

BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR



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THE 61ST BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR: THE SELECTED THEMES FOR THE 2024 EDITION

The major debates concerning the challenges and opportunities of publishing today

Faced with a world of technology that is developing more and more rapidly, increasingly globalised relations between countries and pressing environmental challenges like never before, together with increasingly varied forms of storytelling and issues, Bologna Children's Book Fair is **actively promoting debate on topics such as sustainability, artificial intelligence, intercultural dialogue, the role and forms of children's literature and comics, creativity, and the opportunities of markets such as China and Africa**. These debates are open to the 30,000 plus publishing industry professionals who gather in the halls of the BolognaFiere Exhibition Centre every year.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability represents one of the major challenges of the present time and the global publishing industry cannot shy away from important questions concerning its own activities. The search is on for solutions and new perspectives concerning production processes and for the best ways to act as a tool – through books and content – to introduce global issues to younger readers, inspiring them to play an active role in the creation of a sustainable future. The Fair's commitment can be seen in the 2024 edition – **in collaboration with the United Nations and in cooperation with the International Publishers Association (IPA)** – with two international debates and an exhibition of titles from different countries around the world dedicated to sustainability issues.

"Reading for a Healthy Planet: Inspiring Children's Books to Help Achieve a Sustainable Future" (8 April, Authors Café, 2.30-3.20 pm) examines how books for young readers can help convey complex ideas about the impact of our actions on the environment and empower children to start making a difference in their own communities from an early age. The round table discussion, is chaired by **Ed Nawotka** (Senior Editor *Publishers Weekly*, USA) and features **Irina Lumelsky** (United Nations Publications, USA), **Karine Pansa** (President of the International Publishers Association, Brazil), **Elisa Palazzi** (Climatologist, Author and Professor in climate physics at the University of Turin, Italy) and **Inês Castel-Branco** (Publisher Akiara Books, independent publishing house focussed on sustainability, not only in terms of the topics covered but also of book production techniques, Spain). The exhibition *Reading for a Healthy Planet: Inspiring Children's Books to Help Achieve a Sustainable Future* adds to the panel's reflections on sustainability with a selection of relevant books from all over the world.

"Sea of Stories: The Science, History, and Cultural Importance of the Sea in Children's Literature" (9 April, Authors Café, 11.30 am -12.20 pm) is a round table discussion exploring how today's children's books address the important presence of the seas in relation to human life and society: from the ocean as a natural habitat, to the problem of microplastics, via the geopolitical issues of borders and migration. With: **Irina Lumelsky** (United Nations Publications, USA), **Bernardo P.**



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Carvalho (author, illustrator and co-founder Planeta Tangerina, Portugal), **Janetta Otter-Barry** (Publisher Otter-Barry Books, UK), **Gita Wolf** (Founder and Publisher Tara Books, India), **Deborah Soria** (bookseller, Italy), **Deborah Soria** (OttimoMassimo bookshop and IBBY "Silent Books-Final Destination Lampedusa", Italy). Moderator: **Maria Russo** (children's book expert, former editor of children's books at the *New York Times*, USA).

TAKING CHILDREN'S BOOKS VERY SERIOUSLY

Children's books are cultural works, produced thanks to the extraordinary skills of authors, illustrators, and other professionals. Publishers of children's books are, therefore, expressing pedagogical thinking in the noblest sense of the term. Pedagogy accompanies the youngest members of our species as they grow and slowly discover the world through learning, making infinite connections between pieces of knowledge, knowledge that is at the service of the human capacity to interpret and gain awareness. That is why books for girls and boys go hand in hand with the highest level of awareness: they tell us what the problems are and prefigure answers to try to solve them. In this they anticipate what many adults do not know, perhaps because they were not readers.

