illustrated more than fifty books and is the author of several children's titles.

Her work is characterized by vivid use of color, poetic expression, and deep understanding of the child's world. Throughout her career, she has received numerous Brazilian and international awards, and her books have been featured in prestigious exhibitions of children's illustration around the world.

Support of BIB by Brazilian IBBY and its relationship to it

As the national IBBY arm in Brazil, FNLIJ received all relevant communication, all duly captured and read, and we promptly position ourselves in total solidarity with organizers of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava, the renown BIB event attended by FNLIJ since its 2nd Edition in 1969, selecting Brazilian illustrators, no more than an occasion.

We have come to more intimately know the BIB because of our dear late illustrator Regina Yolanda Werneck, a BIB jury member who was given the BIB Honorable Plate in 1979 because of her efforts promoting the event, which have contributed to enthusiastically and reliably maintain strong bonds on every possible occasion.

In 1983, renown illustrator Rico Lins was nominated by the FNLIJ to attend the BIB as a member of the jury as well Cíça Fittipaldi, Rui de Oliveira and Angela Lago in other years.

In 1987, 1989 and 1995, Elizabeth Serra, who had worked with Regina Yolanda prior to her long FNLIJ history, once attended

the BIB and then returned in 2001 as an IBBY Executive Committee member, during her mandate as vice-president.

The BIB Illustrations Exhibition was taken by FNLIJ to Rio de Janeiro on two occasions: once, in 1969, which then included unforgettable Dusan Roll; and then, in 1989, for the celebration of BIB's 12st anniversary, revamping the historical bonds between the two national sections of the IBBY, with the remarkable support from the local Brazilian embassy in direct liaison with the BIB top management, in prime levels of attention at all times.

Like IBBY Brazil, the National Foundation of Children and Youth Books (FNLIJ) has promoted the production and dissemination of quality books for more than 50 years as crucial elements for the development of a nation, and has honorably upheld the responsibility of underlying the value of both illustrations and illustrators across the country.

A major commitment on the part of FNLIJ/IBBY is to ensure Brazilian participation in the BIB, where we have always held a place of honor, with the opportunity of sharing knowledge and broadening the horizons in favor of children throughout the world.

Non-profit international events are hardly ever found to address illustration as a form of art, and the BIB has upheld this role, positioning itself as an open forum for debate and honoring us as guests whose comments and voice are always heard.

The history of BIB origins is, per se, an act of love and freedom in favor of Slovenian children, in a time when participation beyond the geographic borders of the then Czechoslovakia was a bit harder on account of political issues.

The BIB has provided a bridge between diverging worlds, connecting international cultural production and giving continuity to a job that has always enriched us all with remarkable repercussions in the art of illustration in Brazil. In addition to the opportunity of introducing our artists to the exhibition, they also welcome young illustrators at the Albin Brunowski Workshop, nominate members for the jury, and present some of their work in the Symposium.

We have always been connected by a relationship of respect and admiration. We have never perceived any type of censorship and have always witnessed accolade to different opinions. Our testimony is that probity and listening are part and parcel of every action.

Concerning the selection of Brazilian illustrators who shall represent our country, we have a team of suitable and qualified professionals in the realm of book production.

In addition to Elizabeth Serra, our team comprises Federal University of Rio de Janeiro's School of Fine Arts' professors Graça Lima, PhD, who was a BIB jury member in 2019, and Henrique César Souza, PhD, who is also an awarded professional; in addition to Professor Alexandre Guedes, PhD, from the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro's School of Fine Arts, himself an illustrator as well as a researcher in the field of visual narratives; PhD student and designer Christiane Mello, who attended the BIB 2019 and created the Versalete – a book project expert Studio; Felipe Cavalcante, an awarded illustrator and designer, also a professor at the National University of Brasília (UNB), our nominee for the BIB 2025 jury, representing IBBY-Brazil.

As a result of an open call, this year the FNLIJ received 94 applications with 188 books.

Each jury member prepared a 15-applicant list for the first stage of the selection process. At a second moment, the jury matched the lists and discussed each book to finally arrive at the top 10 runners for Brazil's representatives in this BIB 2025 – its historical 60th Anniversary Edition!

It is always a great pleasure for us to participate in the selection process, which eventually leads to blueprint of contemporary Brazilian illustration production, as part of willing illustrators' and FNLIJ's biennial activities.

Results are always positively appreciated by all participants, in an atmosphere that comprises the difficulties of choosing 10 worthy artists amidst so many others but which is reassured that the selected few will do justice to the quality of illustrations produced in our country.

We are honored to participate in the BIB 2025 and to engage with the diversity of narratives produced by other countries.

With each new participation in the BIB, we bring a renewed and enhanced outlook to the production of illustration across the world. These new perceptions are greatly important for advancing the discussions around illustrated books, and are carried forward in universities, colloquia, congresses, course programs, and other events that involve books for children and the young reader.

Lastly, given all of the aforementioned, we reiterate and emphasize IBBY/Brazil's support to and trust in BIB 2025 organizers.

We shall remain together in our efforts for a more fraternal world and for more bridges.

Sincerely,

IBBY/Brazil

Elizabeth D'Angelo Serra
Graça Lima
Christiane Mello
Henrique César Souza
Alexandre Guedes
Felipe Cavalcante

Graça Lima



Steffen Larsen, BIB 2025 Symposium



Josep Antoni Tassies Penella, Zuzana Jarošová and Steffen Larsen, BIB 2025 Symposium



Participants of the BIB 2025 Symposium



Angela Lebedeva, BIB 2025 Symposium



Angela Lebedeva, Ellise Vance, Sahar Tarhandeh, BIB 2025



Felipe Cavalcante, BIB 2025 Symposium

OLGA MAJCEN LINN (CROATIA)



Olga Majcen Linn is a curator, researcher, and art critic based in Zagreb, working at the intersection of contemporary art, technology, and performance. She serves as curator at Gallery VN within Zagreb City Libraries, where she focuses on emerging and interdisciplinary practices, and is a guest lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts

in Zagreb, teaching courses on art, science, and technology. Olga holds a PhD in Arts and Media from the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. In 2002, she co-founded KONTEJNER, a nonprofit curatorial collective dedicated to contemporary, intermedia, and interdisciplinary art that bridges art and technology, art and science, and live art. Through KONTEJNER, she has curated numerous international exhibitions and festivals, including Touch Me, Device_art, Extravagant Bodies, and DIY_ARTLAB. Throughout her career, Olga has authored and edited more than a dozen books, catalogues, and readers, contributing significantly to the discourse on contemporary and experimental art.

Sketching Stories: Three Decades of Croatian Illustration at the BIB

The Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), organized by BIBIANA – the International House of Art for Children, was established in 1967 and held under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). It is one of the most prestigious international exhibitions and awards dedicated to illustration in children's literature. Although the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava has been an internationally recognized and awarded exhibition since its establishment in 1967, consistent participation by Croatian illustrators began at a significantly later date. The Croatian Centre for Children's

Books was established in 1993 as a part of the Zagreb City Libraries, with the aim of promoting Croatian children's literature both nationally and internationally. In 1995, the Centre was officially recognized as the Croatian Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) (Croatian Centre for Children's Books, n.d.). That same year marked the beginning of Croatia's regular participation in BIB. As such, the year 2025 commemorates 30 years of continuous Croatian involvement in this prestigious international event. Before 1991, Croatia was one of the six republics within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Although Yugoslavia had participated in the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) since its early years, starting in 1967, representation was not evenly distributed. Croatian illustrators were included occasionally, but their presence was neither consistent nor prominently featured under the Yugoslav umbrella.

One of the key outcomes of continuous participation in the Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava (BIB) is the formation of a group of recognized, distinguished, and exceptionally talented illustration artists. While there are certainly more illustrated books than there are illustrators aspiring to exhibit at BIB, the fact that some artists have now exhibited at more the five editions of biennial clearly indicates that their work is valued not only by publishers and readers, but also by expert juries. These artists have become a solid artistic cornerstone of Croatian illustration. For Croatian illustrators, the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) has, over the past three decades, represented a vital platform for international recognition, artistic exchange, and professional development. The Croatian section of IBBY is responsible for organizing the national call and jury process. As Isabella Mauro, head of the Centre since 2018, explains: "I have been the head of the Croatian Centre for Children's Books, the Croatian section of IBBY, since 2018, which means I have organized four Croatian selections for the BIB so far. The response from illustrators is always significant—almost three times more illustrators apply to the public call than the number that can be selected. It is very important for illustrators to apply, and even more so to be selected, as participation in the BIB represents visibility in an international setting and recognition among artists and professionals from all over the world." (Mauro, personal communication, May 2025)

As an exhibition that emphasizes individual artistic merit over

national representation, BIB has allowed artists to present their work alongside peers from around the world, judged by an international jury solely on the strength of their creative vision. This structure has provided illustrators not only with the opportunity to compare and challenge their work in a competitive yet enriching context, but also to draw inspiration from a wide array of aesthetic traditions and cultural expressions. Participation has thus been instrumental in situating national illustration within the broader international scene and in shaping its evolution.

Shaping the Visual Narrative

The late 1990s and early 2000s were formative years for Croatia's presentation at BIB. Artists such as Dubravka Kolanović, Andrea Petrlik Huseinović, Vjekoslav Vojo Radoičić, Maniela Vlačić Maštruko, Stanislav Marijanović, Pika Vončina and many others were key figures in this initial phase, establishing a visual language rooted in poetic narrative, playful forms, and distinctive interpretations of different literary themes. National publishers were consistently increasing their pro-



Manuela Vlačić Maštruko, *Bijele ribice lavandijerice*, 2021

Olga Majcen Linn

duction of picture books, and along with the Biennale in Bologna, BIB offered a space for additional recognition—both events serving not only as platforms for visibility, but also as sources of pride in the artistic and literary quality of their work. Many illustrators became regular participants, contributing to the creation of a consistent presence. Ana Kadoić ranks among the most prolific contemporary illustrators of children's books in Croatia, regularly contributing several new picture books to the field of picturebook publishing each year. On her participation at the BIB she stated:

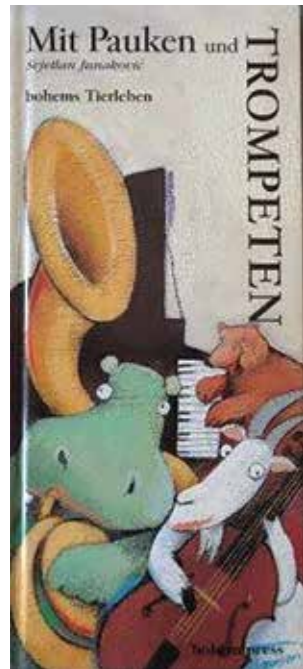
"I have participated in the Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava more than 10 times, and I perceive each participation as a great honor and recognition of my work. Unfortunately, I have never visited the Biennial in person, but I especially appreciate when exhibitions of Croatian authors are held in Croatia. It is also possible to get acquainted with the recent global production through the catalogue." (Kadoić, personal communication, May 2025) This long-term engagement with the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava by illustrators like Ana Kadoić reflects the presence of a dedicated core group



Ana Kadoić (Nina Vadić) - *Velika ljubav*, 2021

of Croatian artists who consistently contribute to the field. Their sustained participation—often over decades—demonstrates not only professional commitment but also recognition of the Biennial as a valuable platform for artistic visibility and international exchange.

Svetlan Junaković, a member of the jury for the BIB 2023, who has exhibited at the BIB multiple times, a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and a recipient of the BIB's Gold-



Svjetlan Junaković,
Mitpauken und trompeten,
2001

it regularly and who, in the best sense, represent the overall production of book illustration in Croatia. These illustrators form the core of contemporary Croatian illustration, playing a crucial role in sustaining its artistic quality, cultural relevance, and public visibility.

Lines of Distinction: Croatian Illustrators in the Spotlight at BIB

Croatian illustrators have been recognized on several occasions with official awards. Already mentioned Svjetlan Junaković was awarded the BIB Golden Plaque at the 18th Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava in 2001, for his works Roter Frosch, grüner Flamingo (1999) and Mit Pauken und Trompeten (1999), published by Bohem Press in Zürich. At the subsequent edition of the biennial, illustrator Andrea Petrlik Huseinović was also honored with a Golden Plaque, further affirming the strength and originality of her illustration in the international arena. Most recently, in 2023, Vendi Vernić was

en Plaque award, described the jury's approach and criteria in general. Emphasizing on artistic quality and depth of expression in the selection of illustrations, the process is focused on works that demonstrate a personal and distinctive style, modern storytelling through images, and high artistic value. Particular attention is given to illustrations that, even when separated from the book context (e.g., in an exhibition), function as valuable works of art. The jury is also aiming to ensure diversity in media, techniques, and generations, reflecting current trends in illustration while valuing originality and experimentation. (Knjižnice grada Zagreba, 2023)

The selection criteria, as described, help explain the consistent group of artists who exhibit



Svjetlan Junaković, Roter Frosch, grüner Flamingo, 2001

awarded a Golden Plaque for her illustrations in the picture book Luda kuća.

Svjetlan Junaković is one of the most prominent illustrators, whose repeated involvement in BIB, but also other international exhibitions and festivals over the years underscores both his sustained artistic excellence and the global relevance of his work. In 2001, he became the first Croatian illustrator to be awarded the prestigious Golden Plaque. He was also from the beginning of his career as an illustrator published by European publishers, for example by the Italian children's publisher Franco C. Panini or Swiss publisher Bohem Press from Zurich. These books, later translated into over twenty languages, exemplify the global reach of Junaković's visual storytelling. His significance within the BIB framework extends beyond his role as a laureate—he also served as a member

of the international jury, contributing his expertise to shaping the biennial's standards of excellence. As Ranka Javor notes in her contribution to the BIB publication, Junaković is "exceptionally productive," having illustrated over 300 books and picture books in the past two decades, for numerous prestigious publishers across Europe and beyond, including Bohem Press (Zürich), Gallimard (Paris), Cambridge University Press (London), and OQO (Pontevedra), as well as leading Croatian publishing houses. His prolific and internationally recognized career highlights the central role that BIB plays in providing a platform for Croatian illustrators to engage with global illustration discourse, gain visibility, and influence the field on an international scale.

Andrea Petrlik Huseinović is an internationally recognized Croatian illustrator, author, and publisher whose body of work has significantly contributed to contemporary children's literature. As both writer and illustrator, she has created several award-winning picture books—most notably *The Blue Sky*,



Andrea Petrlik Huseinović, Plavo nebo, 2003

Ciconia Ciconia, and *Love*—which have been translated into numerous languages and included in prestigious collections such as the Chihiro Art Museum in Japan. In addition to illustrating over fifty picture books for both Croatian and international publishers, she has received multiple international accolades, the Grand Prix at the Oita Biennale of Illustration (2004), solidifying her influence in the global picture book scene. The picture book *Blue Sky*, for which she was awarded BIB Golden Plaque, was both written and illustrated by the author. It is rooted in her personal experience of losing her parents at a young age. The emotional depth of the story reflects her own journey through grief and the challenges of growing up without parental support, which lends the book its striking authenticity and emotional impact. Created during a UNESCO workshop in 2001, the book gained international attention when it was listed among the top 50 most-read titles in a U.S. digital children's library the following year. Its significance was further recognized through adaptations into a documentary by Croatian Radiotelevision in 2005 and an animated film.

