



## THE 63<sup>RD</sup> BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR CHINESE EXCELLENCE IN CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATION

The third edition of the exhibition format created to showcase the best of Chinese illustration to an international public

In 2018, China was the Guest of Honour Country at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, marking a turning point in relations between the country and the fair, not only because of the subsequent increase in participation by Chinese publishers and professionals, but also because of the sense that a new cultural dialogue was taking shape, built through stories and images for young readers.

Since then, that dialogue has grown steadily, becoming part of the fair's identity and evolving into a solid relationship and a tangible commitment. The Bologna Children's Book Fair is now a partner in the organisation of the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair, helping to reinforce a bridge that is not merely logistical or commercial, but cultural, offering the international children's publishing community a shared space for dialogue and growth.

A clear indicator of this trend is the BolognaRagazzi Awards, a key barometer of global publishing trends. Prior to 2018, Chinese books were rarely found among the nominees. By 2026, China ranked ninth out of the 73 participating countries in terms of the number of publishers. Even more significant is the quality of the works in competition: Chinese books are increasingly distinguished by their editorial care, narrative strength and visual originality.

With the aim of promoting the best contemporary Chinese illustrators and highlighting the new direction of contemporary Chinese illustration, in 2023 BCBF/BolognaFiere, China South Publishing & Media Group and Sidee Cultural Communication launched *Chinese Excellence in Children's Illustration*, an annual exhibition format inspired by the success of the Eccellenze Italiane (Italian Excellence) events, to present a selection of works by established and emerging Chinese artists.

Every year, the submitted illustrations are examined by a jury of leading Chinese and international experts. Following an initial phase in which the Chinese jurors shortlist 40 illustrators, the full jury (comprising Chinese and international jurors) select two winners and 18 finalists. The winners are announced on the first day of BCBF (Monday 13 April, 12 noon, The Illustrators Café) during a meeting with the jury. The illustrations by the finalists and winners will then be displayed at the Bologna Children's Book Fair (Hall 30 B46-C45) before setting off, at the end of the fair, on an extensive **international tour**.

The jury members for the third edition of Chinese Excellence are: **Øyvind Torseter** (illustrator, Norway), **Elodie Bourgeois** (Editorial Juventud, Spain), **Grazia Gotti** (Accademia Drosselmeier, Italy), **Cai Gao** (artist, finalist for the 2026 H.C. Andersen Award, China), **Jiang Xun** (scholar, aesthetician and writer, Taiwan, China), **Tian Zhongli** (President of the Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, China) and **Chen Hui** (PhD, Professor of Chinese Literature at Beijing Normal University, China).

A **bilingual catalogue** in English and Chinese documents the works of the 18 finalists and the two selected winners, offering the international community an overview of contemporary Chinese illustration and a deeper understanding of this country's immense cultural heritage.