At the event "**Pictured Worlds: the Illustrated Children's Book Past, Present, and Future**" (9 April, Illustrators Café, 4.50-5.30 pm), esteemed historian and literary critic **Leonard Marcus** (USA), author of *Pictured Worlds: Masterpieces of Children's Book Art by 101 Essential Illustrators from Around the World* (Abrams Books) talks with Marcella Terrusi (researcher and lecturer at the University of Bologna, Italy) about decades of research through the history of children's books, sharing some of their favourite findings on the origins, development and increasingly global reach of this art form. A fitting extension of this train of thought is the talk "**Mac Barnett, are you ever going to write a real book? Why children's books are a very serious thing**" (9 April, Illustrators Café, 3.00-3.50 pm) featuring the US writer Mac Barnett in dialogue with **Maria Russo** and **Giulia Rizzo** (Terre di Mezzo Editore, Italy). Mac Barnett is presenting his first book for "grown-ups", *La porta segreta* (Terre di Mezzo Editore) and talking about why children's literature is literature in its own right and why children are the ideal readers.

BRIDGING CULTURES: CHILDREN'S BOOKS, ADAPTATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

As exchanges between cultures and countries become both more extensive and more intense, Bologna Children's Book Fair aims, on the one hand, to showcase lesser-known and often less accessible cultures, and on the other, to discuss the challenge of translating the same title in culturally distant markets.

Which books can travel across borders? How can publishers, artists and writers create foreign editions that stay true to the essence of the original but also work in other markets? What are the limits of cross-cultural adaptation? From the way difficult topics such as death or divorce are presented, to the deepest beliefs about the nature of childhood, all aspects of raising children are embedded in deep-rooted traditions, which can be destabilised when viewed through the lens of a different culture. This poses unique challenges for children's publishers working in international markets. In the



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panel discussion chaired by **Maria Russo** “**Dead bunnies and naked bottoms. Meeting the challenges of children’s publishing across cultures**” (9 April, Authors Café, 4.30-5.20pm), **Neal Porter** (Vice President and Publisher Neal Porter Books/Holiday House, USA), **Dolores Prades** (Scholar, Founder of Instituto and Revista Emília, Brazil), **Beatrice Alemagna** (Author and Illustrator, Italy/France) and **Erik Titusson** (Founder of Lilla Piratförlaget, Sweden) discuss intercultural successes and failures, taboos and the constant work to refine best practices.

In a world where Western thought is losing its hegemony in the face of the profound crisis of civilisation we are experiencing, indigenous belief systems are being viewed with a new respect and are pointing the way forward, requiring us to rethink fundamental issues such as solidarity, mutual aid, respect for nature and cultural diversity. Inspired by the book **Origen** by Nat Cardozo (Zorro Rojo), the meeting “**Origins: Indigenous Voices in Children’s Books**” (10 April, Book Lovers’ Café, 10.00 -11.30 am) is BCBF’s homage to indigenous communities, many of which are still on the margins of the publishing market. The discussion, which is chaired by **Dolores Prades**, features **Nat Cardozo** (Author and Illustrator, Uruguay), **Jason Low** (Publisher and Co-owner Lee & Low Books, USA), **David Unger** (Author and Translator, Guatemala), **Adolfo Cordova** (Author, Mexico), **Eboni Waitere** (Director of Māori Huia Publishers, New Zealand), **Aviaq Johnston** (Inuit author, Canada) and **Victor D.O. Santos** (Linguist and Children’s books Author, Brazil/USA).

How should publishers work to include themes of African, African-American and Afro-Latin American origin in their catalogues? How to deal with the subject of racism in books for children and young people? How to respect Africanness and move beyond stereotypes and prejudices? The visibility of many authors in Latin and North America, especially those of African descent and native peoples who until recently were considered outside the canon, is reshaping many markets. The panel discussion “**Transatlantic Connections: Literature, Childhood and Diversity**” (9 April, Authors Café, 2.30-3.20 pm) continues the debate initiated by BCBF in 2023 on the interactions between African production and that of Latin and North America. Recognising a black literature today and identifying a place for it in the market and a wider readership is at the top of the agenda. Discussing the topic are **Bel Santos Mayer** (Coordinator of the Queiroz Filho Brazilian Institute of Studies and Community Support - IBEAC, Brazil), **Wade and Cheryl Hudson** (Founders and Publishers Just US Books, USA), **Lola Shoneyin** (Author and Publisher Ouida Books, Nigeria), **Dipacho** (Author and Illustrator, Colombia) and **Kayode R. Onimole** (Illustrator, Nigeria). **Dolores Prades** is chairing the discussion.

