

BIB beyond the Borders

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In the contemporary world, we tend to go beyond national borders and instead reflect on the global, the bigger, context. The raison d'être of the BIB (Biennial of Illustration Bratislava), the oldest illustration award in the world, is to produce such a representative "picture"—one that uniquely manifests the creativity of illustrators from different nations as well as cultural tendencies, specifically to do with children's culture. It is a big effort for the organizer, BIBIANA (the International House of Art), in co-operation with IBBY, to regularly bring together a representative international collection.

Now, as BIB celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, it is possible not only to look back and see regular biennial presentations of countries and their artists but also—retrospectively looking at fifty years of contributions—to discern movements, trends, and developments. Such a perspective is provided to anyone who is interested in studying the individual catalogues of the biennial collections, commemorative books, and digitalized materials.

BIBIANA, the International House of Art for Children in Bratislava (Slovakia), holds a gallery mostly comprised of awarded illustrations. It is also the seat of the BIB Secretariat and the methodical and archive headquarters that processes and publishes the documentation. Altogether this makes BIB a really unique and complex cultural institution. The balance is not small: within fifty years of BIB, there have been 59860 exhibited pictures from 111 countries created by 7580 illustrators. The illustrations have promoted 10,000 books. Last year, 2015, BIB hosted fifty countries, represented by 355 illustrators and 2426 illustrations from 441 books.

The BIB "year of jubilee" was also a fruitful

year for some new achievements. We welcomed a new exhibition in the "room of honour." With the exception of an exhibition of H. C. Andersen award laureates 2014, writer Nahoko Uehashi (Japan) and illustrator Roger Mello (Brazil), this was the first time we hosted an exhibition of the ALMA winner 2014—Praesa (South Africa). Helen Sigeland, the director of ALMA, was one of the speakers at the BIB Symposium.

Another "new baby" dedicated to celebrating the BIB fiftieth anniversary was the IBBY INSTITUTE BRATISLAVA started by the Slovakian IBBY. It is a new international platform focused on increasing literacy. The Slovakia IBBY Committee saw that the time was ripe to create a complement to BIB which would include aspects of books and reading other than those to do with illustrations. As of now, IBBY INSTITUTE BRATISLAVA conferences are planned to be regular events during the time of BIB. But some activities will also take place during the biennial term. So far, there have been nineteen speakers (both from Slovakia and abroad) at the two conferences of the institute: *Seeing differently or How to Read Picture books* and *Stop Reading Crisis! Reading and Children's Development* addressing a wide audience of parents, teachers, and librarians.

To bring the celebration of BIB out to the streets, we also started an open air reading festival, *Knižné hody* (The Book Feast). The activities took place in one of the main city squares, filling it with shows and artistic activities promoting reading and books. The festival was broadcasted live by the Slovak Radio. Our big BIB heroes—such as Dr. Dušan Roll, one of the founders of BIB—were special guests.

Over 12,000 children visited the main BIB 2015 exhibition (from September to the end of October). They had the chance not only to see the illustrations but also to actively engage in the work of illustrators, talk to them, and work with them on little creative projects. Events such as workshops and talk shows with illustrators are traditionally a part of BIB, and child audiences like it. In connection with the BIB exhibition, the child audience could experience puppet theatre performances or watch the movies from Biennale of animation Bratislava (BAB). Children also liked the new interactive game GRAND PRIX CUBES, which presented for them all the Grand Prix BIB Winners and their illustrations. Six side-exhibitions of children's illustrators were placed in the BIB program. They were situated in the Slovak national theatre and some galleries.

In BIBIANA, we prepared inspirational interactive exhibitions of Albin Brunovský and Miroslav Cipár, two of BIB's fathers and great teachers of many Slovak illustrators in the 60s and 80s. Children loved taking a break to rest on Gulliver's hand and to experience Lilliput through another interactive exhibition of illustrations by Peter Uchnár.

The BIB celebration last year was also especially honored by the presence of IBBY Executive Committee having their session in Bratislava. Wally de Doncker, the IBBY President, was one of the main speakers at the opening BIB gala ceremony, together with Lynne Patchet, the official UNESCO representative. Liz Page, the IBBY Executive Director, received a special BIB Plaque for her contribution in advancing BIB's vision during the years of co-operation between IBBY and BIB.

