

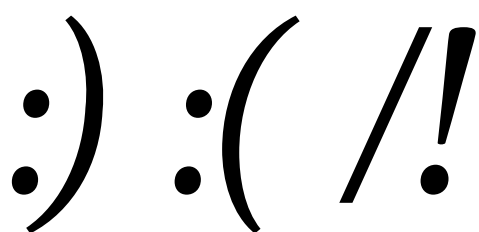
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JOY, SADNESS *and* HOPE

*25 Bulgarian illustrators
of children's books*

curators:
Anton Staykov and Svoboda Tzekova





JOY, SADNESS *and* HOPE

This exhibition is part of Bulgaria's representation at the 61st International Children's Book Fair, Bologna (April 8 – 11, 2024).

The 25 selected contemporary Bulgarian children's book illustrators are from different generations and have a variety of professional experience behind them. This selection is not a ranking, nor does it pretend to be comprehensive; rather, its goal is to draw the attention of the public and professionals to specific qualities and aspects of each artist's work and to illuminate their approach to the literary text, the choice of medium, and their compositional and narrative techniques – those

achievements that formulate what we most generally call *style*. Each of the selected artists is represented by a fragment of an illustration for a specific book and a QR code that leads to the content added to the **booksforkids.bg** project website: a gallery with more illustrations from the same book, preparatory drawings, and interesting details; curatorial text; biography and contact information; and a technical description of the publication, as well as information about other books by the same artist. You will also find the QR codes in this catalogue. After the presentation in Bologna, the exhibition will continue its life, traveling through different cities in Bulgaria.

Background →



1.



2.

There are classic Bulgarian children's books from the second half of the 20th century, mainly from the 1970s and 1980s, which are an inseparable part of the lives of several generations of children, but also of several generations of artists whose styles they influence to this day. But this period, perhaps the strongest for Bulgarian illustration, has its own pre-history. As early as 1921, the artist Aleksandar Bozhinov made his *Golden Book for Little Children*. With art nouveau drawings and excellent quality in the printing, this book always enters the golden selection. Other iconic Bulgarian illustrators are Vadim Lazarkevich and Iliya Beshkov, who worked most intensively in the 1940s.

Beshkov's free ink drawings inspired the famous poet Dora Gabe, and based on them, she wrote the poems in the collection *From an Elephant to an Ant* (1955), which is constantly being republished (1). The trailblazing artist in the history of Bulgarian illustration is Lyuben Zidarov. In his almost century-long creative career, he illustrated Andersen many times, as well as the tales of Scheherazade, Mark Twain, and even the Harry Potter series. But a large part of the hundreds of titles are by Bulgarian writers, such as *Mother's Tear* by Angel Karaliychev (2 and 5), which has made several generations of children cry with its shocking story about the abandoned swallow.



3.



4.



5.

In 1968, the innovative book for children and adults *We, the Sparrows*, by Yordan Radichkov (3), was published. Since then, this writer's drawings have a reserved spot in the history of Bulgarian illustration. Stoyan Anastasov, Neva Tuzsuzova (4), Ivan Kirkov, and Aleksandar Denkov were all inspired by the folklore tradition. Gradually, several state publishing houses began specializing in children's literature. The editions were in full colour, and the books had enormous print runs. After the 1970s, until the end of socialism, libraries with children's classics from all over the world and many works by Bulgarian writers were published by the publishing houses Bulgarski hudozhnik ('Bulgarian Art-

ist'), Narodna mladezh ('The People's Youth'), and Otechestvo ('Fatherland'). The illustrations were predominantly by Bulgarian artists, among them Ana Tuzsuzova, Petar Chuklev, Ivan Kyo-sev, Radoslav "Reme" Marinov, Tonya Goranova, Ivan Dimov, and others – two generations of illustrators with their own personal trademarks. The styles of their work and techniques are free and varied – watercolour, tempera paint, monotype, linocut, ink drawings, mixed media, and collages. The headings are almost always done in calligraphy or logotypes drawn especially for the particular book. The high level of the layout in comparison with the wretched level of printing makes a strong impression.

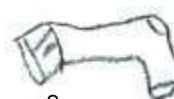
The Present →



6.



7.



8.

