

# **BIB 1967 – 2025**

## **The BIB mission continues**

Slovakia is a small Central European country yet its impact on the quality of illustrations to books for children and youth worldwide is tremendous.

The Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava – BIB – was established in 1967 as an international competition and display of original illustrations to children's books. At the beginning there were several enthusiasts for beautiful children's books such as Dušan Roll, illustrators Albín Brunovský, Ján Švec, Miroslav Cipár and others who thought that children need to be given the best in the form of beautiful picture books. And their idea also was to search for the best original illustrations in the world give them awards in the capital city of Slovakia. That is how Bratislava has become the capital city of world illustration.

From the very beginning BIB has been held under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Board on Books for Young People, IBBY, and with the support from the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia. The International House of Art for Children, BIBIANA, is its chief organizer.

The Bratislava Biennial has been fulfilling an awesome mission for six decades whose reach we may not quite be aware of. The event educates beauty and cultivates children's souls through quality illustration art. A picture book is the first gallery children visit. It is very important whether the child finds quality art or kitsch in it.

For six decades BIB has been looking for the best illustration originals across the world to put them on display, compare, evaluate and award them in Bratislava. It is unbelievable that half a century later, BIB in its form and non-commercial nature, remains a unique unrivalled global event. The BIB logo is a prestigious mark of quality and is known in more than 114 countries in all continents.

Eleven BIB awards, the Grand Prix, Golden Apples and Plaques awarded by international jury at the Bratislava Biennial, have become a prestigious entry ticket to the international starry sky of illustrations. BIB awards always are a respected message to the world saying what is worth discovering, new or original in the world of children's picture books.

The exhibitions document a wide array of styles and approaches to illustrating texts of books and offer a unique way of looking at things from the imagination and creativity of artists from across the world who often have very different cultural and historical backgrounds.

The International Symposiums and the BIB-UNESCO Albín Brunovský Workshop for young illustrators, especially from third world countries, are integral parts of BIB.

If we piled up all illustrations and books which have competed in the Bratislava Biennial since 1967, they would grow into an impressive pyramid. There were more than 9 000 illustrators from 105 countries from all continents, more than 60 000 original illustrations with more than 10 000 books competing at BIB. Every illustrator awarded at the BIB stands at the top of the pyramid erected from imagination, skill and original creativity.

Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava has always been a cultural, apolitical event. Just like our main partner IBBY. Thanks to its apolitical spirit, BIB survived the turbulent geopolitical changes in the world over the past 60 years. I believe that it will remain so in the future. BIB must continue to be a beautiful island of art. A beacon of light and beauty. May the BIB Golden apple continue to unite cultures and personalities from all over the world who want the best for all children.

## **THE HISTORY OF BIB 1967-2025**

The first national Czechoslovak exhibition Illustrations for Children Bratislava was held in 1965. The domestic and international response, support from UNESCO and its associate international organizations, especially the International Board on Books for Young People, IBBY, and enthusiastic initiators led two years later, in 1967, to the 1st Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB). The international exhibition and competition of original illustrations to children's books, BIB, remains the most important non-commercial event of its kind in the global landscape. In the course from then to now, the 29 biennial BIBs have presented 9,028 illustrators from 105 countries with 68,300 original illustrations to more than 10,400 books.

The original illustrations are evaluated by the BIB International Jury (usually 10 members), who choose the winners of 11 statutory awards, namely the Grand Prix BIB (1), Golden Apple BIB (5) and Plaques BIB (5). The International Jury can also give an Honorary Mention to publishers for important publishing activities.

Every Biennial's exhibition and competition is accompanied by several other events/activities such as exhibitions, programs, discussions and workshops. The new winners of the H. C. Andersen awards for literature and illustrations and the winner of the previous year's Grand Prix BIB have individual exhibitions and artwork by leading Slovak illustrators is on display as well in the "Hall of Honour BIB". Besides these events within each BIB, there are a periodical International BIB symposium, International workshop named BIB-UNESCO of Albín Brunovský, and a meeting of the International Committee BIB, the supreme BIB body, composed of international and national organizations.

PhDr. Zuzana Jarošová  
General Commissioner BIB  
Chair of the International Committee BIB

*The exhibition was prepared by: BIBIANA Documentation Centre and Library. The pictures are an output from the Digital BIBIANA project.*

*[www.bibiana.sk](http://www.bibiana.sk)*