And finally, thanks to a collaboration between BCBF and the Society of Illustrators, is the panel discussion “**What Makes an Illustrated Book an International Success**” (10 April, The Illustrators Survival Corner, 11.00-11.50 am). The discussion explores, through different cultural perspectives, the creative elements that help illustrated books achieve international success and is chaired by **Steven Guarnaccia** (author, illustrator and designer based in New York, USA). The debate features some of the artists with multicultural backgrounds exhibiting in the exhibition *The Original Art. Celebrating the Fine Art of Children’s Book Illustration*, the annual exhibition founded in 1980 by painter, art director and artists’



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representative Dilys Evans to showcase illustrations from the year's best children's books published in the USA: **Felicita Sala** (Italy/Australia), **Victoria Tentler-Krylov** (Russia/USA) and **Cecilia Ruiz** (Mexico/USA).

SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA

BCBF's focus on emerging publishing markets is a journey that began some time ago. Returning in 2024 for its third edition is Spotlight on Africa, the programme developed with the support of ITA-the Italian Trade Agency and the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, offering a prominent space to around 30 excellent African publishers from 15 countries of the continent at a dedicated exhibition area within BCBF. A matchmaking programme involving African, Italian and international publishers has been scheduled, together with networking opportunities and seminars on key publishing industry issues held by international publishing professionals, organised for the African delegation in order to share international experiences and best practices, chaired by **Sarah Odedina** (editor-at-large at Pushkin Press and director of Accord Literary, UK).

In addition to the packed line-up of events, and thanks to the collaboration between **BCBF, Aké Arts and Book Festival** (conceived and curated by British Nigerian writer and publisher **Lola Shoneyin** with the aim of promoting and developing creativity on the African continent locally and internationally) and **Mimaster Illustrazione**, an **online illustration course** for African illustrators is due to be launched. Africa has an extraordinary landscape of creativity, particularly regarding literature for children and young people. However, illustrators and creative talents often struggle to establish an effective and constant dialogue with international publishing. The objective of this course is therefore to equip participants with skills related to creativity and design with a focus on the illustrated book, as well as to focus on the dynamics of access to international publishing markets and to provide the necessary tools to enable illustrators to pitch their work successfully. An integral part of the course programme, and again in collaboration with the Aké Arts and Book Festival, will be a **Contest for African illustrators** (announced during the event "Fostering African Illustration: Training, Contest and Exhibition at the Illustrators Café", 9 April, Illustrators Café, 5.40-6.10 pm) that will form the basis for an **exhibition of African illustration** at **BCBF 2025**.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence is undoubtedly the most prominent of the forces driving the major changes in our times, and publishing for children and young people is in no way exempt from the challenges it poses. As the world's leading event for the sector of children's literature, the Bologna Children's Book Fair is rightly serving as a space for investigation and debate regarding the different points of view and new perspectives that these themes open up to publishing professionals and readers today. A series of panel discussions and round tables - **in the framework of Aldus Up** - is taking place for visitors during the days of the fair.



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“Navigating the Future: AI Tools for Publishers” (10 April, Authors Café, 2.30-3.20 pm): from marketing strategies to printing processes and content creation, the event takes an in-depth look at how AI is transforming various aspects of publishing, including innovative solutions and practical insights. Discussing the topic are **Ashley Gordon** (Publishing Market Development Manager for the Page Wide Industrial Division of HP Inc., USA), **Sebastian Wehner** (CEO of Wonderz and Wolkenlenker, Germany), **Sam H. Minelli** (AI expert for the European Commission in charge of partnerships in digital publishing, education and creative industries at Meta Group, UK), **Searsha Sadek** (Founder and Chief Product Officer of Shimmr, Ireland). The debate is chaired by **Neal Hoskins** (Publishing Consultant and Director of WingedChariot, UK).

