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BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR: THE SELECTION FOR THE 2026 ILLUSTRATORS EXHIBITION

The 60th edition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair's most celebrated initiative, unearthing and promoting new talents in global illustration since 1967

A total of 20,840 illustrations submitted by 4,168 illustrators from 96 countries and regions around the world: these are the figures for the 2026 edition of the Illustrators Exhibition, the most celebrated initiative at the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF), which this year celebrates its **60th anniversary**.

Sixty years during which the exhibition, created in 1967 to unearth and promote the best in international illustration to the book community gathered from all over the world in Bologna, has become a springboard and business opportunity **for generations of emerging artists**, as well as a **crowning achievement for established illustrators**. As Carla Poesio, an expert in children's literature and long-time collaborator of the fair, explained: *"Since 1964, well-known, emerging or debuting illustrators, recognisable by the large portfolios they carry with them, have been a notable feature of the intense comings and goings at the Fair. This has led to the establishment of crucial relationships for publishers and artists, and this was part of the rationale that led the Bologna organisers to accompany each edition of the Fair with an Illustrators Exhibition."*

In 1976, during its first decade, the Exhibition appointed its first external jury, which featured Italian designer Bruno Munari. Since then, the juries have included numerous professionals from the world of children's publishing: world-renowned illustrators, publishers, critics, graphic designers, teachers and librarians from all over the world, reflecting different skills, professions, geographical areas and cultures.

This year's selection was chosen by a jury composed of: **Sunkyung Cho** (illustrator and author, SI Picture Book School and publisher at Somebooks, South Korea), **Jenni Erkintalo** (illustrator, author and publisher, Etana Editions, Finland), **Alīse Nīgale** (Co-Founder and Editorial Director of Liels un Mazs, Latvia), **Daniela Olejníková** (illustrator, Slovakia), **Riccardo Vecchio** (Italian illustrator and Chair of MFA Illustration as Visual Essay at the School of Visual Arts in New York).

After meeting online to select the **317 finalists**, the jury met in person in Bologna to choose **75 sets of illustrations by 75 artists from 31 countries and regions** around the world. Among the most represented countries, feature: **9 illustrators from South Korea, 7 from Japan, 6 from Italy, 6 from Taipei, 5 from France and from China, and 4 from Brazil**.

For decades, the exhibition has accompanied the evolution of illustration worldwide, positioning it at the very centre of the fair. However, opportunities for the winners to boost their visibility go well beyond the four days of BCBF and the spaces of the Bologna Exhibition Centre: every year at the end of the fair the exhibition embarks on a two-year international tour that takes it to cultural venues in major cities around the world, starting with Japan, Korea and China.

Since 1971 a catalogue, the **Illustrators Annual**, has been documenting the artworks featuring at the Illustrators Exhibition, quickly becoming a **reference tool** for publishers, illustrators and others working in the sector. Distributed in specialist international bookshops and published by Corraini in Italian and English, in Japan by JBBY - Japanese Board on Books for Young People, in Korea by CCOC and in China by Dandelion Picture Book House, the catalogue features original contributions from the jurors and is completed this year with a cover illustrated by the winner of the 2025 Bratislava Illustration Biennial Grand Prix, **Noushin Sadeghian**, from Iran. To mark the 60th anniversary of the Exhibition, the 2026 edition of the catalogue will also feature an original insert by Paola Vassalli.



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There are also numerous opportunities to support younger participants: the **Bologna Children's Book Fair – Fundación SM International Illustration Award** and the **ARS IN FABULA – Grant Award**, organised by Ars in Fabula - School of Illustration, are specifically for illustrators aged under 35 and under 30 respectively.

Finally, there will be further **opportunities for the finalists**: during the fair, they will enjoy priority access and a guaranteed place for a portfolio review as part of the Illustrators Survival Corner activities, while one of them will be selected to create the **2027 visual identity** of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, under the guidance of the Chialab design studio.

The **63rd edition of the Bologna Children's Book Fair** will be taking place at the Bologna Exhibition Centre **from 13 to 16 April 2026**, together with the two initiatives that complete the event line-up: **BolognaBookPlus**, organised in collaboration with the Association of Italian Publishers (AIE) and specifically for the general publishing industry, and **Bologna Licensing Trade Fair/Kids**, which brings together the main international players in licensing and entertainment related to children's publishing content.

Click on the following link for **the bios of the jury members**:

<https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/en/focus-on/illustrators/the-illustrators-exhibition/jury-2026-illustrators-exhibition/5934.html>

For the names of **the 2026 winners** and a selection of the images, click on this link:

<https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/en/focus-on/illustrators/the-illustrators-exhibition/2025-winning-illustrators/10631.html>

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