The freshest BIB Golden Plaque to Croatian illustrator was awarded to Vendi Vernić, who is from the earliest days of artistic career familiar with awards. Vernić's work received international recognition and awards even before the publication of her first books. Notably, she won the IX International Illustration Award from Fundación SM at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2018 for a series of illustrations based on Fyodor Dostoevsky's story *Crocodile*. This achievement led to the publication of her picture book *La casa de fieras* in Spain, inspired by Ivana Brlić Mažuranić's story *Menagerie*. Her award-winning illustrations for Nikolai Gogol's short stories *The Overcoat* and *The Nose* were published in 2019 in the bilingual edition *El abrigo/La nariz* by Chilean publisher Saposcat Libros. Vernić's work exemplifies a sophisticated blend of classical literature, high-quality design, and innovative illustration. It is also important to mention that she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, learning from another laureate - Svjetlan Junaković.

Awarded by BIB Golden Plaque but also the *Ovca u kutiji* (Sheep in a Box) prize in 2021 for the best Croatian picture book, *Luda kuća* stands out not only for its artistic merit but also for its thoughtful engagement with contemporary social and artistic themes in children's literature. *Luda*



Vendi Vernić, Luda kuća, 2023

kuća (The Crazy House) is a richly imaginative picture book that blends playful narrative with visually dynamic illustration. Told from the perspective of a young girl, the story explores the lives of various residents in a tall, urban apartment building—each neighbor portrayed as eccentric, imaginative, and at times possessing subtly magical traits. Thematically, the book delves into the interplay between individuality and community, inviting readers to reflect on creative freedom, nonconformity, and the acceptance of difference within a shared social space. In illustrating *Luda kuća*, Vernić drew heavily on her personal memories of 1990s Zagreb—evoking its architecture and atmosphere in a subtly Zagreb-like setting without explicitly naming it—creating a nostalgic backdrop for the story (Moderna vremena, 2023).

The illustrations by Vendi Vernić play a crucial role in conveying the book's tone and meaning. Rendered in a variety of traditional media, the images are characterized by vibrant color palettes, unexpected angles, and whimsical, distorted

perspectives that echo the building's surreal interior and the unique personalities of its inhabitants. Rather than merely depicting the narrative, the illustrations create a parallel visual storytelling layer—adding atmosphere, depth, and often humor to the written text. The expressive visual style, reminiscent of retro aesthetics and childhood imagination, reinforces the book's central message about the richness and complexity of living creatively within a collective.



Klasja Habjan, Duh Bauhauza, 2023

In her reflection for the 29th Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (2023), Vendi Vernić emphasized the enduring impact of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić's fairy tales on generations of Croatian illustrators. Brlić-Mažuranić's richly imagined worlds, rooted in Slavic mythology and folklore, have offered fertile ground for visual interpretation—encouraging illustrators to blend fantasy, tradition, and symbolic language. Her narratives continue to inspire layered, emotionally resonant, and stylistically diverse illustrations that bridge the past with contemporary artistic expression. These awards reflect the high quality of individual illustrators and the ongoing vitality and international relevance of the national illustration scene.

Future of BIB

Among the younger generation of promising illustrators featured at BIB, Klasja Habjan highlights the festival's transformative impact on contemporary illustration:

"It seems to me that the festival has encouraged, inspired, and liberated illustrators – primarily towards a more exper-

imental and personal approach that allows them to break away from existing visual solutions and imposed trends. Also, award-winning works like that of Vendi Vernić show that the profession recognizes true value" (Habjan, personal communication, May 2025). The history of illustration spans centuries, beginning with the intricate craftsmanship of illuminated manuscripts that combined text and image to convey sacred and cultural narratives. Over time, illustration evolved through printmaking, children's books, and digital media, continually adapting to new technologies and artistic movements. Today, with the rise of artificial intelligence, illustration enters a new era—challenging traditional roles of the illustrator and expanding creative possibilities in unprecedented ways. As with past technological advancements—from the invention of the printing press to the rise of digital tools—new technologies have consistently expanded, rather than diminished, the creative potential of artists. In the age of AI, the illustrator's originality, creativity, and skill become even more crucial in shaping meaningful and distinctive visual narratives. Offered by this powerful set of tools authors can amplify their own imagination and open new frontiers for artistic expression. The Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), with its legacy of celebrating innovation and excellence, is well positioned to become a key platform for showcasing how illustrators creatively navigate and redefine their role in this evolving landscape. The history of illustration spans centuries, beginning with the intricate craftsmanship of illuminated manuscripts that merged image and text to convey sacred and cultural narratives.

Over time, the field evolved through printmaking, children's literature, and digital media, continually adapting to shifts in technology, aesthetics, and storytelling. Today, illustration finds itself at another turning point—with the rise of artificial intelligence and a resurgence of diverse experimental practices, from handcrafted techniques to mixed media and conceptual visual storytelling. While AI introduces powerful new tools that can expand creative possibilities, it does not replace the illustrator's role; rather, it foregrounds the value of artistic intuition, authorship, and originality. Simultaneously, illustrators are exploring playful, hybrid, and often interdisciplinary approaches that challenge conventional boundaries and invite viewers into unexpected visual worlds. The Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), with its long-standing

commitment to innovation and artistic excellence, remains a vital platform for celebrating these evolving practices—showcasing how illustrators across generations reimagine their craft in both traditional and emerging forms.

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CHRYSOGONUS SIDDHA MALILANG (SWEDEN)



Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang, a nomad writer and translator before finally settling in in Southern Sweden. He started writing professionally – as a journalist – at an early age of 12, mainly motivated by an innocent wish of seeing his name printed in newspaper. After writing a number of short stories for various newspapers, he published two novels in 2006.

In 2013, he got involved

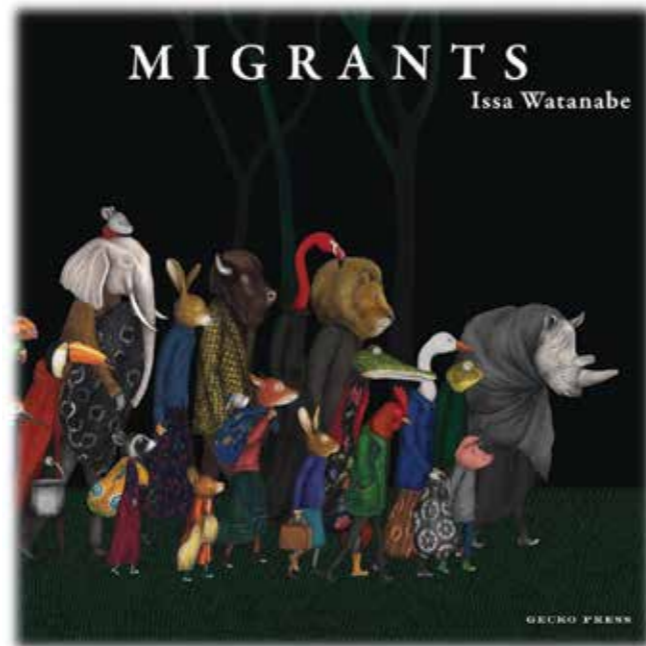
with Flying Islands and started translating Iman Budhi Santosa's poems (Faces of Java) into English. He was then granted Indonesian government funding for a poetry translation project in 2015. His own collection of bilingual poems, Encounters: Never Random, was published in 2017 by Flying Islands. He is currently teaching Creative Writing in Malmö University, Sweden and at the same time trying to get back to a poet mode. His latest works, translations of three children's books from Danish to Indonesian, were published in March 2021. PhD in Literature Study (English) with an interest in Creative Writing Pedagogy, Play in Education, Critical Pedagogy, Community of Practice, and a/r/tography. He is also interested in Children's Literature and New Media (such as graphic novels and video games). Some of his creative works, novels and poetry books, have been published in Macau, Sweden, and Indonesia.

Wordless books and BIB

While everyone here is talking about their past experiences and involvement with BIB, I cannot unfortunately do that. While I have heard a lot about BIB for a long time, this is the first time I am attending BIB. So, when BIB invited me to talk in this symposium, I had to find another angle to formulate my speech. As a scholar and researcher in children's literature, I decided to approach this invitation from an academic perspective. Fortunately, the discussion about illustration in picturebook is closely related to the current project I am doing with Robert Wallden about

wordless picturebooks in the classroom. This speech is, thus, based on the study and our published articles and chapters. Let me begin by taking you into a classroom.

This comes from a study we conducted with a second-grade class in Sweden. Twenty-eight children, a librarian, a teacher, and a wordless picturebook: Issa Watanabe's *Migrants*.



The librarian stands at the front and holds up the book. She tells the children:

"There is no text in this book. The text is something you add yourself. Now we'll add to it in our own heads. We'll think: What's happening here? Who is that? What are they doing?"

The room goes quiet. The children lean forward, studying the images. And then, slowly, the silence fills with voices. One child says, "The skeleton is following them. Maybe he's a shadow." Another insists, "No, he's a soul." A third notices that the frog has changed clothes mid-journey and invents an entire subplot of betrayal and revenge.

Within minutes, the classroom is alive with stories. The

children are not decoding printed words. They are absolutely reading—reading the illustrations, interpreting, negotiating, and creating new narratives of their own.

This moment captures the essence of what our research shows: illustrations are not mere decoration. They are agents of meaning. They invite children into dialogue, and they generate creativity, empathy, and collaboration.

So why is this important?

For a long time, illustrations in children's books were treated as secondary—pretty additions to the "real" story, which was thought to be in the words. But scholarship in children's literature has shifted. We have now recognized that illustrations are narratives in themselves.

Wordless picturebooks make this especially clear. Without guiding text, readers must engage directly with the images.



Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang

They must infer, interpret, and imagine why artistic choices are made. And because there is no single "correct" reading, the space becomes open and dialogic.

In our classroom study, we saw this openness play out again and again. Some children built personal connections—linking the migrants' journey to family histories of war and escape. Others zeroed in on small visual details, like the change in a character's clothing, and spun entirely new plots. The point is that illustrations gave all children a way in, and this aligns with what the librarian herself told us. She said:

"The biggest advantage is that you can reach all students, but in different ways. I like pictures. I like illustrations. I like art. It's an open language. Everyone can relate to it."

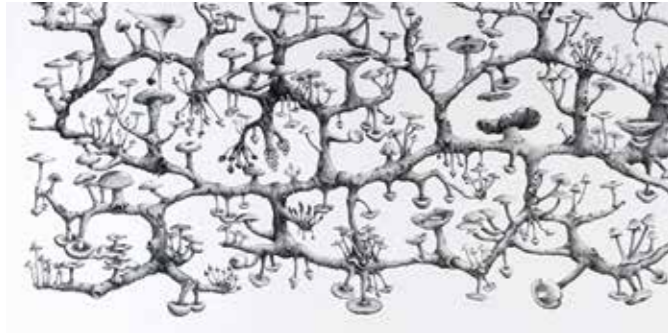
Notice that phrase—open language. Unlike printed text, which sets boundaries on interpretation, illustrations invite multiple readings. They allow children to enter the story through their own doors—whether through empathy, memory, or imagination. It is important to also point out that they can do this regardless of their language proficiency. Whether the student is a native Swedish speaker or newly arrived, the lack of text (or language requirement) in the wordless picturebook put them in equal starting level. Illustration is a language of its own, a visual language where everyone can enter and make meaning regardless of their languages, cultural backgrounds, social classes, and various other things.

We describe this dynamic using the concept of assemblage. The picturebook is not a closed object, waiting to be decoded. It becomes part of a larger network—of voices, interpretations, and creative responses.

In this project, the assemblage extended beyond the book itself. The children created animal figures out of egg cartons, some modeled on the book's characters, others entirely new—dragons, unicorns, imaginary friends. These figures became the basis for written stories, which the children then performed and shared with each other.

So the illustration on the page expanded into artwork, into writing, into storytelling, into embodied classroom dialogue. The wordless picturebook acted as a seed, but the children re-planted it in their own imaginations, growing entirely new narratives.

Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang



Children's Book as Rhizome

This shows us that illustrations don't just support literacy. They generate it. They create inclusive spaces where all students can contribute, not only through reading and writing, but also through art, performance, and conversation. The teachers saw this, too.



Embodiment of Collective Creativity

The classroom teacher told us: "There is no right or wrong. When there's no text, you don't really know where it will go. In another class, it would have landed differently."

This sense of openness is central. With a written text, everyone is tied to the same words. With illustrations, every class, every group, every child can create a different story. And in that process, hierarchies between adults and children begin to blur. The children are not simply recipients of

meaning; they are co-authors of the narrative. Now, let me shift from the Swedish classroom to the international stage: the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava, or BIB.

Since 1967, the Biennial has been one of the world's most important events dedicated to children's book illustration. It is unique in focusing entirely on illustration as an art form—not as decoration, not as something secondary, but as the central medium of children's storytelling. At BIB, illustrators from across the globe come together to exhibit their work, share ideas, and gain recognition. Awards such as the Grand Prix and the Golden Apples have launched many careers, bringing illustrators from local contexts to international prominence.

But beyond prizes, what the Biennial provides is space. Space for illustrators to experiment, to be taken seriously as artists, and to see themselves as part of a global community of storytellers. And this connects directly back to the classroom. Just as illustrations in *Migrants* opened a creative space for children, BIB opens a cultural space for illustrators. Both remind us



Bratislava Illustration Biennial

that illustrations are not passive images, but active forces in shaping how stories are told and how we engage with them.

So let me return to where I began. A child, sitting with a picturebook, pointing to the images, telling their own story. Is this reading? Yes. It is reading, imagining, creating. It is the essence of what illustrations make possible. Illustrations expand children's capacity to tell stories. Thanks to institutions like BIB, illustrators themselves are given recognition and room to grow.

In classrooms and in international exhibitions alike, illustrations remind us that meaning is not carried only in words. It also lives in colors, lines, and shapes—visual languages that speak across cultures, ages, and borders.



Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang, BIB 2025 Symposium





Olga Majcen Linn, BIB 2025 Symposium



Timotea Vráblová, BIB 2025 Symposium



Albín Brunovský Workshop



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OLGA MÄEOTS (RUSSIA)

Olga Mäeots



Olga Maeots is a librarian and curator at the Centre for Children's Books of the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, which holds Russia's largest collection of picture books from around the world, dating from the 19th century to the present day.

At the Centre, she organizes exhibitions and displays featuring

both books and original illustrations by Russian and international artists. She works closely with publishers in Russia, promoting the translation and publication of outstanding picture books from different countries.

Olga also gives lectures and talks to art students on picture books as a unique art form, exploring the work of exceptional illustrators and authors. She considers the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), with its catalogues and publications, an invaluable source of insight and inspiration in her professional work.

In search of individuality

I am a librarian, and my library maintain the biggest in Russia collection of picture-books from all around the world from XIX century up till nowadays.

