

27th Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava 2019

For more than fifty years, Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava has been giving children as well as adults the opportunity to enter the magic world of fantasy. On 25 October 2019 the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava opened its door for the 27th time. As we are talking here about a competition of originals of illustrations, the international jury awarding the prestigious prizes to individual authors held its session one week before BIB opening. In 2019, this jury consisted of ten members – illustrators, fine art theorists dealing with illustration for children and young people and publishers – Ali Boozari (Iran), Graça Lima (Brazil), Akoss Onofri – Mensah (Ghana), Nor Emila Mohd Yusof (Malaysia), Alexejs Naumovs (Latvia), who was appointed to the Chair of the jury, Igor Olejnikov (Russia), Daniela Olejníková (Slovakia), Tatjana Pregl Kobe (Slovenia), Yuval Saar (Israel), Zhigeng Wang (China). We were very pleased to welcome Igor Olejnikov, the holder of Hans Christian Andersen Award 2018.

The jury is purposely formed heterogeneous because understanding of illustration, its aesthetic aspect and the way of looking at illustration for children and young people is different in every culture. This diversity of looking at illustration made the job of the jury very complicated, especially when we consider the fact that they had 4 days to evaluate works created by **416 illustrators from 47 countries, 3056 illustrations from 539 books**. It was not easy for the jury to make the decision, but they worked very quickly and effectively nevertheless. I think it was thanks to the positive energy that worked between them from the very beginning.

A big change concerning BIB happened this year – the exhibition was installed in the representative rooms of Bratislava Castle. This positive change was confirmed by the number of visitors – together 47 417. Visitors had the opportunity to see 3 056 illustrations created by 416 illustrators from 47 countries from the whole world. For the ten member jury it was not easy to choose the winners, but after four days of evaluating they got to their results.

The artist **Hassan Moosavi** from Iran won the Grand Prix with his illustrations in the book *Boxer*. This young and talented illustrator uses warm and lively colours. In the readers' eyes they bring his beautiful and repeated patterns of exciting life to life. His narration is full of images intensified by expressive illustrations. He uses his own technique and strong exaggeration to express the expressive atmosphere. This creative story is intensified by creative and artistic deformations, specific composition, contrast of colours and visual attraction. Moosavi uses his words and illustrations in such a way that he introduces children culture of calmness and at the same time he creates dynamic images with a deep moral message.

Five Golden Apples rolled to different continents of the world. **Chengliang Zhu** from China created illustrations helping children understand the world and nature through creative figurativeness and updated interpretation of the current and traditional illustration. He uses traditional colours like red, black, golden, white and he connects hieroglyphics with illustrations. **Janis Blanks** from Latvia uses a completely different style than can be seen in the story about an animal - a mole that no one likes. He created an interesting horizontal

composition connecting the modern look with traditional Renaissance style. Messages leading to icon paintings can be found in his illustrations, e.g. the Last Supper. He uses interesting tones of colours as well as original composition. The Russian illustrator **Anton Lomaev** illustrated his book using today a rare traditional style. Illustrations are made gently and with many exact details that readers can discover again and again. This awakes readers' imagination. The book tells a story about a beautiful and close relationship between a father and his son. **Wen Dee Tan** from Malaysia uses his simple but colourful expression to present a story about refusing the character hero because of her shining hair looking like fire. In the end she will find friends. The author's strong and positive expression can be understood easily even without understanding the language from the text. She uses a great minimalistic style with a realistic use of colours. The last Apple rolled to South Korea. **Soojung Myung** created illustrations for the book telling a story about a relationship between a girl and nature where she finds friends as well as the answers to her questions. She uses colours in a beautiful and delicate way with a skillful schema and more layers of details. It is a combination of the traditional and modern style. By every single look at the images you can find something hidden inside of them.

BIB Plague went to **Anat Warshavski** from Israel, to a story about three penguins that decide to open a restaurant and then find out that it is not easy to satisfy all their customers. The author depicts these lively characters full of energy using the basic colours – red, blue, yellow and black. Thanks to different points of view and her unique expression, this book was chosen by the jury as the only one from the genre of comic strip for children. Illustrations create together a clever composition and they are placed in a skillful and intelligent way. In contrast to the illustrations made by the Portuguese illustrator **André Letriu**. Repeating elements create patterns showing the hopeless situation in the state of war. Using a unique spectrum of colours that are not very bright enables the illustrations to emphasize the relevant and global problem of the conflict. The pictures helped the book succeed in communicating the message from the text in a tender and elegant way. The Japanese illustrator **Chiki Kikuchi** uses an expressive painting style. Using free and expressive brushstrokes his illustrations depict nature in its full beauty. Moving of nature is achieved by a skillful use of colours in the whole book and this makes us feel this moving. Some of them are close to abstraction, some remind us of Japanese calligraphy and nicety. In opposition to this shining colours we can find the illustrations made by **Maja Kastelic** from Slovenia. The book tells a story about a boy who is afraid of darkness. The schema of colours used in the illustrations is minimalistic, the light and contrast are expressed in a skillful way. Thanks to the illustrations, readers can understand the emotional way the boy is going through. The book uses a current and detailed form of the traditional style. **Guilherme Karsten** from Brazil introduced himself in a completely different way. He talks about a loud noise that spreads in the world. It causes chaos and confusion. What is it? The illustrations reveal the answer depicting the moment and movement. Readers are bravely taken into detailed and dense collages. The answer showing the noise coming from inside is depicted in a unique and intelligent way.

The jury also awarded four Honorary Mentions for extraordinary contribution in the field of publishing. They went to two publishing houses in Brazil, one in Ecuador and one in Great Britain.

The Children's Jury also held its session and traditionally its result were not the same as those of the 'adults' jury. Children's Award went to the Slovak illustrator Svetozár Košícký. The Award of the Mayor of the Capital City Bratislava went to Boris Šima. The Post Bank Award went to Miroslav Cipár.

This year Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava was very rich again concerning the programmes of activities for children, thanks to the Symposium also beneficial to the experts and creative because during its accompanying workshop more than 30 illustrations were created. BIB embodies contribution not only to the experts who have the opportunity to watch the latest trends in the field of illustration for children and young people, but especially to children who are given the chance to meet art of a high quality. And it is especially children who the Biennial is organised for.

As I have already mentioned in the introduction, in 2019, BIB moved to the new exclusive rooms of Bratislava Castle and I believe that it will also remain there. It is a dignified and representative place providing the exhibited illustrations and especially visitors another aesthetic aspect – beautiful views of Bratislava. During its existence, the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava has been presenting the most beautiful illustrations, supporting creativity and fantasy of young people since their early years, building the basics of aesthetic feeling and good taste. Thanks to the variety of artistic illustrations, children can learn to distinguish what a really valuable and good quality illustration is. This is very important these days because the young generation is influenced by a big amount of different impulses and it is necessary to show them the real art of a good quality.

I believe that we will meet the visitors on the occasion of 28th year of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava that should have the ceremonial opening on 15 October 2021 and should last until 9 January 2022.

Mgr. Viera Anošíkinová