The Illustrators Survival Corner is also hosting numerous initiatives concerning the debate around Artificial Intelligence, including **“Perception and Judgement. Facing the Coming of the Era of Artificial Intelligence Illustrations - Masterclass with Luo Ling”** (9 April, The Illustrators Survival Corner, 2.00-2.50 pm) by **Luo Ling** (Illustrator and Lecturer at Jingdezhen Ceramic University, China) on the topic of the scale of perception in the age of illustration created using artificial intelligence. And the round table discussion **“A manifesto not just against the use of generative artificial intelligence but a manifesto for its regulation”** (10 April, The Illustrators Survival Corner, 9.20-9.50 am) to help draft a shared document calling for the regulation of the use of AI, beginning with a series of manifestos drawn up by different international organizations in defence of the rights of illustrators. Participants include **Francesco Archidiacono** (European Guild for AI Regulation - EGAI, Italy), **Paolo Rui** (European Illustrators Forum, Italy) and **Elisabeth Pérez** (Professional Association of Basque Illustrators and member of FADIP, the Spanish Federation of Illustrators Associations, Spain).

BolognaBookPlus also features events on the topic: **“Gen Z, AI, and the Search for New Purpose in Publishing and Beyond”** (8 April, BBPlus Theatre, 1.00-1.45 pm) with **Nadim Sadek** (CEO and founder of Shimmr, Ireland). The advent of artificial intelligence and the rise of Generation Z are bringing radical changes to the publishing industry and society at large. Nadim Sadek explores how, besides transforming the printed page, these forces promise to redefine learning, literature and the very purpose of human endeavour.

Also on 8 April **“Do Androids Dream of Great Alternative Descriptions for Images?”** (BBPlus Theatre, 10.30-11.15 am). A crucial component of accessibility is the provision of reliable alternative descriptions for images. However, their creation is a particularly challenging task for publishers due to the need for specialist knowledge and the time required to ensure their accuracy. Fondazione LIA with **Elisa Molinari** (Project Manager Fondazione LIA, Italy), **Gautier Chomel** (Project Manager EDRLab, France), **Gregorio Pellegrino** (Chief Accessibility Officer Fondazione LIA, Italy) and **Paolo Casarini** (CTO / IT Director Il Mulino, Italy) explore the world where artificial intelligence meets alternative descriptions of images with the help of industry professionals.

“In the AI of the Beholder: How to See the Human Reading Behind the AI” (9 April, BBPlus Theatre, 1.00-1.45 pm) sees **Priya Sathiyam** (Design Director Fractal, USA) talk about the necessity to adopt a human approach to designing the use



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of technology in an ethical and responsible way, especially with regard to young readers, whose approach to reading, sharing and learning is being impacted significantly by technologies. While readers might be feeling better informed about every subject, surrounded as they are by an excess of information, conversely they have gaps in knowledge and understanding, constantly seek social validation and at the same time want unique hyper-personalised content.

“Unlocking AI, VR, AR in Publishing: Tools for Authoring and Digital Content” (9 April, BBPlus Theatre, 4.00-4.45pm) features **Sam H. Minelli** (AI expert for the European Commission in charge of partnerships in digital publishing, education and creative industries at Meta Group, UK) and **Giorgio Genta** (Vice President ETT Group, Italy).

CHINA

For some years now BCBF has been building important connections with China, with which it has established fruitful partnerships, first and foremost, the co-organisation of the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF). BCBF's engagement of Chinese publishers continues this year with an important initiative: China, Market of Focus is set to involve more than 100 exhibitors and is among the highlights of the 2024 programme.

Another important new feature this year is *Chinese Excellence in Children's Illustration*. Organised by BCBF/BolognaFiere, China South Publishing & MediaGroup and Sidee Cultural Communication with the collaboration of China Publishers, the initiative aims to showcase the best contemporary Chinese illustrators. The works of the winners and finalists – a total of 90 illustrations – are displayed at the Fair in the exhibition ***Chinese Excellence in Children's Illustration***. The jury members discuss their choices in the **“Meeting with the Chinese Excellence in Children's Illustration Exhibition 2024 Jury”** (8 April, Illustrators Café, 1.30-2.30 pm): **Anna Castagnoli** (Author, Illustrator, Italy), **Debbie Bibo** (Literary Agent and Editorial Producer of children's picture books, USA-Italy), **Loïc Boyer** (freelance Graphic Designer, Founder Cligne Cligne Magazine, France), **Hai Fei** (Publisher and Writer, China), **Wang Lijun** (Curator and Founder China Picture Book Fair and the Zhang Leping Picture Book Award, China), **Zhang Mingzhou** (Founding Director Lifetree Culture Promotion Center, Executive Director Publishers Association of China, China), **Yang Zhong** (PhD Associate Professor Central Academy of Fine Arts, Director Picture Book Creation Workshop and Master's Degree Tutor, China), **Elena Pasoli** (Director Bologna Children's Book Fair, Italy), **Sara Wang** (CEO Sidee Cultural Communication, China). Moderator: **Marcella Terrusi** (PhD, Professor at University of Bologna, Italy).