In the Centre for Children's Books in the Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow we also hold many exhibitions and demonstrate our books as well as illustrations of Russian and foreign artists. We cooperate with Russian publishers and promote translation and publication of the best picture-books from all around the world. I also often talk to art students about picture-books as a unique art form and we discuss the work of many outstanding artists. BIB with its catalogues, and other publications has been always my important adviser. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the topic so important

for me – picture books in the contemporary world.

The number of picture-books grows rapidly from year to year. In 1967 when BIB has launched its first exhibition considerable part of the artists have presented their contributions to illustrated books – collections of fairy tales, children's classics etc. But picture-books gained important place, too.

1960-ies was an important and prolific period that marked a radical shift in the development of children's books. Many talented artists - young or well established - have turned to children's books at that time. They experienced unique features of picture-books and enjoyed opportunity to address the future generation. Many of these artists got recognition from BIB that almost from the start has become a creative laboratory supporting experiments and modern ideas. I can name Emanuele Luzzati, Etienne Delessert, Binette Schroeder, Farshid Mesghali, May Miturich, Jannus Stanny and many others. All of them have strikingly recognizable individual style – a combination of national traditions, personal cultural background and desire for modernity. Participation in BIB has become for many an inspiration for future prolific creative career.

Picture-book is a specific art form that gives artist a unique freedom of expression suggesting variety of styles. It also provides possibility for the direct dialog with the reader, it can recreate, gives opportunity to enjoy images and colors, but it can also express complicated philosophical ideas. That makes picture book an attractive art form for many artists.

Russian artist Nikolay Popov got the Grand Prix in 1975 for the sophisticated illustrations to "Robinson Crusoe" and the Plaque in 1981 for "Tales and Legends of Portugal". But he also has later turned to picture-books and his "Why", first published in Germany in 1995, has become an important anti-war statement and has been published in many countries.

The advantage of BIB from the first year up till nowadays is its support of personal creativity and non-commercial basis. The artist is not evaluated by his or her commercial success. And it contradicts with an increasing pressure of commerce and globalization that influence book market, requests versatility and demolishes cultural peculiarity. The practice of co-editions demands that books should be easily saleable – that means

be a kind of easy-reading that is apprehensible in any corner of the world. And so, we get numerous editions with similar illustrations – bright, decorative and devoid of peculiarity.

But picture-books have an important mission - they help a child to learn about the variety of the world. Many BIB laureates have introduced us to their native culture. Paloma Valdivia Barria (Grand Prix 2023) from Chile fascinates us with mythical tones of Latin American culture. Anna and Varvara Kendel invite their reader to the North of Russia (Golden Apple BIB 2021) and Chen Xunru from China suggests visiting the Bull King Festival (Golden Apple BIB 2023).

Other artists illustrate foreign tales or stories. Being a translator myself I feel much in common with those who present foreign culture to the young readers. Eva Bednarova impressed BIB audience by poetic illustrations of Chinese fairy tales which invited readers "into a dream-like silence where there is no evil nor pain". And she got the Grand Prix 1969.

Many years later Anastasia Arkhipova in the picture-book "Across the River" has also turned to Chinese story and created a charming world of Chinese winter tale. This picture-book could be considered a successful example of co-edition. For Russian readers it preserves reminiscences of Chinese landscape paintings and a peculiar intriguing exotic tune. And for readers in China? Do they consider the Chinese bears in the picture-book to have a hinted relation to Russia? May be.

Picture-books make bridges to help us meet and enjoy good stories together. They provoke curiosity and support understanding. And what is more – national traditions are a vital source of visual variety that confront a tendency for unification. I consider it most important that BIB supports the specificities of author's style as well as local peculiarities and national cultural traditions in contrast with global trends of standardization.

Contemporary world makes us consider everything in big numbers – countries, nations, social groups. But achieving globality don't we lose respect for individuality – uniqueness of personal attitude, feeling, thinking? It is a dangerous situation: considered as a part of a group one could easily be deprived of one's own opinion. Isn't it the mission of art to present us an individual point of view – to challenge, to make

us care not about thousands and millions but to take into consideration every person and respect and consider individual point of view even when it opposes the prevailing public opinion. An artist makes a statement – it could be expressed in any form, and a picture-book provides both media to convey ideas and audience to consider them.

Sydney Smith from Canada has shown us in his brilliant picture-book "what it's like to be small in the city". The artist presents our big adult world from child perspective and makes us notice small thing we usually pass by and what is more – to realize their importance for ourselves. A child perceives an illustration differently than an adult, he starts from details and compose the whole picture afterwards. And picture-book artists return us this careful consideration and vital details.

Harlin Quist – a famous publisher and innovator of children's books in 1960-70-ies has proclaimed: "I believe mostly what a child deserves in a book is a very simple thing: the unexpected".

BIB has become a place where we meet these unexpected picture-books and artists that dare as fairy-tale heroes enter an unknown ground, stand the risk and break the borders to convey own vision and point of view.

I do remember my first impression when I saw surrealistic and mesmerizing illustrations by Etsuko Nakatsuji from Japan (Grand Prix 1999) or enigmatic and provoking illustrations by Lilian Brøgger from Denmark (Golden Apple 2005): astonishment at first and then – joy and sense of creative freedom. Both artists have demonstrated unique visual language, and their books widen the creative territory of children picture-book. A friend of mine Russian artist Ekaterina Silina participated in the Albin Brunovsky workshop in 2001. Lilian Brøgger was her trainer. Ekaterina has told me that she was fascinated by the possibility to work together with an outstanding artist. It has become a great liberating and inspiring experience to her. I suppose that many artists are grateful to BIB experts for their wisdom and courage to support most daring experiments.

Modern picture-book is a complex polysemantic art form, acting on various levels it addresses both children and adults. It can entertain but it can also transfer complicated ideas and reflections. So modern picture-book suggests or even demand slow reading and rereading.

Olga Mäeots

Klaus Ensikat retells “Faust” Goethe as a picture-book. And due to his unique talent, this album preserves the richness of ideas of the philosophical poem as well as reveals us the beauty of this classical masterpiece.

On the other hand, Anna Höglund from

Sweden retells “Hamlet” as a picture-book with animal characters. Is it an attempt to deprive famous tragedy from its classical gloss – as some famous theatre directors also did and do – or a curious play that introduce little children to the world of classical literature? Both is possible. Anyhow the book provokes us and inspire to search for the reason.

Peter Sis is a world-wide famous illustrator born in Prague. He has worked out a unique personal style that allows his picture-books works on numerous levels. They could be read and reread many times providing endless adventures and discoveries.

Modern picture books could be compared with icebergs where a bright intriguing top is floating in the ocean of knowledge and emotions. The artist needs talent and courage to enter this fascinating world. So let me express my respect and gratitude to BIB for its permanent support of new innovative ways of visual storytelling.



BIB 2025



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AKOSS OFORI MENSAH (GHANA)



Akoss Ofori-Mensah is working with Neil Butcher & Associates (NBA) to research the impact of open licensing on publishing business models by sharing books in underserved local Ghanaian languages. The collaboration aims to understand how open licensing works and its benefits to children; especially allowing them to read stories in their own mother tongue.' In 1993 Akoss started her own publishing house – Sub-Saharan Publishers for children's books. Akoss has served on the Ghana Book Publishers Association as the Honorary Secretary and Vice President. She was elected President of the Association from 2003-2005. She has been a member of The African Publishers Network (APNET) and is part of African Books Collective's council of management.

Sub-Saharan Publishers, founded by Akoss in 1992, is an indigenous Ghanaian publishing house now specializing in African children's books, African literature, literature on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and scholarly books. The environment has always been an important theme to Sub-Saharan Publishers, as is gender. Akoss explains the reason for her emphasis on the environment. "I love nature; I grew up in a rural community where life is dependent on nature; the forest, the rivers were protected by traditional rules. In my adult life I have seen these rules thrown to the dogs; the quest for quick riches has turned our rivers into muddy ponds and farmlands are being destroyed. The traditional environmental protection rules are no longer respected; and government is having a hard time getting its environmental laws enforced."

MULGHETA, A day in the life of a Blind Footballer

By Patricia Thomas

Some years ago, at the Frankfurt Book Fair, I met a writer and illustrator, named Patricia Thomas, who introduced her manuscript to me. The manuscript was about a blind footballer, Mulgheta. This was the story of a young boy of six years, who fled with his parents from a civil war in Eritrea to Germany.

When he was 10 years old he had a serious accident and after that he became blind.

However, thanks to his courage and willpower, he was able to overcome the great challenges of his new life. He learned to play football and worked as a sports trainer and masseur at fitness centres in Germany. I found this extremely intreguing. In my part of the world, disabled persons, especially children, do not get much attention from the government. Mulgheta is an inspiration for children with disabilities.

We had the honour of hosting him in Ghana last year, to interact and play football with the children from the Akropong School for the Blind. Everyone had a great time! It was amazing

A photo album of his visit to Ghana and his interaction with the students of Akropong School for the Blind in Ghana, are shared with you and 5 copies of the book, his story, for the BIB LIBRARY.





Melika Jamali, Fatemeh Parisa Behabadi, Murti Bunanta, Zuzana Jarošová and Sahar Tarhandeh



BIB 2025 Symposium



Meeting of the international jury of BIB 2025 and the director of BIBIANA, Petra Flach



Albín Brunovský Workshop 2025



Juraj Žembera, BIB 2025 Symposium



BIB 2025 Symposium

HYUNMIN PARK (SOUTH KOREA)



Hyunmin Park (born May 24, 1986) is a South Korean picture book author and illustrator recognized for his poetic imagery and thoughtful storytelling. His major works include So Much Snow (2020), Let's Play Together (2021), Finding Light (2021), and City Flight (2022), along with A White Dog, How to Be a True Friend, Frogs

and Whales, and The Incredible Dung Beetle.

Park has received numerous international honors, including a Special Mention at the 2021 Bologna Ragazzi Opera Prima Award for So Much Snow, selection as a Winning Illustrator at the 2022 Bologna Illustrators Exhibition for City Flight, and inclusion in The BRAW Amazing Bookshelf (2023) for Let's Play Together. He was also named a 2023 Italian Excellence winner at the Bologna Children's Book Fair and received the 2024 Korea Picturebook Award Grand Prize (Fiction). His books represented Korea at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava in 2021, 2023, and 2025, and he earned the 2025 Best Book Design of Korea Award.

In addition to his publishing career, Park has collaborated with international brands, including illustrating for Benetton Kids (23SS Collection).

Material and other elements in book creation

Congratulations on BIB's 60th anniversary. It is a great honor for me to participate in such a meaningful year. My picture books have been selected to represent Korea three times up till now, including this time. Of course, it has been a great honor, considering the status of BIB and the role it plays, but at the same time, it came as a surprise because I'd always had a feeling my illustrations might not perfectly suit BIB's aesthetic.

However, since the Korean jury must have selected my work because they felt that the books highlighted some important element of picture books, it got me thinking about what that element might be. I suspect it is the physicality of the book.

I dedicated my book *So Much Snow*, which was exhibited at the BIB in 2021, to Bruno Munari and Remy Charlip. This is primarily because I really admire the two artists, but also because I was directly inspired by Remy Charlip's *It Looks Like Snow* (1957) and Bruno Munari's *Little White Riding Hood* (1972), in which blank white paper is depicted as pure white snow.

There is a dedication to John Cage in Remy Charlip's book. Taking the cue from John Cage's silent piece, *4'33"* (1952), which in fact shows that there is no such thing as complete silence, Charlip also shows that there is no such thing as completely blank white paper. John Cage was influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (1951). They were contemporaries who knew each other, and it is clear that they influenced each other, directly and indirectly.

This kind of blank space is very familiar to us in Asia. In the West, absence means not existing, but in the East, blank space is more inclusive, seen as a space where things are not fixed and independent but where they can change. Compared to the Western concept of emptiness, where the focus is on the medium itself that forms the background, blank space in traditional Asian paintings emphasize interdependent relationships.

Figure 1 shows a chapter by Jang Hyeon-gwang, a scholar of the Joseon Dynasty in Korea, that describes the principles of the universe. It is left blank. In explaining the origin of the universe, he is showing that the universe arose from an empty space devoid of any interlocking relationships. Figure 2 is a painting by Kim Hong-do, one of the most famous painters of the Joseon Dynasty. As a Korean, I am familiar with blank spaces like these, and it feels natural for me to combine them with a Western perspective in my work.

Little White Riding Hood and *It Looks Like Snow* are not as famous in art history as the names of John Cage or Rauschen-

berg. I think this is because people think of books more as vessels containing messages than works of art in themselves. But books are both. They can never have only one aspect.

I think the physical aspect of a book is important. Some people say books will disappear, but I believe books will remain in our culture forever. Umberto Eco once said books, as an in-



Figure 1. Jang Hyeon-gwang (1554–1637)
Essential Summary of the Universe



Figure 2. Kim Hong-do (1745–1806)
The King Viewing Plum Blossoms

vention, has achieved perfection in its form, like the wheel or the spoon. Since media already takes the form of a message, I think we will come to focus more on books, the only thing with physical properties.

Of course, it will not do to emphasize form alone. Hal Foster said that treating a book as a design construct more than an intellectual medium is a crime. This is because the core function of books, which Umberto Eco calls a perfected form, is clearly to convey meaning. I believe that creators who use books as a medium must consider both aspects, as vessels containing messages and as works of art.

As Jonathan Haidt says in his book *The Anxious Generation*, it seems clear that social and digital media are harming children. Although these media appear to be convenient and effective in gathering knowledge, I believe that they cannot help us grow, since they are by nature abject and transient. That is why books, which are firmly grounded in the real world, will become more important.

If you look at Bruno Munari's books, it is clear that from early on, he tried to showcase the book itself by using various shapes of colored paper in various textures, without words or illustrations. These books were not created simply as an abstract or stylistic exercise, but to clearly convey what a book is. The back side of Bruno Munari's *Prebooks* features a dialogue between Munari and a child. To the question, "What is a book for?" Munari answers that "books are used to learn about things or to amuse oneself, in any case to add to one's knowledge of the world." Surprises give way to knowledge, and what we already know does not surprise us. Does AI or digital media offer knowledge that enriches the world? Aren't they tricking us into thinking that we already know?

Bruno Munari incorporated various physical elements such as tracing paper and black paper into his book *In the Darkness of the Night*, but even for Munari, commercially publishing such a book was not easy. Even today, it is not easy to commercially publish works that showcase the physical aspects of the book. In my book *Let's Play Together* (Figure 3), I wanted to use black paper as *In the Darkness of the Night*, but it was not feasible. To compensate, I had the sides painted black.

Of course, that's not something you notice right away, but I

like that detail because with digital books, you can't see the sides.



Figure 3. Let's Play Together (2022)

My book *Frogs and Whales* (Figure 4) was printed on paper made from sugarcane waste instead of wood pulp. The color I wanted to highlight in the printing process was white. Since white ink is not typically used on white paper, I thought that using white ink on sugarcane paper would convey the special texture of the book more effectively to readers. However, the color came out a bit differently than we expected, and the publisher and book designer tried to talk me into printing the texture of the sugarcane paper on regular white paper instead. Whereas what I wanted to present to readers was the book in its entirety, meaning that even if the color was slightly off, that was also part of what I had intended, the publisher thought of the result as defective since they considered a book as just a vessel containing the message. It was difficult to bridge this gap, but in the end, we agreed to mix in a little cyan into the white to create a light blue color, and that is how the book finally came out.