After 1990, the book market in Bulgaria was liberalized. The quality and artistic level of children's publications declined in the first years of the transition. Retrograde practices in illustration and layout were imposed, the consequences of which were to degrade the taste of a large proportion of the readers, future parents. Over the years, the situation changed and new publishing houses appeared, with an affinity for quality publications, as well as new criteria and policies. This was a complex and interesting period that could be the subject of a separate study, but to which we will not devote space here. This exhibition limits itself to dealing with examples from the present.

Some of the artists represented in the selection are established in Bulgaria and have been winners of prestigious awards, while others are just starting out their careers. You will notice that they are quite different – it would be difficult to determine their affiliation with any common school. But it is precisely these individual differences that make the picture of contemporary Bulgarian illustration vital and interesting. Sometimes the illustrator's very first published book brings them international success. Other times, this comes only years later. We could distinguish two basic groups – artists and writing artists. But we could also make a division based on their educational background.



9.



10.



11.

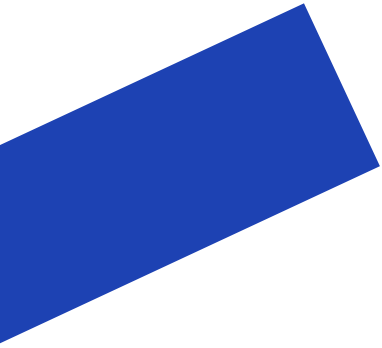
Let us clarify that we call these artists “Bulgarian” because they were born in Bulgaria, but a large number of them, especially those born after 1990, grew up outside Bulgaria’s physical borders, graduated from specialized art academies abroad, and some of them live permanently outside the country. In the last two decades, the globalization of this sector has had an enormous influence on the shaping of the visual language – access to large forums and fairs, to online platforms, and cooperation with foreign publishing houses. For us, it was especially interesting to talk to the illustrators, to look into their archive, and to find out more about them and their way of working.

The project was inspired by the magic of illustration to create worlds and heroes, to tell stories in a universal language.

P.S. – You will find information on the pictures numbered from six to eleven at the end of the catalogue.

Anton Staykov
Svoboda Tzekova
Curators

Illustrators →





12.

Iva Sasheva

Ina Hristova

Kiril Zlatkov

Kalina Muhova

Youlian Tabakov

Miglena Papazova

Martin Stanev

Lyuba Haleva

Mila Yaneva-Tabakova

Sofia Popiordanova

Mira Miroslavova

Katina Peeva

Sotir Gelev

Penko Gelev

Vyara Boyadjieva

Stella Dreis

Yana Kazakova

Yassen Grigorov

Vesselin Pramatarov

Alya Markova

Antonia Mechkueva

Siyana Zaharieva

Elitsa Sarbinova

Lilyana Dvoryanova

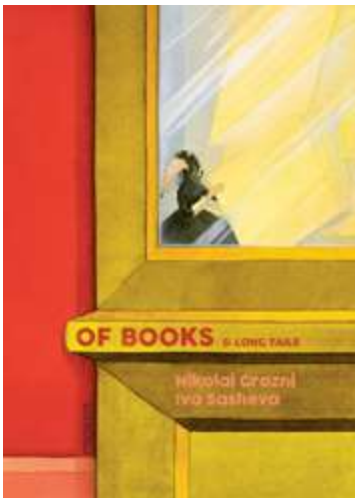
Denitza Mineva



Iva Sasheva

Of Books and Long Tails

A bookstore on Chicago's North Side, a veritable labyrinth of books, connects the main characters – Eloise the mouse and Percival the rat. Eloise is constantly reading, sitting on Ray Bradbury's sofa. She chooses books according to the day and her mood: children's books, books about the stars and the universe, or human anatomy. In the attic, Percival, the "shellshocked rat," repairs clocks. A note he leaves on the floor in the Novels section sets this story in motion, but Eloise the mouse is quite hesitant about its genre. With a classic watercolour technique, Iva Sasheva builds a cinematic system of points of view, in which she navigates so convincingly that she makes the reader a close-up witness of the action and inner dilemmas of the characters. Though the book belongs to the picture book genre, it contains a great deal of silent cinema. Nikolai Grozni's text is embedded in the illustration, working in the same dramaturgical time. The two characters are truly alive among the giant objects in their multi-story book world. This illustrated book is elitist in the best sense of the word, and not just because we see books by Freud, Joyce, and Nabokov drawn in the library.



