



PRESS RELEASE: Norway as Guest of Honour at Bologna Children's Book Fair 2026

Norway is honoured to be Guest of Honour at BCBF 2026, the world's leading meeting place for children's and young adult literature. This unique role gives an exceptional opportunity to share the richness, diversity, and artistic strength of Norwegian stories and illustration with an international audience.

- *NORLA is delighted to present the outstanding Norwegian children's literature and illustration as Guest of Honour at the BCBF 2026. The Guest of Honour status offers a truly unique opportunity for authors and illustrators from Norway, and the project is of great significance for the entire Norwegian children's literature business,*

says Margit Walsø, director of NORLA.

A World of Stories, Pictures and Imagination

At the heart the Norwegian Guest of Honour programme lies the question "What if?"; a simple phrase that opens up a whole world of imagination, curiosity, and courage and that invites us to turn familiar ideas on their head:

What if up were down?

What if outside were inside?

What if I were you?

This reflects a fundamental spirit in Norwegian literature and illustration for children and young people: a drive to question, explore and imagine without limits. The approach reflects values that are deeply rooted in Norwegian society: democracy, freedom of expression, equality and trust. The literature is founded on the belief that children are independent individuals with their own thoughts, feelings and perspectives – and that they deserve artistic expressions that take them seriously.

Norwegian children's and YA literature is bold, creative and honest. Authors and illustrators play with form and content, break boundaries, and confront both humour and seriousness with equal openness. The literature is rooted in a strong tradition of engaging young readers with themes of identity, belonging, curiosity and the natural world. It doesn't tell children what to think – it invites them to ask "What if...?", and to explore answers for themselves.

NORLA's programme

NORLA is developing both a professional and a literary programme to be presented in Bologna in April 2026.

At the BCBF grounds, NORLA and its collaborators will present an extensive rich **programme for industry professionals**, featuring themes such as inspiring children to read, reading literacy, translation, Sámi literature and illustration. The programme will take place both on the fair's official stages and at Norway Café, the stage located within the Norwegian stand.



NORLA is also delighted to introduce all nine authors and illustrators participating in *New Voices*, a talent development programme launched in the lead-up to Bologna 2026.

Across the city of Bologna, there will be a wide-ranging **literary programme** open to the public and presented in Italian. NORLA will bring 23 authors and illustrators to take part, among them Maria Parr, Øyvind Torseter, Stian Hole and Maja Lunde. The events will take place at Salaborsa and its branches, as well as MAMbo, Cineteca di Bologna and KiloWatt.

Exhibitions

Several exhibitions will take place during the fair

- What If - the main Norwegian illustration exhibition at the BCBF fairgrounds - showcases works by 49 Norwegian illustrators. The selection has been curated by a jury of illustrators chaired by Bologna Ragazzi Award winner Øyvind Torseter. Daily guided tours led by Norwegian illustrators will take place throughout the fair.
- At the Scuderie at Salaborsa, a smaller exhibition will be on display, featuring one illustration by each of the 49 artists included in the main exhibition.
- At Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (MAMbo) an exhibition will highlight the work of authors and illustrators Kari Stai, Kristin Roskifte and Bologna Ragazzi Award winner Stian Hole. The exhibition will be accompanied by workshops with the artists, which MAMbo will continue to run during the month following BCBF.
- Grafill - the Norwegian organisation for visual communication - will present the award-winning titles from the 2025 editions of the competitions Most Beautiful Books and Most beautiful Illustrated Books. A total of 52 books will be showcased, offering an outstanding overview of the year's finest Norwegian achievements in book design and illustration. The exhibition will be on display at the fair.

Special Events

During BCBF Norway will host three separate events in Bologna, for Italian students studying the Norwegian language, literary translators of Norwegian to Italian and Italian booksellers. These events are by invitation.

The complete programme will be available at bologna2026.com in March.

The BCBF 2026 Guest of Honour project is carried out by NORLA - Norwegian Literature Abroad.

