

Illustrators for Gianni Rodari. Italian Excellence

13–15 November

Booth 1A03 (Hybrid Zone)

The China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF) is glad to present ***Illustrators for Gianni Rodari. Italian Excellence***, an art exhibition of 63 illustrations brought together to celebrate the centenary of one of Italy's most revered writers, Gianni Rodari, born on October 23, 1920.

Writer, teacher, journalist and poet, Rodari was one of the most innovative literary voices of the last century. Among the world's best-loved and influential children's authors, Gianni Rodari was the first Italian writer to receive—in 1970—the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award, generally considered the Nobel Prize for children's literature. His work includes fairy stories, nursery rhymes, short stories and novels, as well as his famous essay *La grammatica della fantasia*, a seminal reference text for children's literature and education specialists.

Innovative, universal and still effortlessly topical, Rodari's work has been translated and re-printed the world over. In China also, Rodari's works are often seen as modern classics, especially *Le avventure di Cipollino*, which conquered generations of readers since it was first translated in 1953.

Most importantly, Rodari's work remains an inexhaustible source of inspiration for numerous Italian artists, who down the years have put his words into pictures.

This exhibition looks at some of the artists who in the last fifty years have illustrated Rodari's texts—starting with towering figures like Luzzati and Munari through to internationally renowned contemporary artists, including Alessandro Sanna, Beatrice Alemagna, Valerio Vidali and Gaia Stella. Altogether, the exhibition gives a fascinating overview of the work of 21 Italian illustrators.

Illustrators for Gianni Rodari is an impeccable tribute to the great master of fantasy, as well as a gateway to the excellence of contemporary Italian illustration.

The exhibition is organised by BolognaFiere S.p.A., Bologna Children's Book Fair and the Cultural Promotion Abroad Regione Emilia–Romagna in collaboration with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura Shanghai and the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair. It has been curated by Giannino Stoppani Cooperativa Culturale–Accademia Drosselmeier.

The full list of artists featured in the exhibition includes: Bruno Munari, Emanuele Luzzati, Beatrice Alemagna, Francesco Tullio Altan, Chiara Armellini, Elenia Beretta, Anna Laura Cantone, Nicoletta Costa, Mariachiara Di Giorgio, Vittoria Facchini, Manuele Fior, Francesca Ghermandi, Federico Maggioni, Simona Mulazzani, Giulia Orecchia, Alessandro Sanna, Gaia Stella, Fulvio Testa, Pia Valentinis, Valerio Vidali and Olimpia Zagnoli.

Evaluation

“Gianni Rodari gave us many books. He gifted us with ideas and avenues of thought to explore. He mused, experimented and played with words. He gave us rhymes, nursery rhymes, poems, letters, short stories, novels, thoughts on education and newspaper articles. He was the only Italian to receive - in 1970 - the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the Nobel Prize for children’s literature. His work deserves being read time and time again. Translated into many different languages, Rodari reaches beyond stereotypes, his work a continual discovery, to be read, listened to, and looked at. Rodari’s texts were born with illustrations, the artists among those who made world illustration history”.

Massimo Mezzetti, Councillor for Culture, Youth and Legality Policies Emilia-Romagna Region

“According to Rodari, part of learning is a transformational experience. Relations are constantly transformed through interaction, and so is the environment. He felt it was important to create and re-create an environment for learning that suits the needs and pleasure of the children. Rodari often spoke about animating children to invent new stories with the objects in their immediate environment. It does not matter what children read, nor does it matter if they are immersed in all kinds of mass culture that adults consider harmful for the growth and education of children. What matters is the approach to culture in general, that is: how do we animate children so that they will think creatively and critically about their worlds and so that they can responsibly take charge of them?”

Jack Zipes, Professor Emeritus at the University of Minnesota and translator of the English version of Rodari’s *Grammatica della fantasia*

“Gianni Rodari was a visionary, a man so ahead his time that today, well into the 21st century and a hundred years after his birth, his words and his vision of the world still speak to us. They speak to us as clearly and sharply as before, but now with an even more compelling view of modern humankind. It’s almost as if Rodari has somehow managed to capture the essence of being human through childhood”.

Beatriz Helena Robledo, Colombian writer and researcher in literature and reading processes. She has published several fiction books and essays, and directs the “Cosultorio Lector”, a service providing personalized assistance in reading, writing and literature

“It would be so interesting to see Gianni Rodari’s reaction to this exhibition of brilliant artists, whose illustrations are so different yet all inspired by his books. What would he think? What would he prefer? Which of them would he consider to be closer to his images? More decorative and colourful? More romantic and enigmatic or bold and funny? Sophisticated or childish? At any rate, I am sure he would be surprised and proud to see that such talented persons have interpreted his literature. He was an extremely popular author in the Soviet Union, even more popular than in Italy at that time. His first book in a foreign language appeared in Russian. It was *Cipollino*, brilliantly translated in the early 50s by Samuil Marshak, a famous poet and translator”.

Anastasia Arkhipova, Illustrator, President of the Moscow Association of Book Illustrators and Designers, President of the jury of the international contest on book illustration and design

“Image of a Book” (Moscow), Vice-president of IBBY, and Professor at the Stroganov Academy (Moscow)

“The Exhibition is testament to the accessibility and universality of Rodari’s writing that it can so comfortably accommodate such stylistically diverse visual interpretation. (...) For these and many other artists, the words of Gianni Rodari would seem to be universally appreciated as an inspiration and a gift, an irresistible opportunity to share in creative play and immerse themselves in the great man’s words”.

Martin Salisbury, Professor of Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University, where he founded and continues to teach on the renowned MA Children’s Book Illustration programme. He is the author of a number of books on the practice and theory of illustration and has served as chairman of the Bologna Ragazzi Award Jury

“The art of the illustrator involves inventing, listening, enriching and re-elaborating. Rodari’s illustrators allow themselves to be guided by his stories, producing a visual synthesis that amalgamates line and form, composition, formal clarity, light-heartedness and fun. They embrace the text, sweeping away any hiatus between words and images as they seek to render the consummate poetic of the author’s genius, only to then strike out in many different directions and offer whole new visual interpretations of the words, adding a visual narrative to the written word”.

Silvana Sola, Co-founder of Giannino Stoppani Cooperativa Culturale and Accademia Drosselmeier, lecturer in History of Illustration and Co-ordinator of the two-year Graphic Art and Editorial Planning course, part of the Illustration Diploma of ISIA Urbino, President of IBBY Italia

OFFICIAL CONFERENCES

In Tribute to Gianni Rodari (1920-1980):

Reading Matters—Discussing the Role and Influence of Children’s Books in the Classroom

15 November, 10:00–12:00

Official Conference Room (Copyright Zone)

Speakers:

Gong Min (China), Teacher; Director, Shanghai Wunan Kindergarten

Grazia Gotti (Italy), President, Giannino Stoppioni Cooperativa Sociale; President, National Committee for the Gianni Rodari Centenary Celebrations

Huang Runfang (China), General Manager, HsinYi Shanghai

Li Qingming (China), Teacher, Doctor of Philosophy, Children’s Literature Promoter

Li Yinuo (China), Co-Founder, ETU Education

Mei Zihan (China), Children’s Literature Writer, Professor

Sara Wang (China), CEO, Sidee Cultural Communication

** Simultaneous interpretation in Chinese and English.*

** International speakers will be connected to the venue through online channels.*