Of Books & Long Tails

Author: Nikolai Grozni

Illustrator: Iva Sasheva

Cover: hardback

Page count: 40

Format: 18.5 x 25.8 cm

Publisher: Begemot, 2018

ISBN 978-619-905-288-4





Ina Hristova

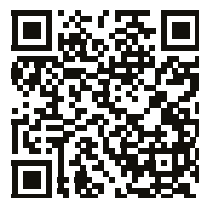
A Child's Christmas in Wales

Dylan Thomas's poetic text, originally written for reading on the radio, evokes tactile images from childhood that are as personal as they are universal. Ina Hristova transports us into the atmosphere of this "wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays" with pictures of frozen moments that stretch out in time, the same way they do when we remember enchanting experiences from childhood. Hypnotic, reduced to a moment of rapture and intoxication – a moment of rolling in the snow, a moment of snowflakes falling, a moment of looking at the fish beneath the ice rink of the frozen lake. A moment when a child's warm nose touches the frosted window... This effect makes the text sound like an audio track against the background of the snowy paintings. The artist dresses the children in bright monochrome coats and scarves and makes them the centre of the action amidst the silver decorations, leaves open spaces in which footsteps in the snowdrifts lead our eyes to warm homes, and throughout the entire book, a magical snow falls onto the grey-blue rural landscape.



A Child's Christmas in Wales

Author: Dylan Thomas
 Illustrator: Ina Hristova
 Cover: paperback
 Page count: 44
 Format: 21.5 x 21.5 cm
 Publisher: List, 2019
 ISBN 978-619-735-058-6





Kiril Zlatkov

The Mice Go to the Opera

The Mice Go to the Opera is a poem for children. This is a classic genre, known in Bulgaria since the interwar period and influenced by European models. Opera is not exactly in vogue among today's children, but when a group of lovable and smartly dressed mice become enthralled with it, there is a serious likelihood that will change. "Opera is beautiful!" we are assured by both the text and the illustrations in this equally beautiful book. They seem to gently take us by the ears and lead us out of our familiar everyday scenery. The artist Kiril Zlatkov approached Maria Doneva's wonderful poems in a truly theatrical way, and you can see that they captivated him. The colour palettes are warm and complex, composed of carmine, ochre, sienna, emerald green, ultramarine, cinnabar... The mastered watercolour technique is combined with coloured pencil strokes and tempera accents. There is not a single blank page in the book – the illustrations fill the pages completely and do not let in a single ray of light from the ordinary world outside.



The Mice Go to the Opera

Author: Maria Doneva
Illustrator: Kiril Zlatkov
Cover: hardback
Page count: 32
Format: 22.5 x 24 cm
Publisher: Janet 45, 2022
ISBN 978-619-186-792-9

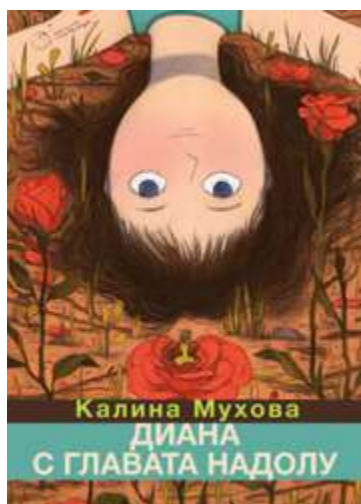




Kalina Muhova

Upside Down Diana

Kalina Muhova has created a comic book about a mischievous city girl who goes to visit her grandparents. There, in the Bulgarian Rose Valley, she learns from her grandmother what ingredients are used to make pancakes, and from her grandfather – what the secret of the “fragrant boulder” is. Things grow complicated when a fall off a cliff takes her to an underground kingdom of miniature rose people. There, Diana meets the Queen of Roses and is taken captive, just like a children’s Gulliver (to which there are references in this story, but they are filtered). She learns that the giants (the humans, that is) have littered the Land of Roses and sets out to help. After many ups and downs, Diana serves up the story’s finale: pancakes with wild strawberry jam, which has a secret ingredient. The comic book is an art that requires specific skills. Kalina Muhova possesses them. It also has its own language, which she is fluent in throughout its range. The creation of the characters and the storyboard, the choice of colour schemes, the convincing drawing of the characters, the ratio of the text and onomatopoeia, the use of metaphors, allegories, the inclusion of magical means, all according to the canons of Propp... This comic is insanely beautiful, for which we should congratulate Kalina Muhova.