I used recycled kraft paper to print *The Incredible Dung Beetle* (Figure 5), which was selected as the Korean entry for the BIB this year. The recycled kraft paper helps tell the story of cycles in nature. This book was not easy to publish either. I wanted



Figure 4. Frogs and Whales

to emphasize the color white for this book, too, which is not commonly used in printing, so we used UV printing to print white ink on dark kraft paper for all the pages in the book. Since this process can be costly, but does not produce results as showy as fancy post-processing or spot colors, it was not easy to convince the publisher. I really wanted to present



Figure 5. The Incredible Dung Beetle

the paper itself to my readers, and in the end, the publisher agreed and we published the book. I kept the illustrations from getting too close to edges so that the sides of the book could appear uniform. We also used green binding thread to convey the message of recycling. My books are the only commercially published books in Korea that use sugarcane paper or kraft paper. I think somebody needs to insist on these aspects, even for commercial books.

I want my books to convey my intentions, instead of being just reproductions. This idea is incompatible with commercial publishing, but it is conceptually possible. In picture books, the artist's intentions get diluted mainly through colors. The original artwork is scanned and converted into digital files, and then rendered into combinations of the four primary colors, CMYK, which compromises the artist's intentions. Even when the artwork is produced digitally, working on a computer and printing those colors again in CMYK are fundamentally different processes. I like the halftone printing process, but when it comes to conveying my intentions, I prefer spot colors. In *City Flight*, we used each CMYK color individually and combined them at the end. Of course, the process of printing the final product is the same as normal printing, but I composed the images as I would a four-color printmaking. (Figure 6).

The best way to change a point of view is to try out that point of view yourself. In my book *City Flight*, I showed readers the point of view of a dandelion. In the book, I wrote that it is possible to love a person if you can see the world through his or her eyes. Humans tend to think visually, and I believe that picture books, which are a visual medium, can be of great help. In this book, the dandelion seed learns to change its point of view and to look at itself objectively, and in the end, succeeds in taking flight.

Sometimes I make the mistake of thinking that I work alone. But it is not possible to exist by oneself. I feel that these moments where we meet and spend time together are precious, and I hope that we can all help one another to fly.

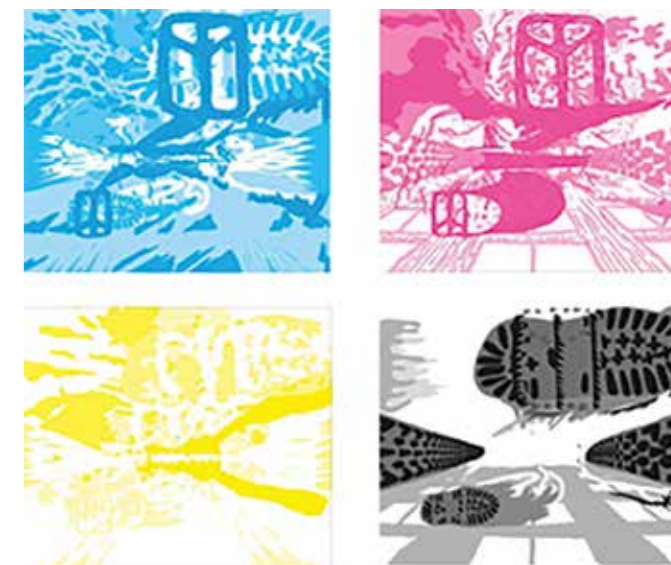


Figure 6. City Flight

KYEONG WOO (FRED) MINN (SOUTH KOREA)



Fred Minn is a storytelling and cultural-education professional from South Korea specializing in interactive and cross-disciplinary initiatives. He serves as the CEO of Nami Island Arts & Education Inc., where he leads programs blending art, literature, digital media and community engagement.

In his role, Minn has directed projects that bring together international perspectives on children’s literature, reading communities, and creative learning environments, such as his participation in the AFCC 2025 (Asian Festival of Children’s Content) under the topic “Building Reading Communities Around Asia.” From 2015 to 2018 Fred served on the Board of the IBBY Foundation. In addition, since 2011 he has been working as the publisher of Nami Books and also since 2016 he has been serving as the Director of The Song Island Foundation. Minn’s work is shaped by a commitment to redefining how young audiences engage with story, art and culture through immersive experiences—positioning him as a key figure at the intersection of literacy, heritage and new media.

Nami Concours and BIB

Located in Chuncheon City, South Korea, Nami Island is a must-visit destination for travelers from around the world, attracting over 2,000,000 visitors annually. Hosting more than 600 cultural events, performances, and exhibitions each year, Nami Island’s galleries showcase diverse exhibitions that engage and inspire visitors. Renowned for its enchanting atmosphere and commitment to children’s wellbeing, the island has been designated by UNICEF as a Child-Friendly Theme Park, reflecting its ongoing support of UNICEF and its continuous efforts to organize cultural events for children.

Founded by Minn Byeong-Do, co-founder of South Korea’s

first publishing house — which released numerous books tailored for young readers — the island was created with a vision to make culture accessible to children. Committed to this vision, Nami Island continues to promote culture and foster a love of books. Since 2005, the NAMBOOK Festival, held every May, has transformed the island into a lively celebration of storytelling, culture, and nature. Since 2019, guest countries have taken center stage, inviting children to explore new cultures and embark on journeys of discovery.

Another highlight is the Nami Concours, an international illustration competition launched in 2013 to support illustrators worldwide and advance picture book artistry. Now in its 7th edition, this globally recognized award provides a platform for artists to exchange ideas and push the boundaries of picture book illustration. On the island, winning works are brought to life through immersive exhibitions and hands-on workshops, inviting visitors of all ages to experience the magic of picture books.

The collaborative journey between Nami Island and BIBIANA began in 2016 with the signing of the first MOU, followed by a second in 2019. After weathering the pandemic period, the third MOU was signed in April 2025, promising continued collaboration through 2030. This re-signing came at a most fortunate time, coinciding with both the 60th anniversary of BIB and the 20th anniversary of the NAMBOOK Festival.

Over the past decade of collaboration, representatives from both sides have continued to visit each other’s events and exchange exhibitions — the most recent example being the Nami Concours exhibition currently held as part of the 2025 BIB here in Bratislava. As we move together into the second decade of collaboration, I look toward the future with great excitement and optimism for our continued efforts to enrich the world of picture books. Next step, NAMBOOK festival 2026!

Kyeong Woo (Fred) Minn





Park Hyun Min, BIB 2025 Symposium

Felipe Cavalcante and Park Hyun Min, BIB 2025 Symposium



Kyeong Woo (FRED) Minn, BIB 2025 Symposium

Mingzhou Zhang Igor Piačka, Zuzana Jarošová and Kyeong Woo (FRED) Minn, BIB 2025 Symposium



Liz Page grew up and lived in England until 1985 when she and her family moved in Switzerland, in Basel. She soon became involved with JUuKiBu, the Intercultural Children's Library in Basel, of which she was a founding member. The library opened in 1991 and has become an important centre with over 24 000 books and other me-

dia in 52 different languages. Later she became the President of the Intercultural Children's Libraries Association in Switzerland, now called Interbiblio. She joined the International Board on Books for Young People – IBBY – as Executive Director. IBBY as a non-profit organisation that represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together. Liz frequently travels to visit IBBY sections around the world and presents the work and activities at many Regional Meetings and other events. Liz Page is also an ex offo member of Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury. She shares the world's best practices and findings in children's literature.

Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava

It is a great pleasure for me to address you today on this auspicious occasion – the 30th Anniversary of BIB!

The histories of IBBY and BIB have been intertwined from the very beginning of the Biennale in 1965 -- 60 years ago! That year, one of the first winners of the Grand Prix was Květa Pacovská who later won the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration in 1992. Over the years we can see just how IBBY and BIB are connected through the many folks who served on the Andersen and BIB juries. Many BIB prize winners went on

to win the Andersen Award for Illustration. 1973 stands out when three future Andersen winners received Golden Apples and another received a Plaque from BIB!

I joined the IBBY secretariat in 1997, but my first visit to Bratislava was not until 2001 when the French illustrator Éric Battut received the Grand Prix. By this time, it was truly an international event with jurors coming from Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Slovakia, Russia, the USA, Japan, the Netherlands and Greece as well as a representative from UNESCO. I had heard many stories about the Biennale from former IBBY Executive Director, Leena Maissen, and now I could understand just how much this very special happening meant to so many people. Leena still tells stories about her visits here!

The BIB became a regular highlight in my IBBY-life and opened a window into an even bigger world of international illustration than I had discovered at IBBY. Not only because of the magical visits to the castle and the city, but also through the close cooperation with the organizers. Books by current Andersen winners are exhibited during each edition of the Biennale. This year IBBY is happy to share the books by Canadian illustrator Sydney Smith and Austrian author Heinz Janisch with you.

In 2015, I was truly honoured to receive an Honorary Plaque during the celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of BIB. This has stayed with me in pride of place. It is a great honour for having a good time!

Over the past sixty years the power and importance of illustration for young people has been demonstrated by the longevity of the international institutions honouring them. These include IBBY, the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the International Youth Library, as well as the more recent additions such as the ALMA, the Nami Island Concours, the SM Premio Iberoamericano. Of course, many more have been established across the world for national literatures. BIB has been a model for many of these. However, as the world order is becoming rather shaky these days, we need to do more. We need to tell more people how each of these institutions are working with future generations, giving young people windows to see others and mirrors that reflect their own lives – stories and pictures can do this. Despite world affairs that can sometimes polarize us, let BIB remain open to all

regardless of what our governments get up to. The potential for bringing children together, which logically continues as they become adults, is enormous.

Of course the Biennale of Illustrations Bratislava, is not just about a fabulous opportunity for international artists, it also encourages young and emerging illustrators through the Albin Brunovsky BIB-UNESCO workshop – just imagine how many young illustrators have got their start through these workshop! The International Symposium premiered in 1967 and in 2015 the IBBY Institute Bratislava was established to bring together experts in the field of reading and reading promotion.

When looking back at my connection to BIB, I can see that innovation is alive and well in the world of illustration for children and young people.

Congratulations to the Biennale of Illustration Bratislava and may its internationality and equality remain a beacon for illustration across the world.



Liz Page, BIB 2025 Symposium



Murti Bunanta, Liz Page and Zuzana Jarošová, BIB 2025



Petra Flach, Zuzana Jarošová and Liz Page, BIB 2025

JOSEP ANTONI TÀSSIES PENELLA (SPAIN)



Tàssies (Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella) studied Journalism at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In 1983, he began publishing in newspapers (El Periódico de Catalunya, Barcelona, El País, Madrid), carrying out graphic opinion sections and illustration pieces for socio-political articles.

Since 1984, Tàssies has illustrated children's

books. His first international award was a Plaque in the 1993 Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava for his illustrations of «El llibre dels bonus amonestaments,» «The Book of Good Advice,» a work of Catalan medieval moral poetry written by Anselm Turmeda in 1398.

Since the early 2000s, he has authored several picture books entirely. The first of them, «Volando del revés» («Flying upside down»), on the value of freedom and tolerance, was published in Spain, Mexico, and, in 2025, in Iran. «El nen perdut» («The Lost Child»), about the positive power of children's joy and hope even in dire situations like war and migration, won him the SM International Illustration Award in 2008 and, in 2009, his highest distinction, the Grand Prix BIB (Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava). Tàssies' work has been featured in several international solo exhibitions, including the 2010 edition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, when he presented his book «Noms Robots» («Stolen Names»), which speaks out against bullying at school. In addition to the Spanish version is available also in Russia, Greece, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Mexico; Edition Bracklo presented a German Edition in 2022 at the International Literature Festival Berlin. Several educational programs have been working with this book.

Tàssies has served as a juror for the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy, the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava in the Slovak Republic, the Tallinn International Triennial in Estonia, the Image of the Book Contest and Mikhalkov Prize in Russia, and the National Illustration Prize in Spain.

BIB and its significance today: a commitment to creating quality and respectful children's illustrations

I congratulate the successive governments of the Slovak Republic for their support of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava through the Ministry of Culture. Slovakia has successfully established, over the past sixty years, one of its most renowned international cultural events. Has done so by nurturing and taking care of something fragile and special for us: the art of illustration for children.

Moreover, Slovakia exports firsthand cultural quality from the town of Bratislava abroad, through the BIB regular exhibition program, featuring selected works of art displayed in various international museums.

Not only does the BIB celebration lend prestige to the country, but it also attracts, every two years, visual literature specialists from around the world, and has become a familiar meeting point for the IBBY community.

All of us celebrate today that BIB has soared through challenging circumstances over the decades, including periods of totalitarianism. This resilience is a precious testament to the power of art and the human ability to foster international bonds.

Over the past 60 years, social and communicative evolution has significantly transformed our environment towards a global community. Picture books for children and youth, as we know them today, have evolved worldwide. That shift in the communication ecosystem became widespread with the advent of the internet. International cultural standardisation began to become a reality. Since 2010, the general use of smartphones has crucially accelerated this standardisation.. Picture books adapted their shape to new customs and social interests, but also to technical developments in printing, logistics, illustrating procedures or editorial management.

How has BIB interacted in this process? Until the late 1980s, when Europe was divided and the internet did not exist, BIB signified a rare connection between disconnected worlds. From its inception, it had served as a showcase of the graphic

traditions of each country, highlighting some national trends. It facilitated communication between international and in-house illustration professionals and experts in a robust and influential manner.

Then came the geopolitical changes. From then on, BIB began to take on its current meaning as an oasis: a biannual showcase of non-commercial art for children in different countries around the world, with an emphasis on traditional techniques and an appreciation for the cultural diversity of sensibilities. It takes on a great deal of meaning today, due to the permanent connection that BIB represents with the rich illustration heritage of the past, on the one hand, and with pioneering experimentation, on the other.

In BIB, there is a worthy founding vocation. From the beginning, BIB focuses its attention on childhood, on children's rights, and on respect for what children are in themselves. In Bratislava, children are not viewed as adult projects or potential consumers, nor as mediators of advertising objectives. They are complete human beings. In the words of Zuzana Jarošová, General Commissioner of BIB, "The mission of the Bratislava Biennial is unique and invaluable – it teaches children to appreciate beauty and enriches their souls through outstanding artistic illustration." It had all started in 1967 with Dušan Roll, accompanied by great Slovak illustrators such as Albín Brunovský or Miroslav Cipár. They believed that children deserve the best art in the world.

That consideration, that respect, that desire to put quality works in front of children still makes much sense. Unfortunately, we can no longer aspire that the first images a child sees are those of an illustrated book. Today, respect for children's right to a humanist education in beauty is irresponsibly abandoned when a mobile phone is left in their hands, which will invade their first perceptions.

In Western societies, we tend to replace the concept of childhood as a transitory stage with the idea of childhood as an object of overprotection. But a specific social transgression is necessary. There is no need to write many books about diversity itself, as much as to talk from a point of view that includes variousness. And without a particular grade of transgression, there is no authentic diversity. The very voice of diversity is

transgressive and necessary.