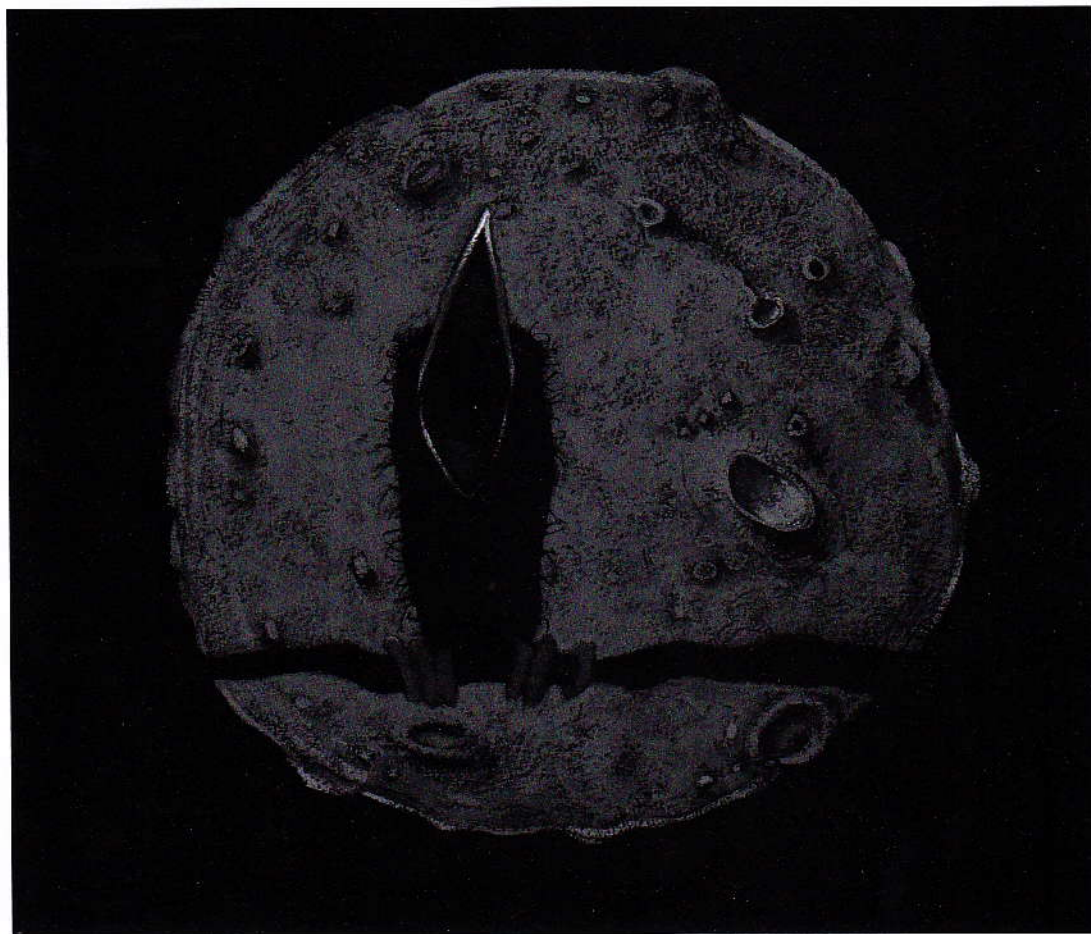


Illustration by John Rowe

In his talk Dr. Dušan Roll, the founder of BIB, quoted Jella Lepman's words about the "wonderful demonstration of progress" seen already in 1969. Today, Roll says, "For children, art is a matter of the heart and I believe that children's books will never disappear from their hands. As far as my successors are concerned, I believe the work for BIB will become their purpose in life as well."

BIB 2015 and AWARDS

The international jury was chaired by the laureate of Hans Christian Andersen Award 2014, Roger Mello (Brazil), with members Anastasia Arkhipova (Russia), Helena Bergendahl (Sweden), Nazan Erkmén (Turkey), Karol Felix (Slovakia), Piet Grobler (Great Britain), Maria Jesus Gil (Spain), Agnes Gyr (Rwanda), Yukiko Hiromatsu (Japan), František Skála (Czech Republic), and Nina Wehrle (Switzerland).

The jury awarded Laura Carlin (UK) with the Grand Prix for *A World of Your Own Iron Man*. The Bib Golden Apple was awarded to Mirocomachiko (Japan) for *Yellow and I*, Elena Odriozola (Spain) for *Frankenstein*, Javier Zabala (Spain) for *Bird in a Cage*, Ronald Curchod (Switzerland) for *The Night when I Sleep*, and Bingchung Huang (China) for *Braid*.



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Illustration by Michael Kallay