Upside Down Diana

Author: Kalina Muhova
Illustrator: Kalina Muhova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 64
Format: 17.5 x 24.7 cm
Publisher: Tochitsa, 2019
ISBN 978-619-186-792-9





Youlian Tabakov

Sketchbook № 4

The title of the book is a play on words. Sketchbook [Blok] No. 4 is the name of a children's drawing pad popular in Bulgaria. But this is also the numbered apartment block (judging by the illustrations, from the time of socialism) in which the main character, Mitko, lives. "The kind of apartment blocks no one draws in a drawing class, because most people think there's nothing to love in them." Using the picture book genre, the authors Zornitsa Hristova and Youlian Tabakov tell us a story about the saving power of imagination. Pencils, tempera paints, felt-tip pens – the artist seems to have pulled the drawing materials out of his school bag. Rarely is the choice of technique so successfully linked to the text as here. Youlian Tabakov first takes on the role of a child and, like a child, draws a house with a sun, but then he easily returns to his role as an illustrator. He weaves jungle vines between buildings, where he lets tigers roam; he decorates tree branches with songbirds, paints little tadpoles in city puddles and graffiti on building facades. The artist's style is elegant, relying on a clean line and colouring as delicate as an oriental engraving.



Sketchbook № 4

Author: Zornitsa Hristova
Illustrator: Youlian Tabakov
Cover: hardback
Page count: 36
Format: 21 x 29 cm
Publisher: Tochitsa, 2019
ISBN 978-619-717-210-2





Miglena Papazova

A Boy or a Guinea Pig

“Oh, no,” said the Dodo. “This is already too much. An evil gentleman, a talking cat, a tiger, a parrot, and now a dwarf.” This little book full of big adventures is part of the Story Seekers series. Its creators are the writer Julia Spiridonova and the artist Miglena Papazova. The publication is aimed at beginning readers, and the ratio between text and pictures is balanced. Even the choice of font is aligned with this important goal. Few illustrators can draw as freely and virtuosically as Miglena Papazova. She is a real fury in scenes that need to recreate confusion and chaos, but she is no less adept when depicting a knuckle, an ice cream, an airport with a plane taking off... She draws in a flash, including strokes in the image that symbolize movement, onomatopoeia, and punctuation marks. All elements are integrated into the illustration in a very natural way. With just a few wild pencil strokes and some light watercolour that blends with the pencil outline, she is capable of depicting any event and any condition.



A Boy or a Guinea Pig

Author: Julia Spiridonova
Illustrator: Miglena Papazova
Копуца: paperback
Page count: 104
Format: 13 x 20 cm
Publisher: Marmot Books, 2023
ISBN 978-619-724-167-9





Martin Stanev

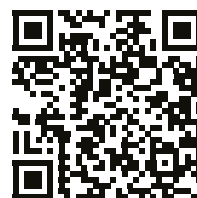
The Planet in a Pickle Jar

This is the first book for which Martin Stanev has written the text. It is in the picture book genre and has been very well received since its debut, already having been published in several languages. The plot was inspired by the author's not-so-distant childhood and by the timely topic of environmental protection. A brother and sister find out that their grandmother's world, which has seemed ordinary and uninteresting up till then, is full of miracles, and her life has a mission. This discovery happens suddenly, when she disappears one day and wild animals appear in her house. A mysterious door leads them to an endless warehouse full of jars. Not just any jars, but magical ones. Martin Stanev has filled these jars and the pages of the entire book with drawings of things, places, and events. The great attribute of *The Planet in a Pickle Jar* is the fantasy and visual richness of the illustrations. The sonorous colours and beautiful decorative quality are captivating.