Transgression as a means of attention to variousness is convenient. For example, the transgression of the most common standards of artistic beauty helps us to appreciate beauty much more broadly and personally, overcoming prejudices and strengthening sensitivity. For example, transgression against the social canons of human beauty in illustration brings the capacity for respect, acceptance and self-reliance. Without it, we perpetuate the tendency to show canonically beautiful protagonists so that our books are more attractive. Without transgressing, we would leave out all the "different" characters when, in reality, we can celebrate that almost all of us are "different".

The images in illustrated books can be transgressive, because they show what is not written. And, often, you have to go further, to step over the red line, to be wrong when the right is oppressive. Because extreme competitiveness, violence, and even war can tiptoe into the dictation of what is right. Then, peace is the transgression.

When we focus on children, we can imagine ourselves overcoming the differences in our adult societies. We could idealise children as a way to escape from reality. We may feel more capable of projecting our dreams for the future onto them than of acting to make our dreams a reality in the present. We celebrate that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified UN convention, with 196 signatory states, but we regret the enormous delay in its implementation.

There is a timeless vocation at BIB that connects with the concept of children's rights in the real world, as well as with an academic understanding of picture books, pedagogical approaches to art, and art itself. We are not aware of any other internationally significant event focused on children's picture books that has this kind of foundation.

Except, in part, for the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF), which transcends its fundamental commercial nature with a rich and consistent program of exhibitions, presentations, and roundtables on illustrated books.

BIB and BCBF maintain an interesting complementary relationship that deserves to be preserved. First of all, as we

Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella

said, BCBF is a business fair, but it also constitutes another fundamental focus for the illustrated book. The international exhibition of illustrators in Bologna attracts professionals and aspiring artists from all over. They are candidates who apply directly, people who want to publish or who want to see their talent recognised in the context of the best trade fair in the sector. As a result, the choice of the international jury shows the commercial trends of each moment.

Bologna exhibitions are complemented by the more diverse and independent nature of the BIB exhibitions, where candidates are nominated by the international sections of IBBY and by other cultural organisations of the countries represented. BIB is also unique due to the composition of the juries, which are large and heterogeneous groups of people, including international experts from various fields of knowledge, all of whom are related to illustrated books. But they are also juries from different geopolitical areas, and this creates a greater contrast between cultures. This results in reasoned debates that reveal common goals. These goals, due to the cultural diversity, may not align with the dominant commercial publishing trends on the international scene, although they may incorporate them. Thus, the consensus of excellence grants more opportunities for tradition or poetic rarity.

Secondly, every two years, BCBF hosts a personal exhibition of the works of the BIB Grand Prix, which features the cover of the catalogue and pages that signify the significant milestones in their career as an illustrator. This fact contributes significantly to the international projection of BIB, which is involved, in situ, in the program of the fair every two years.

Furthermore, like Bratislava, Bologna is a meeting place for the IBBY community, around the Hans Christian Andersen Award, which BCBF will later promote.

So, the most prestigious international prizes are therefore united: the BIB, for an illustrated work for children and young people, and the Andersen, for a career as an illustrator of books for children and young people.

It was an honour for me to win the BIB Grand Prix with “The Lost Child”, a book about childhood in a situation of war and migration. The book had already received the SM Foundation

International Illustration Award. I suffered documenting that work. Making books is beautiful, but it is not always fun. But the Bratislava Grand Prix gave me the courage and strength necessary to tackle another complex and daily issue, bullying. “Stolen Names” tells the story of a day in the life of a person who suffers from harassment at school.

As the winner of the BIB Grand Prix, I presented the originals of the two entire works in a personal exhibition in Bologna, which made it possible for me to publish “Stolen Names” in eight countries. I recently expanded this sequence, which explores taboos surrounding childhood, with *Golden Shadow*, currently published in China. This book deals with the life of a child from the moment he is abandoned to the moment he is adopted.

The BIB Grand Prix made it easier for me to win other prizes, make some more joyful books, and travel to Slovakia, Greece, Russia, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Germany, Croatia, Italy, Indonesia, and Colombia. In some of these places, where I have had exhibitions, speeches, workshops or book presentations, I have had the pleasure of sharing enriching experiences with children, authors, illustrators, specialists and reading promoters in their own environments. Most of all, I have had the privilege to win new friendships with highly compromised people. Precious people who believe in the power of children’s picture books that I am thankful to have known. Be sure, my friends, that I am thinking about you.

As a result of being awarded the Grand Prix BIB, I felt impelled to share the benefits the prize had provided me by temporarily engaging with Children’s literature institutions in Spain. I did it between 2017 and 2021. First, I promoted the reinstatement of the Professional Association of Illustrators of Catalunya (the most significant illustrators’ association in Spain) in Ibbycat, the Catalan section of OEPLI, Spanish IBBY. And then, since my temporal incorporation into the Ibbycat board, we coordinated with the other three Spanish sections (Galix, Galtzagorri Elkartea and Consejo General del Libro) to renew the promotion of BIB. We proposed to publicise the competition as soon as we had the bases, that is, giving the illustrators as much time as possible to prepare their proposals. The quality of the Spanish selection was another one of our objectives. We assembled a team of professionals in illustration, illustra-

tion pedagogy, and picture book prescription that agreed on ten criteria.

Our “Bratislava Criteria” for the evaluation of illustrated albums included four basic and six advanced items. Basic criteria were: 1. Formal coherence. 2. Discursive coherence. 3. Technical solvency. 4. Minimum interest of the proposal (There should be no gratuitous accumulation of commonplaces).

Advanced criteria were: 1. Innovation: contribution of one’s own and distinctive formal language. 2. Formal excellence: also in common visual languages, on already consolidated stylistic lines, when the author’s interpretation is comparable to the best references or surpasses them. 3. Specific narrative or evocative qualities of the images. 4. Global quality (fullness) of the creative proposal (including the text). 5. Interaction with the text (literality, complementarity, otherness). 6. Interaction with the design (and with the support)

These quality criteria for evaluating illustrated works had to serve as the common starting point for the free subjectivity of each jury member. Then, we promoted the creation of four different professional juries, one for each section of IBBY Spain, that conducted the selection using the same criteria. The organisational support of the OEPLI and Ibbycat technical secretaries enhanced the process’s performance. Our efforts contributed to making it possible to present high-level illustrators, surrounding the winner of the 2021 Grand Prix.

BIB instils the Faith to keep on believing that artistic and intellectual diversity is a treasure for children and that, together, we can bring about small changes for a better world.

That is why we specially thank BIB and Bibiana organisers for their continued efforts to preserve this deep sense. We look forward to inspiring them to unify and value the contributions of Slovak and foreign illustrators and experts, for everyone is needed to bring richness and diversity. We encourage organisers to boost and uphold the academic rigour, transparency, respect for diversity and freedom of action that should remain the hallmarks of BIB. This commitment to quality and cultural independence around children’s books is crucial for the biennial’s success and continuity.

Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella



Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella, BIB 2025 Symposium



Murti Bunanta and Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella, BIB 2025 Symposium



Liz Page, BIB 2025 Symposium



BIB 2025 Symposium



Zuzana Jarošová, Liz Page, Wally De Doncker and Katerina Dermata, BIB 2025 Symposium

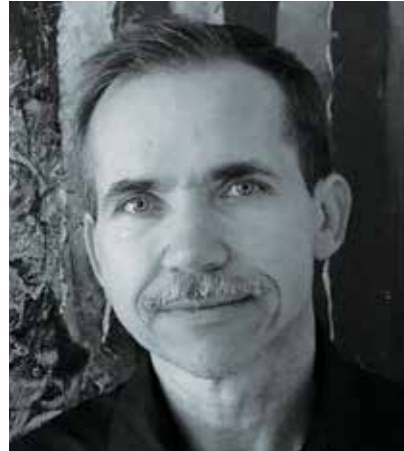


Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella, BIB 2025 Symposium



Director of BIBIANA, Petra Flach, BIB 2025 Symposium

IGOR PIAČKA (SLOVAKIA)



Igor Piačka was born on October 8, 1962, in Třebíč, Czech Republic. From 1983 to 1989, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava in the studio of Prof. Albín Brunovský and complemented his studies with time at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. Since 1990, he led the figurative drawing course at

the Department of Graphics of the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava for 13 years. He is engaged in painting, graphics, drawing, illustration, and stamp design. His works are represented in many private and public collections around the world. Since 1990, he has exhibited in more than 100 solo exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions in Slovakia as well as abroad (for example, in Prague, Vienna, Berlin, London, Moscow, New York, Tokyo, and Beijing). He has received more than 40 awards for graphics, painting, stamp design, and illustration. At BIB '93, he received the Children's Jury Award. He has also designed 35 postage stamps, 90 ex libris, and 60 illustrated books or covers. He is a member of the G-bod group, the UBS and SVVÚ associations, and the SČU Hollar association. He regularly participates in art workshops, symposia, juries, and commissions. He lives and works in Pezinok with his wife Júlia, who is also an academic painter.

Slovak Illustrators

What does quality in illustration mean?

Which criteria for assessing illustrations are subjective and which are objective? How should we view, perceive, and evaluate illustrations and illustrators?

In this paper, I'd like to focus on and mention some of Slovakia's most excellent illustrators whose works have been tested by time and have had a significant influence not only on me but also on entire generations of readers and fellow illustrators.

Although these authors have never been honoured at BIB, their works definitely deserve a mention here. My list should by no means be seen as complete, as there are too many to mention.

The first illustrator I'd like to introduce to you is **Miro HANÁK**. Born in Czechoslovakia, he was an illustrator, painter, graphic designer, and creator of postal stamps. He has a distinctive, original style inspired by Chinese ink



wash and watercolour paintings. He is an excellent observer of nature and animals – his paintings capitalised on his deep knowledge and sharp visual memory. His peculiar style of watercolour painting plays with the contrast of applying paint to a wet surface to produce bleeding colours and adding sharp finishing details to a dry surface. He is skilled at capturing the essence of animals; his depictions feature dynamic movements, characteristic stances, and striking expressions. His abstractions are firmly rooted in his understanding of reality. His handwriting is brilliant, almost calligraphic, and energetic; his work is concentrated, swift, but thoughtful and joyful. He uses the whiteness of the paper, which shines through the aquarelles. He harnesses colours and their power like a ma-

gician. By transforming his own enthusiasm, experiences, enchantment, and fascination with nature, he employed his talent and mastery to convey these to readers and spectators. He viewed the world as a wondrous place, reflected in his poetic illustrations for books by Jack London, Ernest Thompson Seton, Bomumil Říha, and Rudo Moric, as well as those by Krista Bendová and others.

I would also like to mention a few other well-known Slovak illustrators of adventure fiction.

As an illustrator for books and magazines, **Vladimír MACHAJ** also designed stamps and free graphics. His artistic output is extensive. I must mention his illustrations of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan of the Apes. His black-and-white pen drawings, finished with airbrush and scratchboard, beautifully convey the mystery of the jungle. He has mastered both human and animal anatomy, as well as the dynamics of movement. I first saw some of his illustrations when I was just a child, and they have since been forever etched in my memory. The scene of Tarzan confronting a lion, along with other jungle beasts, and



the ultimate life-and-death clash with giant apes, as well as dramatic, romantic, and fantastical scenes, are rendered authentically, convincingly, and with confidence.

Later, Machaj's illustrations became more stylised, as is evident in his work for Slovenské báje (Slovak Myths) by Jozef Cíger Hronský. His compositions follow several patterns – combining large and small shapes with a single focal point, usually positioned at the centre of the composition. He merges structures with various forms – landscapes, trees, cliffs, and architecture with people, animals, and drapery. Besides the central subjects, there are secondary themes that guide the viewer's eye across the picture's landscape, unveiling new objects not previously seen. This introduces a sense of time into the static illustration. His use of proportions is more relaxed, respecting the boundaries of the overall composition. His attention to detail demonstrates his persistent and diligent study of reality.

František ŠESTÁK was a painter, graphic designer, and portraitist; his illustrations include books by Karl May, Z. Grey, J. London, R. Kipling, and A. Assolant. His preferred technique was scratchboard, which mimics wood engravings. Using this method, he creates with "light" by removing the dark ink to reveal new shapes. He is a master of light and darkness. He draws, or rather engraves, figurative compositions full of dynamic gestures, action, movement, and mystery. The drawings are energetic and have a certain panache. His characters are stylised yet individualised enough, with their personality expressed through portraiture; his horses are beautiful. The charming romanticism of the Wild West is convincing, as are his paintings depicting the adventures of David Hamilton's Buffalo Bill, with their expressive colour schemes.



Teodor SCHNITZER is another master of black and white. He mainly illustrated novels about the indigenous peoples of America and Westerns by K. May, as well as works by J. F. Cooper, L. Stevenson, V. Hugo, and many others. He employed a special technique called scratched brush drawing, using Mässer plates. His compositions feature people and majestic landscapes, depicting both dramatic and peaceful stories. He managed to create a sense of a homogeneous, all-encompassing, and specific whirling movement. Each part of his composition communicates with the whole. It helps create a captivating atmosphere filled with its own internal light. His spatial perspective underscores his spellbinding visions.



Jozef CESNAK is best recognised by readers for his illustrations of the iconic series of novels by Robert Arthur: Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators. His pen drawings, which use a range of lines, from light, delicate strokes to long, heavily shaded areas, are full of mystery and skillfully depict the suspenseful stories that always involve a crime plot. Light and shadow, intricate grids, and labyrinths of hatching, with a focus on detail and mystery, all contribute to his drawings being authentic, believable, credible, and sincere. The resulting style combines Civilism and lyrical sadness.

The following group of artists-illustrators all share more than one trait: besides creating illustrations, graphics, drawings, and paintings, they also taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava.



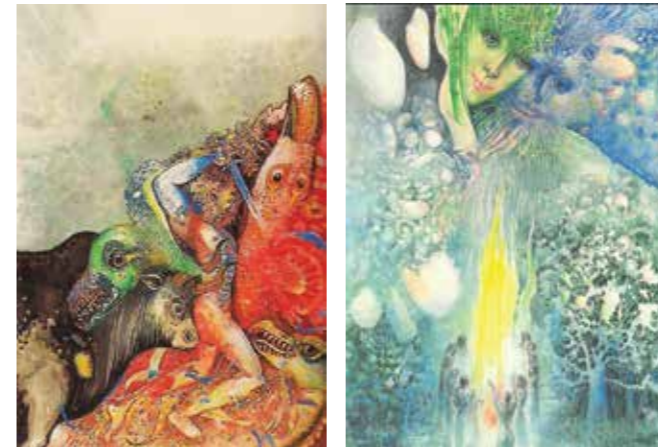
First to be mentioned is **Dušan STOPIAK**, an accomplished artist, graphic designer, and figure painter. His illustrations for R. Mertlika's book **Staroveké báje** (**Ancient Myths and Legends**) showcase his drawing and graphic skills, as well as his distinct personal style, inspired by the classical art of the old masters, ancient art, and modern figuration. His compositions employ a challenging technique of intaglio printing, combining dry-point and mezzotint. These are complemented by technically simpler yet equally powerful pencil drawings. His untimely death halted the burgeoning career of this talented artist.



