



From The History of the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava

The idea of starting a competition exhibition of original illustrations to books for children and youth was on the minds of the founders as far back as the early 1960s and it was then actually started in 1965 as a national Czechoslovak exhibition called Illustration for Children Bratislava. That was the zero year and the predecessor of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava that offered a forum to compare illustrations for children and youth in Czechoslovakia, and the first exhibition which offered comparisons of original illustrations in published books. There were 37 Czech and Slovak illustrators participating in the event. In the course of almost 55 years of BIB history, and its 28 exhibitions, more than 8,700 illustrators from 112 countries have presented more than 68,000 original illustrations and more than 10,500 books.

Two years later, in 1967, Year 1 of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) was held. The founders included JUDr. Dušan Roll, artist Miroslav Cipár, artist Albín Brunovský and other enthusiasts of children's book illustration. That first year welcomed 320 illustrators from 25 countries and the last BIB in 2013 welcomed 362 authors of illustrations from 49 countries. BIB has been the largest non-commercial event of its kind in the world. The organizers of the Bratislava biennial had several intentions right from the start. The idea was to offer opportunities for presentation of the best art from countries with traditions in book culture and illustration for children and to offer opportunities to illustrators from various countries to present their art to world experts and publishers. Another significant purpose from the start of the biennial was to attract the attention of children.

The international display of originals of children's book illustrations, the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava is the most important event organized by BIBIANA, the International House of Art for Children. The event is held under the auspices of UNESCO and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and it is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic with BIBIANA as the organizer in chief. BIB is held every odd year in fall, September and October, in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia. BIB is the most important world event for the art of children's illustration. Every two years "the best of illustration" meets in Bratislava.

BIB holds a separate exhibition for artists who have won Hans Christian Andersen awards for literature and illustration. BIB also presents works by a no longer living Slovak author who had made a major contribution to development of illustration art in Slovakia. The international BIB Symposium takes place at the beginning of the event and is an indispensable, integral part of the event.

In 1985 the first international BIB- UNESCO Workshop of Albín Brunovský for young illustrators from developing countries was established in cooperation with Academy of Fine Arts and Design (VŠVU) in Bratislava. The first workshops were conducted by Professor Brunovský, a leading Slovak illustrator and one of the founders of the Slovak school of illustration. The current workshops are now conducted by reputed Slovak illustrators. The workshops have so far been attended by 135 young illustrators from 50 countries who have made more than 400 original illustrations. Besides these mentioned activities, there are various other activities accompanying the biennial including special exhibitions, theatre performances, animated works and workshops.

The illustration originals are evaluated by an international jury consisting of theoreticians of fine art, illustrators, publishers and librarians. The jury has from six to twelve members from various countries, continents and cultures. The jury presents 11 prestigious awards, namely the Grand Prix BIB, five BIB Golden Apples and five BIB Plaques. The jury can also award an Honorable Mention to a publisher for outstanding accomplishments. The illustrator who wins the highest award, Grand Prix BIB, has the privilege of holding a separate, personal exhibition at the next BIB and also becomes a member of the BIB international jury.

BIB is not only a competitive display of original illustrations in Bratislava. Illustration art for children and youth is also presented in other cities of Slovakia and, of course, in other countries as well. We cooperate with various international organizations, institutions, Slovak cultural institutions abroad and Slovak embassies across the world and we participate in book fairs and promote quality children's illustration all over the world.