The Planet in a Pickle Jar

Author: Martin Stanev
Illustrator: Martin Stanev
Cover: hardback
Page count: 32
Format: 23 x 27 cm
Publisher: Orange Books, 2022
ISBN 978-619-171-127-7





Lyuba Haleva

Merry Tickling Laughter. Part II

There are children's books that people want to own their whole life, to give to their children with the wish that they might in turn pass them on to their children. The Bulgarian playwright and writer Margarit Minkov's *Merry Tickling Laughter*, illustrated by the artist Lyuba Haleva, is just this sort. And luckily, it has in two parts. When a text written with talent reaches the heart of a talented artist, then the words and pictures come to life in an organic whole. The characters in this book are strange creatures with curious names. They conduct funny, absurd, and often philosophical dialogues. Lyuba Haleva's collages and drawings are composed with exceptional flair and taste; they are cut, intertwined, and arranged in unexpected juxtapositions. The stylization of the images has a high degree of abstraction, which opens up enormous spaces for children's imagination. The colour palettes and characters painted by Lyuba Haleva are as far from realistic as the author's texts. The angry beetle in boots, the horse on a bicycle, the buttons that talk to ladybugs, the yellow lion with black spots, the mysterious traveller with legs like keys – for each such seemingly impossible subject, she finds an interesting silhouette and solution in the layout of facing pages, turning them into compositions of stunning grace and beauty.



Merry Tickling Laughter. Part II

Author: Margarit Minkov
Illustrator: Lyuba Haleva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 130
Format: 23 x 31 cm
Publisher: Janet 45, 2017
ISBN 978-619-186-323-5

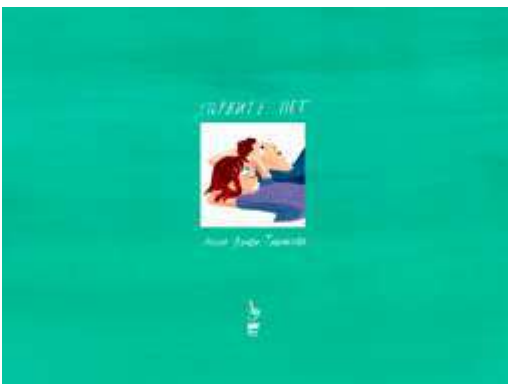




Mila Yaneva-Tabakova

The First Five

“It’s safe at home. It wasn’t so scary before outside, either... Then you showed up.” Mila Yaneva leads us to the edge of the pool, where she begins a story of the dramatic contrasts of motherhood. Experienced, sincere, revealing. Her authored picture book has so little text that it borders on the silent book genre. But the text is thoughtful and precisely dosed to interact with the dominant visual narrative. The storytelling talent of Mila Yaneva is indisputable. Her ability to use metaphors, to shrink and stretch the action before the reader’s eyes in all sorts of metamorphoses, is also remarkable: the mother’s hand stretches through several streets to reach the child’s bed; the bathtub turns into a high-water river, the river into an ocean in which predatory sharks lurk. And the stripes on the sofa heat up and blaze... Until the “flood” of tears puts them out. The expressive juicy tempera brushstrokes, the colours combined in reduced ranges with a strong symbolic impact, the dense paintings – everything she does as an illustrator is subordinate to the meaning.



The First Five

Author: Mila Yaneva-Tabakova
Illustrator: Mila Yaneva-Tabakova
Cover: paperback
Page count: 114
Format: 21.4 x 15.5 cm
Publisher: One Book Bookstore, 2022
ISBN 978-619-186-323-5





Sofia Popiordanova

The Snow Princess

The fairy tales of the writer Fani Peycheva are from the 1980s. With a poetic tone, written in rich, somewhat archaic language, they are reminiscent of folk tales. The Snow Princess is the mistress of winter and the guardian of nature. The plots, as in most fairy tales, thematize the struggle between good and evil, affirming traditional moral values. The style of the artist, Sofia Popiordanova, is based on the good examples of Bulgarian children's illustration from the second half of the 20th century. Stripped of unnecessary detail, these sensitive illustrations have a melancholic impact. The faces of the characters are quiet and engrossed; the compositions are very effective. The tonalities throughout the book are subdued and complex. The scenes are viewed slightly from above and turn the space in a way that makes it schematic and subjective. Sofia Popiordanova's illustrations give the reader the opportunity to move from the real world into the literary one.