Ján LEBIŠ produced multifaceted and varied illustrations, graphics, drawings, and paintings. To showcase his work, I have selected his illustrations for the book *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. They highlight the artist's strong, earthy style with exaggerated forms. He is fascinated by signs, expressive colours, grotesque elements, and humour. Both his tiny and large figures are vivid and in motion, and even structures, ships, animals, and other elements are filled with playful movement and a sense of fun.



The poetic illustrations by **Karol ONDREIČKA** are shaped by his prolific career in graphics and painting. He assembles various fragments of the real and abstracted worlds to create a unified image. For example, we can refer to *Báje a mýty starých Slovanov* (*Legends and Myths of the Slavs*) by Ivan Hudec. Ondreička's illustrations blend a poetic, imaginative perspective with a more epic, narrative-focused approach. They are visual collages constructed on the principles of metaphors, symbols, and surprising visual pairings. They are visual poems. Elements of the real world are placed within an abstract setting, producing a new visual reality.



Igor RUMANSKÝ

His illustrations for a collection of folk tales called *Slnovratka* by J. C. Hronský are poetic, deeply human, emotional, profound, overly spiritual, wistful, sometimes melancholic, yet also earthy and honest. The colours in his compositions are well-balanced. Drawings dominate his works—lines are lyrical, melodious, and sometimes dramatic, with varying thickness and transparency. They genuinely demonstrate the talent and experience of someone with excellent skills in drawing and graphics. His aquarelles are multi-layered and radiant. The figures he depicts are generalised, well-studied, and observed; the illustrations are intense, passionate, and sincere. At the same time, Rumanský's illustrations are straightforward, yet artistically sophisticated.



And, last but not least, **Ferdinand HLOŽNÍK**.

His illustrations are playful, humorous, straightforward, and simple; his drawings, graphics, and colours are bold and striking. They are aimed at younger children. The world they illustrate is a beautiful, pure, optimistic place where a child's spirit can grow and is protected from the burdens of the teenage and adult worlds. If artists wish to create a good drawing, illustration, or painting, they need to be able to step into the shoes of the children, or even animals like dogs, horses, or trees, that they are portraying. F. Hložník did exactly that.



I realise that the topic of illustration in Slovakia is so vast that it is almost impossible to cover it all in a short time and mention everyone deserving of recognition. I have only highlighted some of the most prominent Slovak illustrators, who form part of the mosaic that is Slovak illustration. Each of them is unique. Their work resonates with the senses and sensibilities of their viewers, readers, as well as art enthusiasts and emerging artists. They have contributed quality and artistic skill, sharing their talents, knowledge, and hearts. Their work has helped nurture Slovak culture, and for that, we wish to express our admiration, respect, and gratitude.

MARIJA RISTIĆ (SERBIA)



Marija Ristić was born in 1989. She completed high school in Zemun and is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Since 2009, she has been a member of the National Museum Associates's Club. From 2014 until 2016 was an intern at the Art Pavilion 'Cvijeta Zuzorić'. She has been participating in the organization of art

colonies in the Republic of Serbian for the past 3 years. She is the author of four exhibitions. She worked as the curator of the Golden Pen of Belgrade 2017 – an international illustration biennale organized by the Association of Artists and Designers of Serbia (ULUPUDS). Her professional activities include writing essays, catalog introductions, and group exhibitions. Marija in her essays explored the background of the emergence of Serbian illustrations as an independent artistic discipline, because the roots of Serbian illustrations are dual. On one hand, they developed from Baroque graphic art as well as from other artistic disciplines in the broadest sense of the word, and on the other hand, they evolved hand in hand with the expansion of publishing activities and the emergence of civic culture in Serbia at the turn of the 20th century. Serbian illustration is, in a sense, a cultural phenomenon par excellence, as until the end of the Great War, illustration in Serbia was carried out by painters as a secondary activity.

Bratislava Illustration Biennial: Six Decades of Contribution to the Theory of Illustration

The Emergence and Role of Global Illustration Exhibitions
Viewed in the context of art history, the Bratislava Illustration Biennial (BIB) is a cultural phenomenon whose layered significance extends beyond that of a conventional exhibition. To fully under-

stand its impact on the evolution of the picture book as an art form, it is essential to consider the complex historical, socio-cultural, and artistic framework in which it exists.

The founding of The Golden Pen of Belgrade in 1959 by the Association of Applied Arts Artists and Designers of Serbia (ULUPUDS) marked the first step in defending illustration as an autonomous artistic discipline worthy of recognition equal to painting — and of the illustrator as a legitimate professional. The Golden Pen exhibition, accompanied by a catalogue with formal regulations, expert forewords, and professionally photographed works, was the first showcase of this kind of illustration in Europe. This was a pivotal moment in art history when illustration needed to be elevated to a higher graphic and artistic standard, as well as affirmed through the formation of a dedicated field of theoretical study. Following the example of Belgrade's Golden Pen, eight years later, under the patronage of UNESCO and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), an exhibition dedicated solely to children's illustration was established in Bratislava — the Bratislava Illustration Biennial. Since their founding, these two major exhibitions have worked in tandem to present illustration not merely as decoration or textual supplement, but as an independent and expressive art form with its own narrative and visual potential.

The Symposium as a Space for Theoretical Development

For a long time in contemporary visual and artistic culture, children's illustration was marginalized in theoretical and critical discourse, creating a need for experts to contribute to its theoretical foundation. This opportunity was provided by the BIB Symposium, held as part of the Biennial's accompanying program. It brought together distinguished artists, art theorists, critics, editors, designers, and educators from around the world.

The results of this intercultural dialogue are published in the Proceedings of Theoretical Papers, which document the development of illustration, its role, visual rhetoric, and shifts in media and the visual perception of children's literature. This polylingual publication (in Slovak, English, Russian) makes the content widely accessible. Over six decades, the symposium's presentations — in synergy with the main exhibition and related programs — have fundamentally transformed the perception, aesthetics, and cultural significance of the picture book globally.

This diversity of approaches has sparked the emergence of new theoretical frameworks in art pedagogy, highlighting the importance of images in shaping children's perception of the world. The symposium's interdisciplinary character is reflected in the

diverse backgrounds of its participants — including fine arts, design, semiotics, psychology, literary theory, and art history. This professional variety has bridged the gap between theory and practice, enabling a continuous and dynamic dialogue between creators and interpreters.

Symposium Topics as Reflections of Current Issues in Illustration

Each symposium session is organized around a central theme, allowing participants to explore pressing issues in illustration more deeply and comprehensively. Examined chronologically across the last 60 years, these topics offer invaluable insight into the theoretical challenges associated with illustration as an art form — such as identity formation, migration, visual literacy, the relationship between text and image, and the historical evolution of illustration.

The early volumes (1967 - 1985) of BIB Symposium Miscellanies focused on the pedagogical and emotional functions of illustration, viewing it as a tool for emotional formation and visual communication before literacy. Conclusions from this period emphasized illustration's role in children's cognitive and emotional development, the symbolic value of stylization, and the psychological impact of color, shape, and composition — affirming illustration as a medium of internal states and aesthetic experience. Proceedings from the late 1980s and 1990s reflect a shift toward viewing illustration as an autonomous artistic expression, independent of text. Dominant themes included the critique of commercialization (which threatened experimentation), artistic freedom, and the unique visual language of illustrators. These texts elevated illustration from a narrative aid to a full-fledged artistic medium with its own semiotic power. After 2003, the symposium themes adopted a postmodern lens: multilayered meaning, fragmentation, playful form, and intertextuality. Illustration emerged as an active textual partner — sometimes provoking, sometimes paralleling the written word. Concepts such as image as text, reader as co-author, and illustration as a field of artistic experimentation bordering comics, installations, and animation were explored. This phase affirmed illustration as a contemporary artistic practice — not just "decorative accompaniment." From 2011 onward, topics addressed more socially engaged perspectives. Illustration was examined through the lenses of migration, intercultural identity, wartime trauma, post-war childhood, ecological narratives, and climate crisis. It was no longer viewed solely as an art form but also as a tool for social engagement. Artists used images to comment on global issues and offer children symbolic tools for

understanding the world — turning illustration into visual activism. The 2015 and 2019 volumes responded to technological changes: digitalization, e-books, and interactive apps. Questions arose about the loss of the artist's "hand" and preserving artistic integrity in digital environments. Conclusions called for new aesthetic criteria for digital illustration, recognition of the screen as the new canvas, and exploration of hybrid media: illustration that moves, sounds, and reacts. In this view, illustration is no longer defined by form, but by intentional artistic gesture in any medium.

Recent volumes (2021 - 2023) have focused on the emotional complexity of contemporary childhood — themes like anxiety, isolation, and the pandemic. Illustration is presented as a tool for introspection and healing, essential in times of crisis. It has gained a therapeutic dimension, becoming part of the emotional education of both children and adults — enhancing its artistic and social relevance.

The Symposium's Legacy — A Theoretical Mirror of Illustration Art

The BIB Symposium Proceedings, comprising the work of hundreds of experts worldwide, document the transformation of illustration into an artistic discipline and establish methods and frameworks for its theoretical study. The trajectory outlined in their pages spans illustration as educational tool (1960s), artistic medium (1990s), and multimedia, activist, and introspective expression (2000s - 2020s). These papers not only follow developments but often initiate them — shaping both artistic practice and society's understanding of visual art in children's books. Throughout the symposium's history, diverse methodological and thematic models have emerged — from postmodern deconstruction and redefinition of space, to psychological and emotional development, intercultural dialogue, digital evolution, activist imagery, and emotionally layered narratives. After sixty years, the proceedings have elevated children's illustration from a "minor art" to a subject of serious theoretical inquiry. Through awards such as the Golden Apple (Grand Prix), artists were encouraged to shape children's literature according to their personal visions and styles. The Golden Apple recognized illustrators not only for aesthetic excellence but for addressing social and educational themes. Thus, the legacy of BIB lies not only in its archives, but in generations of young people for whom BIB set high artistic standards in children's illustration. It helped establish illustration as a crucial element in children's literacy, emotional development, and critical thinking.

Marija Ristić

Conclusion

Over six decades, BIB has reshaped how we view illustration as a key component of children's literature — encouraging artists to create works that are simultaneously artistic, educational, and socially engaged. The symposium's publications remain an invaluable resource for researchers, especially given the lack of theoretical literature on illustration. They provide insight into major illustrators, industry challenges, market pressures, and other factors shaping the profession and art of illustration.

In today's context — where children are increasingly exposed to digital media — BIB remains a vital institution upholding artistic standards and celebrating originality and diversity. Even as picture books become commercially packaged with design and interactivity, BIB insists on high-quality, thoughtfully created books that foster deep emotional and intellectual connections with young readers. It affirms the value of authorial, non-commercial illustration — focused not on marketing, but on genuine artistic expression and meaningful communication.

While embracing digital forms with critical reflection, BIB continues to champion traditional techniques. Amid the commercialization and digitalization of children's literature, it stays true to its mission of preserving the artistic integrity of illustration. Its core mission is to cultivate a space for rethinking what it means to create children's books that not only entertain but shape character and worldview.

Finally, in a time when education systems around the world face challenges in preparing new generations for an uncertain future, BIB affirms the fundamental importance of visual literacy and creative thinking as essential skills for the years ahead.



Igor Piačka, BIB 2025 Symposium



BIB 2025 Award Ceremony



Marija Ristić, BIB 2025 Symposium



BIB 2025 Award Ceremony



BIB 2025 Symposium



BIB 2025 Symposium

ELLIS VANCE (USA)



Ellis Vance has been an educator for over forty years. He began his education profession in 1964 as an elementary school classroom teacher. In addition to his experience in the classroom, he has served as a reading and mathematics resource teacher and an elementary school administrator. He also worked at a district office level as

assistant director for Library Media Services and coordinator of English Language Arts and History Social Science for schools in the district. From 1990 to 2002 he was director of Library Media Services at the Fresno County Office of Education in California. While at Fresno County he also directed several technology projects for the state of California.

„BIB and the World of Children's Books: Sharing unique experiences, knowledge, and memories of United States IBBY involvement“

First of all, I would like to congratulate BIB on the 30th anniversary of its founding in 1967. Since then, and over the years, BIB has gained a reputation of being one of the foremost children's book exhibitions in the world and its prestigious awards for children's book illustrations and illustrators is well known throughout the world.

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) has been a supporter of BIB since its beginning, and I am proud that The United States Board on Books for Young People (USBY), as the US national section of IBBY, has a long history of involvement with BIB as well.

USBY plays an important role in selecting and nominating American illustrators for the BIB and its involvement is a key aspect of its broader connection to and support of IBBY's mission to promote international understanding through children's books.

In essence, USBY's involvement in the BIB is a testament to its commitment to promoting global children's literature and recognizing the artistic contributions of American children's book illustrators on an international stage that raises awareness of their talent within the global children's book community.

In truth, USBY's participation in BIB has fluctuated over the years. However, because of renewed interest generated while serving on the IBBY Executive Committee and my committee relationship and friendship with Timotea Vrablová, USBY established a BIB Nominating Committee and wrote its plan for increased involvement into the USBY statutes during the early 2000s when I was USBY Executive Director.

Like many IBBY National Sections, USBY has a committee of appointed members that selects American illustrators and their works to be nominated for the BIB. It is interesting to note that the number of illustrators nominated by USBY has fluctuated from time to time- with more being nominated in the early years and now again in recent years.

There was a period of time, after several years of non-participation, that the reconstituted USBY BIB Nominating Committee selected only one nominee to represent USBY at BIB. And for several years, that nominee was the same children's book illustrator also nominated for the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award

In 2019, under the leadership of USBY BIB Committee Chairperson, Brenda Dales, the BIB Nominating Committee sent three children's book illustrators from the United States to the BIB competition, a competition that included 539 illustrations from 3,056 children's books, created by 416 illustrators from 47 countries.

The 2019 exhibition included the following entries from the

United States:
 Ekuia Holmes: illustrations from *The Stuff of Stars*.
 Yuyi Morales: illustrations from *Dreamers* and *Niño's Horrendous Hermanitas*, and Pamela Zagarenski: illustrations from *The Whisper* and *Henry & Leo*.

The USBBY nominee for 2021 was the outstanding and accomplished children's book illustrator, Raul Colón, illustrator of *Child of the Universe* and *Fearless Flyer: Ruth Law and Her Flying Machine*.

The 2021 jury was given the enviable task of examining 2,700 illustrations from 380 illustrators representing 42 countries.

While the U.S. did not win a prize in 2021, just being among the competitors was a significant honor for Raul Colón and a shining exemplar of talent from the United States. Children's book illustrator, Colon, is also the illustrator of *Draw! and Imagine!*

In 2023, the nominees were Rashin Kheiriyeh and John Parra.

Rashin Kheiriyeh is an internationally recognized, award-winning illustrator/author, art director, animator and painter who has 23 years of experience in publication and broadcasting. She has published over Ninety children's books in countries such as United State, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Germany, Spain, South Korea, China, Brazil, India and Iran, including *Rumi: Poet of Joy and Love*.

