

TÀSSIES
GRAND PRIX BIB 2009
(Exhibition in House of Art)

Josep Antoni Tàssies Penella is his full name but he has been using just Tàssies for some time. He was born in Barbasra near the Aragon Pyrenees in 1965 and moved to Catalonia later. He studied journalism at the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

In 1991 he was awarded the First Prize at the Week of Children's Books from the Spanish IBBY section. He presented his innovative and controversial style which has been splitting Spanish public opinion since then. In 1997 he received Second Prize for the Best Children's Book from the Spanish Ministry of Culture and many more awards followed in Spain and abroad, including the Grand Prix BIB 2009.

Since the beginning of his career in illustration, Tàssies has exhibited a universal style and his works reflect the poised and passionate nature of the Catalans and simultaneously the solemn and proud nature of the Aragonians. Tàssies has also worked for newspapers, journals, magazines and publishers specializing in children's literature.

Tàssies has used composition full of rich colours, myriad characters and symbols represented in almost baroque-like scenes from the very beginning. Later his works acquired minimalistic and pure nature. His recent years' figures emerge from a dark background, in strong contrast with illustrations whose figures are against a white background. All his work is full of such powerful contrasts. His figures emerge from black silhouettes subjected to a plastic shape: visible touches of the brush grant them a physical structure and shape, whereas bold contour lines underpin the form. His figures thus acquire a 3D, voluminous dimension despite the motion and composition. Precise contour and pictorial content, expressively modifying human figures, formal simplification, stressed texture and conspicuous touches of the brush are the key features of Tàssies' style.

Tàssies' work bears a tragic dimension resulting from his personality and is closely associated with his social involvement and bonds. His newest book "El nen perdut" is a mix of those two features. Two prestigious awards for that book, Grand Prix BIB 2009 and the Prize of the Santa Maria Foundation, attest to that. The book shows that Tàssies is not afraid of displaying strong emotions. With his feet on the ground, he resorted to distortion and a graphical synthesis and that is what made his work even more expressive. His expressiveness is achieved in unusual ways. The empathy and aesthetics of Tàssies' drawings seek to challenge readers and open new horizons to them.

As Anastasia Arkhipova, the chair of the BIB 2009 international jury said: "His illustrations attracted the attention of all jury members at first sight. Everyone could feel the dramatic intensity of the artist's pictures even not knowing the text. Using his unique visual language, the artist managed to express his highly significant message to those who saw his illustrations – to share with him their deep sensations accompanying his thoughts about the loneliness of a child in our strange world. 'The Lost Child' – one can really feel what those words mean through his pictures."

Mgr. Viera Anoškinová
Head of the BIB Secretariat