The Snow Princess

Author: Fani Peycheva
Illustrator: Sofia Popiordanova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 150
Format: 18 x 24 cm
Publisher: List, 2022
ISBN 978-619-759-688-5





Mira Miroslavova

Grimm's Fairy Tales

Mira Miroslavova belongs to that type of illustrator captivated by decoration. Her affinity for beautiful details, ornamentation, and a noble colour palette is visible in all of her illustrations, and these for the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm are no exception. The stylized characters and motifs are arranged in one plane, like a tapestry. Without complex perspectives, the point of view is frontal, and most compositions are symmetrical or arranged in the form of patterns and friezes. The artist diversifies this model in places by creating more freely composed scenes from the particular fairy tale. Some of them span two facing pages, allowing the painstaking development of each element to be examined in detail. Around the titles of the tales and in the vignettes with which the entire book is dotted, she spins tangles of floral motifs, birds and horses. The illustrations were created digitally, with tools that achieve the effect of a multi-layered tempera technique or coloured pencils. Mira Miroslavova paints with the passion of a child and the routine of a professional.



Grimm's Fairy Tales

Author: The Grimm Brothers
Illustrator: Mira Miroslavova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 600
Format: 16.5 x 23.5 cm
Publisher: Colibri, 2022
ISBN 978-619-020-809-9





Katina Peeva

The Stranger Child

E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Stranger Child* was a key book of the Romantic era. Almost two centuries later, this is its first edition in Bulgaria. This temporal distance is clearly felt in Katina Peeva's illustrations, which were created with digital technology. But at the same time, they are grounded in layers of tradition in fine art, using techniques from easel painting and applied arts. This makes them eclectic in a very special way. The compositions are reminiscent of stage sets in a baroque theatre, where the sets are "ordered" one behind the next, and the lighting is always from an unclear source. This enhances the feeling of a stage, but the setting is completely imbued with the philosophy and symbolism of Romanticism. Katina Peeva's imagination and concentration are unbelievable! The book is overgrown with plants and populated with birds, wild animals, and fantasy creatures that look you straight in the eye. Evil characters are satirically hyperbolized, while good ones are idealized in complex and multi-layered images. The two contrasting worlds – those of good and evil – are in deadly conflict. But what is evil? The opposite of freedom.



The Stranger Child

Author: E. T. A. Hoffmann
Illustrator: Katina Peeva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 128
Format: 21.5 x 25 cm
Publisher: Enthusiast
Cultural Perspectives, 2019
ISBN 978-619-164-296-0





Sotir Gelev

How Lora Learned to Count to Ten

“Lora could only count to one. ‘That’s enough for me,’ she told herself. ‘I can count every single thing I see.’” But the artist and writer Sotir Gelev seems to say: No, children, that’s not enough – it’s good to be able to do much more! The main plot is simple – accompanied by her cat, the main character, Lora, meets dwarves, a monster, a robber... and fairies. In funny dialogues with them, she learns to count to ten without even noticing. She goes home with new knowledge, not only about numbers, but also about countless other new things. In this book, the entertaining and the educational go hand in hand, just like the text and the illustrations. The style is inspired by the art of printmaking, the drawing and strokes are masterful, and there is nothing treacly about Laura’s wild, tousled hair, her face, even the look of the fairies. Monochrome graphics in brown tones are supported by gold elements that, in addition to creating a decorative environment throughout the book, remind us that what is happening is very much in the mind of the child and in the realm of the fairy tale.



How Lora Learned to Count to Ten

Author: Sotir Gelev
Illustrator: Sotir Gelev
Cover: paperback
Page count: 72
Format: 20.5 x 26 cm
Publisher: EHMycyacm, 2018
ISBN 978-619-164-271-7





Penko Gelev

Ladybug, Spotty Bug

Dora Gabe is a classic Bulgarian poet from the last century. Even by the late 1920s, her poems were known by heart by parents and children alike; they were published in textbooks and anthologies, and songs were written about them. She also had her favourite illustrators, the most famous of whom was the Bulgarian classic Iliya Beshkov. This selection of her poems, illustrated by Penko Gelev, was published a century later. The artist's hand has travelled tens of kilometres over the blank page, his talent and vast experience in various genres allowing him to paint literally anything with ease. He repeats the classic model from her first editions, composing small drawings around the poems. The characters and plots originate in the text – dogs, cats, goats, a girl feeding chickens, children playing hide and seek, a boy jumping into a puddle. To a large extent, these are scenes from the lives of children from other times. And although these drawings were created digitally, their essence is analogue – drawing with ink and brush. The artist's quick mind and knowledge of the world of children can be felt in them, and this is why the images are universal.