Once again ample space is devoted this year to an analysis of the Chinese publishing industry, starting with **“Data Release and Case Analysis of the Chinese Children's Book Market”** (8 April, Authors Café, 3.30-4.20 pm), organised by China Publishers.

These events is complemented by a structured programme of initiatives in the meeting area of the large collective Chinese stand (Hall 26).

COMICS



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BCBF's commitment to identifying and promoting the development of comics and graphic novels, among the most dynamic and innovative sectors in contemporary publishing, as well as the fastest growing, continues with the **Comics Corner**, the exhibition area for specialist publishers, produced with the support of ITA- the Italian Trade Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Every year the initiative reveals new insights and perspectives, identified by the Fair and brought to the discussion spaces inside the halls of the BolognaFiere Exhibition Centre at each new edition. This year's new features include the focus on the most interesting national industries, the success of Italian comics in the USA and comics for the very young.

Insights into national publishing scenarios range from Slovenia to Canada, via Southeast Asia. Curated by the Hamelin Association, **"Great Stories from a Small Country: Slovenian Comics Today"** (9 April, Authors Café, 1.30-2.20 pm) provides a focus on Slovenia, 2024 Guest of Honour Country - which for some years has been one of the most original and surprising laboratories of European independent comics - with: **David Krancan** (Comics artist and Editor Stripburger, Slovenia) **Tanja Skale** (Editor, Stripburger, Slovenia) and **Izar Lunacek** (Comics artist, Slovenia). **"New comics from Southeast Asia: An Emerging Market"** (10 April, Authors Café, 3.30-4.20 pm) leads an in-depth look at the Asian comics scene – beyond manga and webtoons – with four independent publishers from Singapore and the Philippines discussing original production and the opportunities for the Western market: **Ani Rosa Almario** (Vice President Adarna House, Philippines), **Felicia Low-Jimenez** (Publisher and Co-founder Difference Engine, Singapore), **Nida Ramirez** (Publisher 19 Avenida, Philippines), **Priti Sharma** (Managing Editor Epigram Books, Singapore). Finally, **"On a Journey through Canadian Comics"** (10 April, Authors Café, 11.30am - 12.20pm), curated by Accademia Drosselmeier-Kids Comics, navigates a voyage through the Canadian comics scene together with **Peggy Burns** (Publisher Drawn & Quarterly, Canada), **Frédéric Gauthier** (Publisher/Co-Founder La Pastèque, Canada) and **Valerie Picard** (Publisher and Creative Director Monsieur ED, Canada).

And from regional focuses to cases of successful "exports": curated by Associazione Hamelin, **"The Italian factor: How to Build a Career in Comics and Illustration in the US. A Conversation with Bianca Bagnarelli, Matteo Berton, Sarah Mazzetti"** (8 April, Authors Café, 4.30-5.20 pm) explores opportunities for young Italian illustrators seeking a career overseas, and how it is possible to end up working for some of the biggest US publications, focusing on the experiences of three young artists who, having started out in Bologna, are now making names for themselves in the US: **Bianca Bagnarelli** (Cartoonist and Illustrator, Italy), **Matteo Berton** (Illustrator, Italy), **Sarah Mazzetti** (Cartoonist and Illustrator, Italy), and with contributions from **Arabelle Liepold** (Executive Director Society of Illustrators, USA) and **Maria Russo**.