For questions, further information and appointments, please contact

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Partners

The project conducted by NORLA and funded by The Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality, The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also with the support of The Norwegian Publishers' Association, Norwegian Writers for Children and The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association.

About NORLA - Norwegian Literature Abroad

NORLA works to advance the export of Norwegian literature through active promotion and by offering a range of funding schemes for the translation of books from Norway. Financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture, the organisation disseminates information about books and authors from Norway internationally.

NORLA was founded in 1978 and since 2004 has contributed to the translation of more than 9,000 Norwegian books into no less than 81 languages. NORLA was responsible for organising and delivering Norway's Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2019, working in close collaboration with the Norwegian and German book industries, as well as foundations, organisations and institutions from both the private and public sectors.

norla.no

Attachments

- Authors and Illustrators in the Norwegian Programme
- Illustrators represented in the What if Exhibition
- Jury for the What if Exhibition
- NORLA's Official Partners and Collaborators
- What if - Norway as Guest of Honour at BCBF 2026 (English, Italian)

What if up were down?
What if outside were inside?
What if I were you?

This is more than just playing with words – it lies at the very heart of Norwegian literature and illustration for children and young people. It is an invitation to turn reality on its head, to ask questions, and to open doors to new worlds.

Our slogan *What if* is an attempt to capture a spirit of curiosity and courage.

The essence of Norwegian children's literature is shaped by freedom, imagination, and boldness. These books break boundaries, confront taboos, and play with both form and content. Brimming with mischief, humour, seriousness, and surprise, they dare to be fearless and direct. Unconventional and innovative, they don't tell children what to think – they invite them to think for themselves.

This approach mirrors values that are deeply rooted in Norwegian society: trust, democracy, freedom of expression, and equality. Children are independent individuals with their own thoughts, feelings, and perspectives – and they deserve artistic expressions that take them seriously.

The books open up spaces for wonder, reflection and questions. They meet their readers at eye level, giving children the opportunity to explore both themselves and the world around them.

When children encounter literature, something happens.
They discover new worlds and begin to wonder:

What if...?



Authors in the Norwegian Programme

Akin Düzakin
Anna Fiske
Arne Lindmo
Arne Svingen
Åshild Irgens
Bjørn Arild Ersland
Bjørn F. Rørvik
Cathrine Sandmæl
Erlend Loe
Fabian Christensen
Gøril Sæther
Gulraiz Sharif
Håkon Marcus
Jostein Gaarder
Julia Lossius Kahrs
Kari Stai
Kjersti Synneva Moen
Kristin Roskifte
Kristine Rui Slettebakken
Maja Lunde
Mari Kanstad Johnsen
Maria Parr
Marianne Kaurin
Marta Breen
Nora Dåsnes
Øyvind Torseter
Pernille Radeid
Reidar Müller
Sigbjørn Lilleeng
Siri Pettersen
Siri Sjøgren Selmer
Stian Hole





Illustrators in the What If Exhibition

Norway's Guest of Honour Illustration Exhibition 2026

1. Akin Duzakin
2. Alice Lima de Faria
3. Anja Dahle Øverbye
4. Anna Fiske
5. Annika Linn Verdal Homme
6. Åshild Irgens
7. Åshild Kanstad Johnsen
8. Bendik Kaltenborn
9. Bjørn Ousland
10. Bjørn Rune Lie
11. Camilla Kuhn
12. Eivind Gulliksen
13. Gry Moursund
14. Henriette T. Osnes
15. Hilde Hodnefjeld
16. Ida Larmo
17. Ida Neverdahl
18. Inga Sætre
19. Inger Lise Belsvik
20. Jannicke Hansen
21. Jenny Jordahl
22. John S. Jamtli
23. Kaia Dahle Nyhus
24. Kari Stai
25. Kim Hiorthøy
26. Kine Kjær
27. Kjersti Synneva Moen
28. Kristin Roskifte
29. Lene Ask
30. Lisa Aisato
31. Magnhild Winsnes
32. Malin Falch
33. Mari Kanstad Johnsen
34. Marianne Gretteberg Engedal
35. Martin Ernstsen
36. Martin Hvattum
37. Nora Brech
38. Nora Dåsnes
39. Øyvind Torseter
40. Per Dybvig
41. Ragnar Aalbu
42. Sigbjørn Lilleeng
43. Sissel Horndal
44. Stian Hole
45. Sunniva Sunde Krogseth
46. Svein Nyhus
47. Trude Tjensvold
48. Xueting Yang
49. Zarina Saidova