John Parra is a best-selling, award-winning artist, illustrator, author, and educator, widely recognized for his award-winning, Latino themed children's picture books and commercial artwork. Passionate about art and literacy, he frequently speaks as a visiting artist at schools and literary conferences across the country. A current publication is *Growing an Artist: The Story of a Landscaper and His Son*

Duncan Tonatiuh, Jiemei Lin and Rahele Jompour Bell are the United States nominees this year 2025. Their nominations are a testament to the depth of children's book illustrators in the United States representing cultures from around the world.

Duncan Tonatiuh is a Mexican-American author and illustrator of several award-winning children's books. The illustrations in

his books are influenced by Pre-Columbian art. The themes in his stories relate to the Latino experience, with subjects that include social justice issues, art, history, and immigration.

Jiemei Lin is an artist born in Hangzhou, China, currently living and working in the Inland Northwest, Washington State. Lin works with both digital media and traditional media to create paintings, murals, and illustrations. Her work includes *The Rock in My Throat* which was selected as a Asian/Pacific American Awards for Literature Honor Book in the Picture Book category. Her illustrations give a voice to the stories of immigrants and Asian Americans, focusing on the experiences of women and children from East and Southeast Asia.

Rahele Jomepour Bell is an Iranian American illustrator, author, and educator. She moved to the United States in 2011 to pursue her dream of becoming a free international artist. Rahele has illustrated over 20 picture books published across Iran, the United States, and Canada. Among them are *Our Favorite Day of the Year*, *I Will Always Be*, *To Change a Planet*, *Missing Mama*, and *The Treasure Box*. Her work has been translated into multiple languages, including Vietnamese, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, and Turkish. Her illustrations have garnered numerous accolades and awards.

During the history of the BIB competition and exhibition, some United States children's book illustrators have received BIB Awards. Most notably, In 1991, Lane Smith received the Golden Apple Award for the illustrations in his book, *The Big Pets*.

However, regardless of being a BIB Award recipient or not, by participating in BIB, U.S. illustrators have received worldwide recognition, provided by the exhibition, inclusion in the BIB catalog, and the additional publicity generated by participating.

USBYY is also very proud that two of its very active members have served in recent years on the BIB International Jury. Brenda Dales, former USBYY BIB Nominating Committee Chairperson and USBYY Board Member, served in 2021 and Junko Yokota, former IBBY Executive Committee Member, former USBYY President and current USBYY Executive Director is serving on the Jury this year, 2025.

My own personal involvement in BIB has provided a number of

special memories for which I will be forever grateful. For several years, I served on the BIB International Committee and also made presentations at the BIB Symposium, including a session on important children's literature about refugee children. As a result of that session topic, I was interviewed by a local media outlet during the exhibition. And thanks to my friend, Timotea, I also participated with her in several Musicales during the opening week of BIB where we performed at a historical venue in Bratislava. Last, but certainly not least, in 2021, I was honored with a special award from Bibiana for my long and continuing support of BIB.

Finally, I want to thank Petra Flach, General Director of BIBIANA, Zuzana Jarošová, General Commissioner of BIB and Chair of the International Committee of BIB, and Viera Anoškinová, Head of the BIB Secretariat, for inviting me to speak at this 30 anniversary symposium. It has been an honor to be here in beautiful Bratislava once again, one of my most favorite cities in the whole world!



Ellis Vance, BIB 2025 Symposium



Ellis Vance, BIB 2025 Symposium



International Jury of BIB 2025



Ellis Vance and Petra Flach, BIB 2025 Symposium



Ellis Vance and Steffen Larsen, BIB 2025 Symposium



Meeting of the International Jury of BIB 2025



Ellis Vance and Mingzhou Zhang, BIB 2025 Symposium



Angela Yannicopoulou is a professor of Children's Literature at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Her research interests focus on picturebook, teaching of children's literature, ideology in children's books and materiality of the book. She has served on several boards and committees, including State Children's

Literature Award committee in Greece and Cyprus, and has organised several national and international conferences, including *People on the move and nostalgia in historical picturebook* (Agiou Nikolaou, Greece, 2022). She has authored seven books published in Greece and U.K (*Aesopic Fables and Children: Form and Function*, Liverpool, 1993) and many peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.



Chryssa Kouraki is a Teaching Staff member in Children's Literature at the Department of Early Childhood Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and a Lecturer in the M.Ed. program "Children's Book and Educational Material" at the University of the Aegean. She previously served as a Lecturer for two

years in the M.Ed. program "Literature" at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Her research interests focus on picturebooks, nonfiction children's books, the teaching of children's literature, and narratology in children's and young adult literature.

Greek illustrators as story authors

1. Authors and/or Illustrators

Although the simplistic dichotomy between written text and images has been seriously challenged in recent times, traditionally it was commonly assumed that the roles of author and illustrator are distinct and fulfilled by different individuals. This conventional assumption has historically led some authors to compartmentalize their visual talents, keeping them distinct from their literary production. Victor Hugo stands as a compelling example of a literary figure who employed visual art not as illustration, but as a parallel creative language and a serious, autonomous mode of expression. Although he produced over 4,000 works of visual art, often in an abstract and avant-garde style for his time foreshadowing elements of surrealism and modernism, these works were never intended for public display. Similarly, authors such as Henry Miller, Franz Kafka, August Strindberg, and D. H. Lawrence also chose to maintain a clear separation between their literary and visual works.

Over time, the boundaries between writing and illustrating have blurred, with authors creating images illustrating their literary works. In the realm of Greek children's literature, a notable example is the Nobel Prize laureate Giorgos Seferis. In his collection of limericks for young children, *Poems with Drawings for Young Children* ([*Poiimata me zografies se mikra paidia*], 1975), he followed the literary tradition established by



Picture 1. *Poems with Drawings for Young Children* [*Poiimata me zografies se mikra paidia*]

Edward Lear by complementing his poems with illustrations created by his own hand (Politis and Yannicopoulou, 2023) (picture 1). Internationally, examples of author-illustrators are even more abundant. For instance, Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, first published in 1902, featured illustrations drawn by Kipling himself. Similarly, *The Little Prince* has become inseparable from the visual form given to it by its author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

In addition, within the domain of books with images, there are instances where illustrators themselves assume full authorship of the narrative, claiming creative authority not only over the visual elements but also over the verbal content. This phenomenon marks the emergence and gradual consolidation of a distinct trend within Greek children's literature, whereby illustrators increasingly become the sole and exclusive creators of the entire work. This phenomenon is also evident on an international scale, with numerous prominent examples of illustrator-authors, including, among many others, Beatrix Potter, Maurice Sendak, Shaun Tan, who have each made significant contributions to the field by seamlessly integrating text and image within their work.

In instances where the author and illustrator of a text are one and the same, this phenomenon is referred to as authorial illustration. As Leroy (2019: 5) defines, it refers "to the practice of illustrating one's own writings, as opposed to illustrating the writings of others or having one's works illustrated by someone else." Closely related is the portmanteau term authorstrator (Agah, 2018; Salisbury, 2008), which denotes a creator who is responsible for both the verbal and visual components of their work. This term is typically used in the context of picturebooks, graphic novels, comics, and other forms of visual storytelling, where the integration of word and image is essential to the narrative structure.

The rise of authorial illustration/ authorstrators challenges the print-centric bias of the traditional "author function" (Foucault, 1977), which is usually tied to written language ignoring the fact that there are books where meaning is generated not only through words but also through images. As text and image are harmoniously blended into a unified narrative form, book creators emerge as true "polymaths" (Knight, 2019); artists, writers, and designers.

This paper explores how Greek illustrators, especially those participated in Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), function as illustrator-authors, redefining authorship through visu-

al narrative, and blurring traditional literary boundaries.

2. Greek illustrators

2a. Wordless Picturebooks

The most evident case in which an illustrator assumes the role of author is found in wordless picturebooks—also commonly referred to as silent books. In such works, where verbal text is entirely absent, the responsibility of constructing narrative meaning falls solely on the visual mode (Missiou, 202: 2). Here, the image is not merely a vehicle for artistic expression, but the narrative medium (Nières-Chevrel, 2010: 137). In wordless picturebooks, the illustrator does not simply create isolated images but rather crafts a coherent story through a sequential visual narrative, thereby fully inhabiting the role of author.

In the realm of wordless picturebooks, it is more common for the illustrator to be the sole author, making instances of shared authorship between writer and illustrator the exception rather than the norm. A representative example of this uncommon practice is the wordless picturebook *The Child and the Moon* [*To Paidi kai to Feggari*], conceptualized by Argyro Mountaki and Dora Andreadaki, with illustrations by Kostas Theocharis. The narrative unfolds exclusively through images, depicting the dramatic rescue of a ship by a lighthouse keeper and his son during a violent storm at sea (picture 2).



Picture 2. *To Paidi kai to Feggari*

Angela Yannicopoulou & Chryssa Kouraki

Although wordless picturebooks are often mistakenly associated with simplistic narratives intended solely for young children, they are, in fact, capable of addressing a wide range of themes and audiences, making them genuinely crossover readings (Beckett, 2012). A compelling example is Persa Zacharia's *The Whale, the Boy and the Sea Between Them* [H Phalena, to agori kai i Thalassa Anamessa tous] (picture 3), a wordless narrative that can be interpreted on multiple levels. Young readers may perceive it as a joyful tale of friendship between a boy and a whale, while adult readers may discern deeper themes, such as loss, death, ecological destruction, and the complexities of human relationships, whether they be familial, platonic, or romantic. Such layered readings emerge through careful attention to visual cues: the choice and symbolism of color (e.g., why is the sea depicted in the green tones of a swamp?), the deliberate absence of color (e.g., what does the empty, colorless sky signify?), the scale of the characters (e.g., why does the whale occupy the entire double-page spread?), the use of perspective and so on. In wordless picturebooks, it is the illustrator's visual literacy, emotional sensitivity, and mastery of the formal properties of the image that transform them into effective storytellers/ authors who shape meaning and evoke emotion through purely pictorial means.



Picture 3. *The Whale, the Boy and the Sea Between Them* [H Phalena, to agori kai i Thalassa Anamessa tous]

Another notable crossover picturebook is *Routs* by Iris Samartzi (picture 4), which received distinction in the First International Silent Book Contest (2025), organized by Carthusia Edizioni in collaboration with the Bologna Children's Book Fair and other cultural institutions. The book explores the concept of routes and paths that every creature must follow. Roads are depicted as omnipresent; on the ground and underground, in urban and rural landscapes, in the sky, and even within us. Some roads lead to a destination, while others seem endless. And when no road exists, one can always be created. According to Samartzi, "A silent book is just like music: it has no language, no boundaries. Thousands of invisible words are hidden within an image, waiting for young readers to discover them and construct their own narratives" (Samartzi, 2025).



Picture 4. *Routs* by Iris Samartzi

2b. Greek Picturebooks

Illustrated books and picturebooks differ in how images contribute to storytelling. In illustrated books, text dominates, whereas images play a secondary role. In contrast, picturebooks feature a close interplay between text and image, with visuals often taking on a significant narrative function. The distinction between verbal and visual text, author and illustrator, raises the question: "Whose book is it, the author's or the illustrator's?" Historically, the author has been privileged, often claiming conceptual ownership of illustrations, as seen in Jules Verne's detailed visual directives to his illustrators (Evans, 1998). However, even nowadays and even regarding picturebooks, where illustrators play a more recognized role, paratextual elements, like cover design and typography still reflect a hierarchy, typically placing the author's name more

Angela Yannicopoulou & Chryssa Kouraki

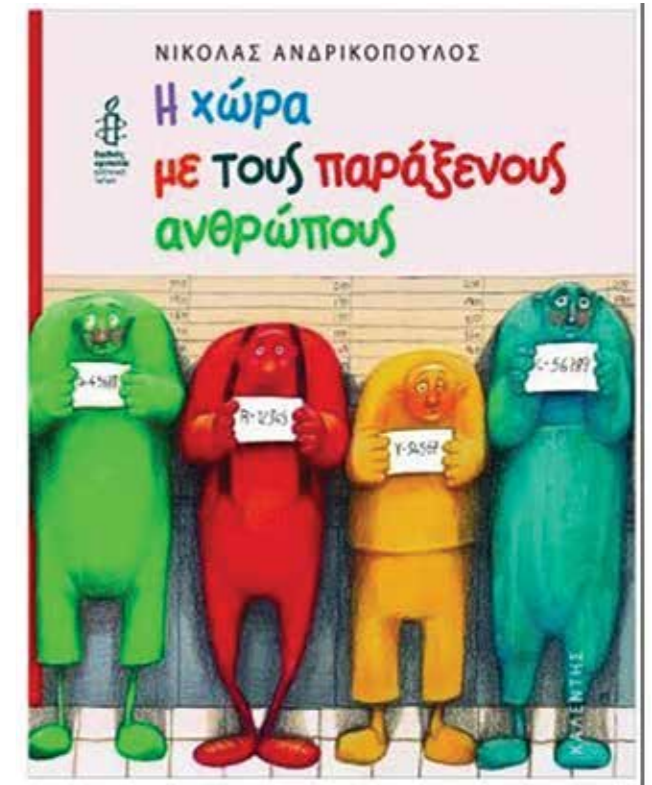
prominently. Such design choices reveal a persistent imbalance in perceived authorship, despite growing appreciation for the illustrator's creative contribution.

In this context, illustrators have increasingly come to recognize their elevated narrative role and, with it, a growing sense of creative maturity and autonomy. While Greek illustrators begin their careers by visualizing stories written by others, many eventually embrace dual authorship, assuming responsibility not only for the illustrations but also for the written text. This shift reflects a broader evolution in the field, in which illustrators adopt a more holistic approach to storytelling, seamlessly integrating word and image to construct meaning on multiple levels. In picturebooks, which are inherently multimodal texts, the illustrator-writer, operating with a distinctive authorial voice that merges the visual and the verbal, gains increased freedom to experiment with narrative form, structure, and meaning.

Vassilis Papatsarouhas has illustrated both works by other authors and his own. In his own picturebooks, such as *12 Little Stories* [12 Mikres Istories] (picture 5), *The Boy Who Painted the Sky* [To Agori pou Zografize ton Ourano], *The Beautiful Buttoned Woman* [I Oraia Kimomeni], and *The Clown's Magic Umbrella* [I Magiki Umbrella tou Paliatsou], images serve as the initial foundation for the story. In this creative process, writing becomes a means of supporting and extending a visually conceived narrative. The interplay between words and images is characterized by ongoing feedback, wherein illustrations intended to accompany the text may prompt revisions to the written narrative, and vice versa, resulting in a dynamic and integrated storytelling process.

When illustrators write their own picturebooks, they assume full control not only over the verbal and visual texts but also over their presentation on the page. Nikolas Andrikopoulos, who is credited as both author and illustrator in numerous works, such as *Two Shoes with a Wheelchair* [Dyo Papoutsia me Karotsi], *Photoula Loved Plastic* [I Fotoula Agapouse ta Plastika] and many others, demonstrates this integrated approach in his book *The Country with Strange People* [I Hora me tous Paraxenous Anthropous] (picture 5), which addresses the theme of embracing diversity. In this work, he employs a colorful font and vibrant page design to visually reinforce the message that diversity enriches and beautifies the society that accepts it.