The programme continues with a focus on the role of women in the comics industry, with **"Melancholic, Sarcastic, Brilliant and Tenderly Cruel...Female Protagonists in Comics Dominate the Scene"** (10 April, Authors Café, 10.30-11.20 am), curated by Accademia Drosselmeier-Kids Comics and featuring **Giulia Rizzo** (Editorial Vice Director Terre di Mezzo, Italy), **Caterina Ramonda** (Translator Becco Giallo, Italy), **Della Passarelli** (Editorial Director Sinnos, Italy) and **Grazia Gotti** (Accademia Drosselmeier-Kids Comics, Italy).



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Finally, an overview of the publishing industry and the new opportunities in the sector, with a special focus on the latest innovations represented by comics for very young children. **"Absolute beginners. Comics win over toddlers"** (10 April, Authors Café, 1.30-2.20pm), organised by Comicon, Alir and Accademia Drosselmeier, sees **Matteo Stefanelli** (Creative Director of Comicon and Director of Fumettologica, Italy) and **Imma Napodano** (Founder of Bibi Libreria dei Ragazzi in Naples and part of the Kids Comics working group of Alir, Italy) present the new trend in world publishing represented by Comics for beginner readers, chaired by Grazia Gotti. Even as the sector is experiencing significant growth, it is still essential to support the careers of authors whose work can stand the test of time and outlive passing trends in publishing. With this in mind, **"First Times: Scouting and Publishing Debuts in Contemporary Comics"** (8 April, Authors Café, 1.30-2.20 pm) sees five publishing houses discuss their scouting policies, with: **Gautier Ducatez** (Editorial Director and Founder The Hoochie Coochie, France), **Guillaume and Damien Filiatre Borja** (Editorial Directors and Founders Misma Éditions, France), **Giovanni Ferrara** (Editorial Director Coconino Press - Fandango, Italy), **Rita Fürstenau** (Editorial Director Rotopol Press, Germany), **Matteo Gaspari** (ADD Editore, Italy). Lastly, curated by associazione Hamelin in collaboration with Sarbacane, **"Publishing Graphic Novels for Young Adults"** (10 April, Authors Café, 9.30-10.20am) explores how to choose and publish graphic novels capable of speaking directly to teenagers and how to attract young readers. **Max de Radiguën** (Comics artist and Editorial Director Sarbacane, France), **Isabel Minhós Martins** (Writer and Co-Founder Planeta Tangerina, Portugal), **Simona Binni** (Comics artist and Editorial Director Tunué, Italy) and **Elisabetta Mongardi** (Hamelin, Italy) discuss the topic.

PUBLISHER

PublisHer, the movement mobilising women in publishing around the world to overcome gender imbalances in publishing, is back for the second consecutive time as an exhibitor at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. The PublisHer stand, made possible thanks to an ongoing partnership with BCBF, offers a space for discussion and debate, with networking cafés hosted daily at 2pm, as well as public debates to explore the following topics: **"The Power of Collaboration: Women in Publishing Networks"** (8 April, 10 am), **"Breaking Barriers: Women in Leadership Roles"** (9 April, 10 am) and **"Innovations in Publishing: Female Perspectives"** (10 April, 10 am).

LITERATURE AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE: THE IBBY CONGRESS IN TRIESTE

From 30 August to 1 September 2024, Italy will play host to the **39th International Congress of IBBY - International Board on Books for Young People**. The central theme is "Join the Revolution. Giving every child good books". More than 600 participants from the world of children's books from every continent (writers, illustrators, translators, publishers, librarians, booksellers, educators and promoters of reading, academics, volunteers, health workers and others) are due to attend the event in Trieste. Ahead of the Congress, IBBY Italy is leading a discussion at BCBF (10 April, Illustrators Café, 1.30-2.20 pm) on the topic of **"Literature as the driver of change. IBBY Italia towards the 39^o International IBBY Congress 2024"** together with illustrator **Roberto Innocenti**, the first Italian to win the Hans Christian Andersen Prize (2008) since Gianni Rodari in 1970.



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The discussion examines the role of literature, and in particular literature for young people, in constructing society and in launching revolutionary practices in education and the community. **Paola Vassalli** (Author and Curator, member of Executive Board of IBBY Italy, Italy) and **Valentina Zucchi** (Curator Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence, Italy) dialogue with the author, introduced by **Elisabetta Lippolis** (Vice-President IBBY Italy, Coordinator IBBY Congress 2024, Italy).

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