Jury for the What If Exhibition

Norway's Guest of Honour Illustration Exhibition 2026

Øyvind Torseter

Jury chair



Øyvind Torseter (b. 1972) is one of Norway's leading illustrators, cartoonists, and picture book authors. He has written and illustrated numerous critically acclaimed and award-winning books, and he has also collaborated as an illustrator and co-author with other writers. He has received around 55 awards, honours, and grants, including the Bologna Ragazzi Award, Prix Jeune Albert, the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize, the Premio Andersen, the Critics' Prize, the Ministry of Culture's awards six times, and the Brage Prize. His books have been translated into over 20 languages.

Nora Dåsnes



Nora Dåsnes (b. 1995) is an author, illustrator, and comic book creator. She debuted in 2020 and received the Pondus Award and the Ministry of Culture's Prize for her debut. For the graphic novel *Missed Calls* (original title: *Ubesvart anrop*, 2021), she was awarded the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize, the Ministry of Culture's Prize for Best Comic Book, and the Riksmål Society's Children and Youth Book Prize.

Marianne Gretteberg Engedal



Marianne Gretteberg Engedal (b. 1986) is a trained illustrator who also works under the artist name Skinkeape. She debuted in 2019 and has received the Ministry of Culture's Picture Book Award twice, as well as the Nynorsk Children's Literature Prize. She has also been nominated for the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize.

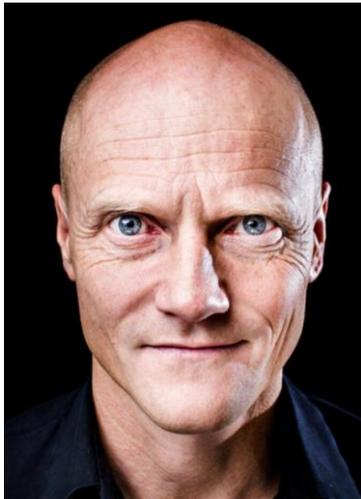
Hilde Hodnefjeld



Hilde Hodnefjeld (b. 1966) is a Norwegian illustrator and children's book author, trained in graphic design and illustration. She has written and illustrated numerous children's books and has received several awards, including the Ministry of Culture's Illustration Prize, the Ministry of Culture's Picture Book Prize, and the Critics' Prize.



Stian Hole



Stian Hole (b. 1969) is a critically acclaimed and award-winning illustrator, graphic designer, and picture book author. He has received numerous national and international awards, including the Brage Prize twice, the Ministry of Culture's Debutant Prize, the Ministry of Culture's Picture Book Prize, the Bologna Ragazzi Award, and the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, among many others. His books have been translated into nearly 30 languages.



NORLA's Official Partners and Collaborators

Norway

Partners

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Norwegian Publishers' Association

NBU - Norwegian Writers for Children

NFFO - The Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers and Translators Association

Key Collaborators

The Norwegian Festival of Literature

Norwegian Reading Centre

The Norwegian Association of Literary Translators

Collaborators

CEATL - European Council of Literary Translators' Associations

Foundation READ

IBBY Norway

Mun Dajan, Sámi Authors Association

NBI - The Norwegian Institute for Children's Books

Nord University

Nordland County Library and Trøndelag County Library

Norwegian Library Association

Sámlitt



NORLA's Official Partners and Collaborators

Italy

Collaborators

Biblioteca Salaborsa

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Cineteca di Bologna

KiloWatt

Hamelin