In picturebooks, which function both as narrative texts and physical objects, illustrators play a crucial role in shaping the overall design. As a result, they often engage with the materiality of the book to convey meaning not only through images and



Picture 5. *The Country with Strange People* [I Hora me tous Paraxenous Anthropous]

words but also through the physical form of the book itself. A noteworthy example is *In My Dreams* by Effi Lada, where the interplay of transparent and opaque pages, combined with a subtle use of color, effectively evokes the coexistence of reality and dream (picture 6). Similarly, in *Tata?* [Tata?] by Iris Samartzi, the exaggerated depiction of an unnecessarily large house is materially expressed through a fold-out page that expands to accommodate the oversized structure, rendering the large scale of the house.



Picture 6. In My Dreams by Effi Lada

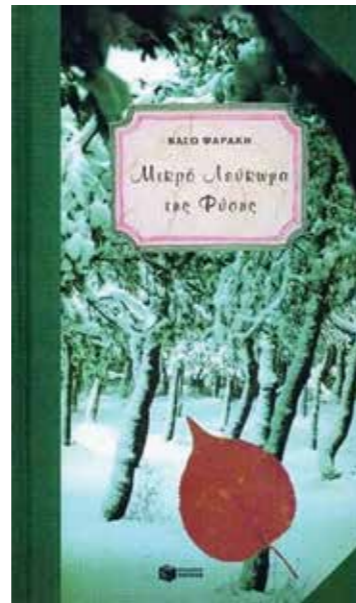
2c. Greek Chapter Books

Interestingly, author-illustrators are not confined to creating picturebooks with minimal or no words; some have produced more extended narratives. What remains consistent throughout their work is the centrality of visual imagery, which is always distinguished by its aesthetic quality. Eleni Tsaldiri, for instance, in her book *The Garden of Asclepius* [O Kipos tou Asklipiou] (picture 7), which recounts the true adventure of three children exploring nature as a means of discovering Greece's biodiversity, mythology, wildflowers and the legacy of renowned botanist Konstantinos Goulimis (1886–1963), creates fascinated illustrations that vividly depict the beauty of Greek flora.



Picture 7. The Garden of Asclepius [O Kipos tou Asklipiou]

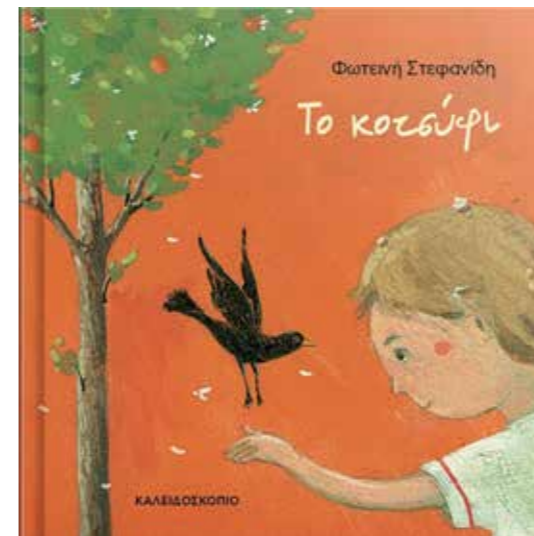
Illustrators consistently demonstrate a strong interest in the aesthetic qualities of their books, whether they employ their own illustrations or incorporate photographs to accompany their written texts. In *The Little Album of Nature* [Mikro Lefkoma tis Physis] (picture 8), which features texts, sketches, and 225 photographs, Vasso Psaraki, who is credited as both author and illustrator of this and the entire Soumoutou book series (e.g. In *Touroupita's Castel Soumoutou* is *Cooking with the Children* [Sto Kastro tis Soumoutou I Touroupita Mageirevei mazi me ta Paidia], *The Wise Book of Soumoutou* [To Sofo Biblio tis Soumoutou]), conveys the emotional resonance of nature with tenderness, elegance, and sensitivity.



Picture 8. The Little Album of Nature [Mikro Lefkoma tis Physis]

On the other hand, perhaps due to their strong aesthetic qualities and capacity to evoke vivid mental imagery, books written by illustrators are, rather unsurprisingly, adapted into performing arts rather than other media. For example, Lela Stroutzi's multi-award-winning book *The One and Only Black Olive* [I Mia kai Monadiki Mavri Throuba (picture 11), a richly illustrated, 152-page work, was transformed into a mystery performance at the atmospheric theater located on Rouf's train.

Extensive texts have also been authored by the visual artist Fotini Stefanidi, who as an author-illustrator creates works across various categories. Notably, her wordless picturebook *The Blackbird* [To Kotsifi] (picture 9) features a circular structure that encourages continuous, cyclical reading, mirroring the perpetual cycles of life and time. Additionally, her concept books, which present the alphabet or numbers, are distinguished by her remarkable accompanying paintings, further demonstrating her integrated artistic and literary approach.



Picture 9. The Blackbird [To Kotsifi]

Among her extensive works is *My Darling 1922* [Tzieri mou 1922], in which Stefanidi documents memories of lost homelands as recounted by her grandmother in Athens during the summer of 1980, when Stefanidi was eighteen and her grandmother ninety. Another significant work, *Shoes with a Strap* [Papoutsia me Louraki], employs a modular narrative structure comprising twenty-one short stories that trace a girl's coming of age from ages four to fourteen, set against the backdrop of the Greek dictatorship and the early post-junta period. In both books, Stefanidi's drawings are integral, reflecting her unwavering primary identity as a visual artist. As a writer, Stefanidi brings a distinct visual sensibility to her narratives that shape both the structure and tone of her texts, producing chapter books that retain a strong visual identity

while engaging readers through more complex and extended storytelling. In *Shoes with a Strap*, the twenty-one chapters have been described (Pappos, 2021) as twenty-one "openings and closings of the camera lens" and as a "printed film noir for teenagers and adults, for every reader.", underlining that even in this book, the painter Fotini Stefanidi essentially illustrates with ... words.

3. Greek illustrators in new roles

Greek illustrators have every reason to feel vindicated in their role, since their artistic value has been recognized not only within Greece but also internationally. Furthermore, through their academic studies and involvement in international forums, like the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB), they have developed a strong foundation in the field of book arts and publishing. At the same time, due to the inherent nature of picturebooks, in which they are primarily involved, they are accustomed to co-creating stories alongside authors in the role of visual narrator. Their transition from supporting roles to primary creators, as both illustrators and authors, has been not only unsurprising, but particularly compelling and successful!

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Angela Yannicopoulou a Chryssa Kouraki, BIB 2025 Symposium



Angela Yannicopoulou, BIB 2025 Symposium



Chryssa Kouraki, BIB 2025 Symposium



MINGZHOU ZHANG (CHINA)



Mingzhou Zhang is an active translator, publisher, editor, rights manager, and international promoter of children's reading. After graduating from Shanghai International Studies University in 1991, he worked for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has served on several juries for children's books, including the

BIB (Bratislava Illustration Biennial).

He organized the 30th IBBY World Congress held in Macau, China, in 2006. Until 2018, Mingzhou Zhang was the General Manager of the CCPPG (Chinese Children's Press and Publications Group) International division. He is a board director of the China Publishers Association and Executive Vice President of the China Children's Literature Research Society.

Mingzhou was elected IBBY President in 2018 and served in this role until 2022. Previously, he was a member of the Executive Committee on several occasions (2008-2012, 2014-2018), and he chaired the IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award Jury in 2012. He has strengthened cooperation between the Chinese IBBY Section and the central IBBY, as well as with other national IBBY sections.

He believes that the arts can save human souls, that international cultural and artistic exchanges can enhance mutual understanding and respect, protect the ecological environment, and maintain world peace.

China at BIB and BIB in China: a personal story

"Good morning/afternoon, everyone. My name is Zhang Mingzhou. It is my great honor and pleasure to attend this year's BIB 60th Anniversary Celebration and today's seminar. I wish today's seminar and the series of BIB 60th anniversary events a complete success!

First, let me talk about my connection with picture books, IBBY, and BIB:

I am Chinese, born and raised in a remote mountain village in the northeastern corner of mainland China, near the border with the Russian Far East. The village was 20 kilometers away from the county seat, but due to economic backwardness and poor transportation, very few people had the chance to visit the county seat. For the children there, hearing adults who had been to the county seat talk about the city was like listening to a fairy tale. At that time, my world revolved around the other children in the village, the chickens, ducks, geese, dogs, pigs, cows, horses, and sheep. I cared about things like when the wild grapes in the mountains would ripen, or which family's piglet had been carried off by a wolf.

Approximately 50 years ago, when I was a young boy in that mountain village, I stumbled upon a picture book titled *The Little Seed's Journey*. It told the story of willow catkins floating in the air when spring came, as the willow seeds traveled to the ends of the earth. The cover featured a chubby baby flying in the sky, which sparked a strong interest in this child from closed and remote mountain area. It made me look beyond the village and develop a profound love for reading. By asking my father or elder brother for help, I learned to read old newspapers pasted on the walls and roofs of our mud-brick house, which allowed me to recognize a great number of Chinese characters. Reading is powerful; it endowed me with strong self-learning abilities, kept me at the top of my class, and during high school, I aspired to become a diplomat. After graduating from high school, I was admitted to Shanghai International Studies University, and upon graduation, I joined China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work as a professional diplomat. Unfortunately, due to my mother's poor health, I had to leave the diplomatic service to take care of her.

In 2002, I attended the IBBY World Congress for the first time. I was deeply attracted and moved by the dazzling array of picture books on display and the speeches by children's literature authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, librarians, experts, and scholars from around the world. I was also drawn to this international organization, which has official consultative relations with UNICEF and UNESCO, and deeply touched by its mission: to promote international understanding and safeguard world peace through high-quality children's books.

Mr. Hai Fei, the Chairman of IBBY China (CBBY), invited me to join CBBY.

In 2003, I visited the Bologna Children's Book Fair, the world's largest international children's book fair, for the first time. At the fair, a warm-hearted elderly gentleman led me to a booth called BIB. The exquisite illustrations, filled with childlike innocence, creativity, and imagination, immediately captivated me. It was then that I learned BIB is the world's oldest and largest non-commercial illustration award. That polite gentleman was Mr. Dusan Roll, the founder of BIB. He told me that China had not participated in the BIB competition for 10 years, and that the responsibility of recommending contestants to BIB fell to the national sections of IBBY. Mr. Roll hoped that I could help coordinate IBBY China (CBBY) to organize Chinese illustrators to resume participation in BIB's biennial international competition.

In 2005, Chinese illustrators re-entered the competition, and we organized a delegation of illustrators to visit the BIB exhibition in Bratislava, thus resuming the history of cooperation between China and BIB. I am honored to have been the person who witnessed and promoted the exchange and cooperation between BIB and Chinese illustrators.

My Understanding of BIB's Mission and Spirit

Starting from 2005, China has recommended its finest original illustration works to participate in the BIB competition every two years. Later, I got to know Zuzana Jarosova, from whom I learned more about BIB's history, particularly its connection with Jella Lepman, the founder of IBBY. It turned out that IBBY had given great support to BIB from its very beginning. When she showed me a photo of Jella Lepman and Dusan Roll together, I was deeply moved. They were so young back then, yet they shared a common ideal: to promote international understanding through high-quality children's books, transcending political, racial, and ethnic boundaries, ideological differences, and breaking through the Iron Curtain that divided the East and West. With courage, they brought together artists from around the world to communicate and connect through their works.

They firmly believed that all humanity is one family. Filled with love, especially for children, and with their broad minds

and vision, they used BIB, IBBY, and the outstanding illustrations they selected to drive the great development of illustration art and picture book art, promote international understanding, and contribute to safeguarding world peace. Their remarkable achievements and noble spirits deserve our eternal remembrance and learning.

The Symbiotic Relationship Between BIB and the Development of Original Chinese Picture Books

In 2013, Yu Rong won the BIB Golden Apple Award. Twenty years had passed since Cai Gao first won the Golden Apple Award in 1993, making Yu Rong the second Chinese illustrator to receive this honor. Her victory caused a sensation in China and greatly inspired the creative enthusiasm of Chinese illustrators, especially young ones, for picture books.

In 2016, through my efforts, Shandong Education Press obtained authorization to publish a series of picture books featuring BIB award-winning works in China. We also organized BIB illustration exhibitions and international seminars. These events attracted a large number of Chinese illustrators to visit, exchange ideas, greatly broadened their international horizons, stimulated their creative passion, and effectively promoted the quality of original Chinese picture book creation. As a result, the standard of original Chinese picture books improved rapidly. After Yu Rong, four more Chinese illustrators—Hei Mi, Zhu Chengliang, Wu Mao, and Chen Xunru—successively won the BIB Golden Apple Award. The quality of original Chinese picture books has gained increasing recognition from both Chinese consumers and international experts. These books and their illustrators have won numerous awards worldwide, and their copyrights have been exported to dozens of countries and regions.

The picture book *Starling Like a Cloud*, for which Yu Rong competed in 2013, was her debut work. After winning the award, many excellent publishing houses invited her to create new books. She has created several new books, almost every one of which has achieved great success—not only enjoying enthusiastic market reception but also gaining recognition through many international and domestic awards. After her win, her husband and children were deeply proud of her; their initial lack of understanding turned into active support. From a full-time housewife taking care of her children, she became

Mingzhou Zhang

a professional international illustrator with wide influence. Her journey of growth has inspired countless young Chinese illustrators to join the ranks of illustration art and picture book creation, making a positive contribution to the rapid development of China's illustration art and original picture book quality in recent years.

Continuing to Advance Cooperation Between BIB and China, and to Promote Chinese Picture Books

When I first visited Bratislava in 2013, I was profoundly shocked by the enormous contributions this small country (with a population of only 5 million) and this city (with a population of 500,000) have made to the development of illustration art and picture book art worldwide. I was also deeply impressed by the professionalism of the BIB organizing committee and jury. Here, I have made friends with many outstanding artists from across the globe, and some of them have even become my authors. Through exchanges with them, I have gained a deeper understanding of the laws and trends governing the development of illustration art and picture book art.

To further promote the quality of China's illustration art and picture book creation, and to enhance the artistic appreciation of the Chinese people, the Life Tree Cultural Promotion Center has signed a cooperation agreement with BIBIANA to launch the "BIB in China" project. This project will bring touring exhibitions of BIB award-winning works to major cities across China.

I wish BIB will continue to play a leading role in identifying outstanding illustrators from around the world. I wish illustrators everywhere continued progress, with more excellent works emerging to provide all the children on our planet with illustrated books and picture books of high literary merit, artistic value, innovation, and charm."



Mingzhou Zhang, BIB 2025 Symposium



A remarkable meeting of three IBBY presidents in Bratislava at the celebrations of the significant 30th BIB anniversary 2025 – Mingzhou Zhang, former IBBY president; current IBBY president Basarat Kazim (center); Wally De Doncker, former IBBY president; and Zuzana Jarošová, BIB General Commissioner



Mingzhou Zhang and Petra Flach, BIB 2025 Symposium



Mingzhou Zhang, Igor Piačka, Zuzana Jarošová and Kyeong Woo (FRED) Minn, BIB 2025 Symposium



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