Ladybug, Spotty Bug

Author: Dora Gabe
Illustrator: Penko Gelev
Cover: hardback
Page count: 200
Format: 18 x 24 cm
Publisher: List, 2023
ISBN 978-619-772-215-4





Vyara Boyadjieva

My Sofia and Other Images

“You go, you come back” is the first sentence in this graphic novel dedicated to the city of Sofia. In it, the artist goes back through her childhood memories of trips with her grandfather to the last stops of the public transport just “for pleasure.” Sofia has many different faces, and years later, Vyara Boyadzhieva experiences them with the eyes of an artist. These 20 favourite urban locations are stages for her characters. Busy passers-by and people reading, young families and children playing, as well as dogs, cats, and pigeons as full-fledged inhabitants of this common space. Even the people in the illustrated advertisements are caught in a moment of action. The illustrator is exceptionally observant of small gestures, gaits, and states, and the deformation of the bodies adds expressiveness without crossing the line into the grotesque. The spontaneous capturing of all these things is seen well in her renderings with linear sketches and written overheard phrases. This is not a homogeneous literary work – the entire book has a sketch-like quality – but it is very beautiful in this form and gets you to look at it for a long time. The exact choice of the technique with which these urban paintings are created alla prima, the restrained tonalities, and the delicate nuances in the details express the different hours of the day, the change of seasons, but above all – the city living with its inhabitants, her city, her Sofia.



My Sofia and Other Images

Author: Vyara Boyadjieva
Illustrator: Vyara Boyadjieva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 60
Format: 19.5 x 24.5 cm
Publisher: Tochitsa, 2024
ISBN 978-619-717-243-0





Stella Dreis

Was macht die Nacht (*What the Night Does*)

A father is putting his child to sleep. "...But... Dad? / Yes? / What actually happens while I'm sleeping? / Oh, the strangest things! I'll tell you." This is much more than a good night book – it's a night book. And much more happens at night than we imagine. Dirk Gieselmann's remarkable text meets a masterful translation with Stella Dreis's illustrations. They duplicate each other in their poetics and surrealism. And this is good. The artist does not make illustrations, exactly; these are paintings in countless shades of black, illuminated by lights that pierce with rays, reflections, and nimbuses. We need time before our eye is accommodated in these dark, diffuse spaces to discover the strange subjects there. But the narrative moves like clockwork, and every hour immerses us in stories and images born of fathomless fantasy. A whale rises to the surface of a swimming pool, lampreys bend down to the ground to drink water from puddles, and the wind sweeps the sky, to paint a new picture.



Was macht die Nacht (*What the Night Does*)

Author: Dirk Gieselmann
Illustrator: Stella Dreis
Cover: hardback
Page count: 40
Format: 25 x 31.9 cm
Publisher: Thienemann Verlage, 2023
ISBN 978-384-890-209-5

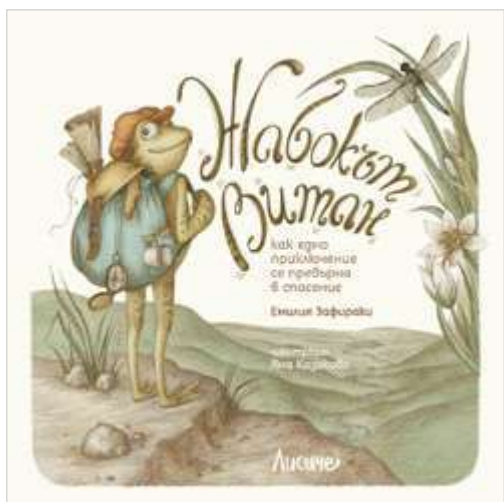




Yana Kazakova

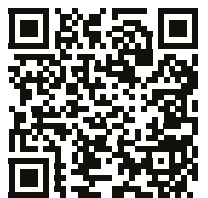
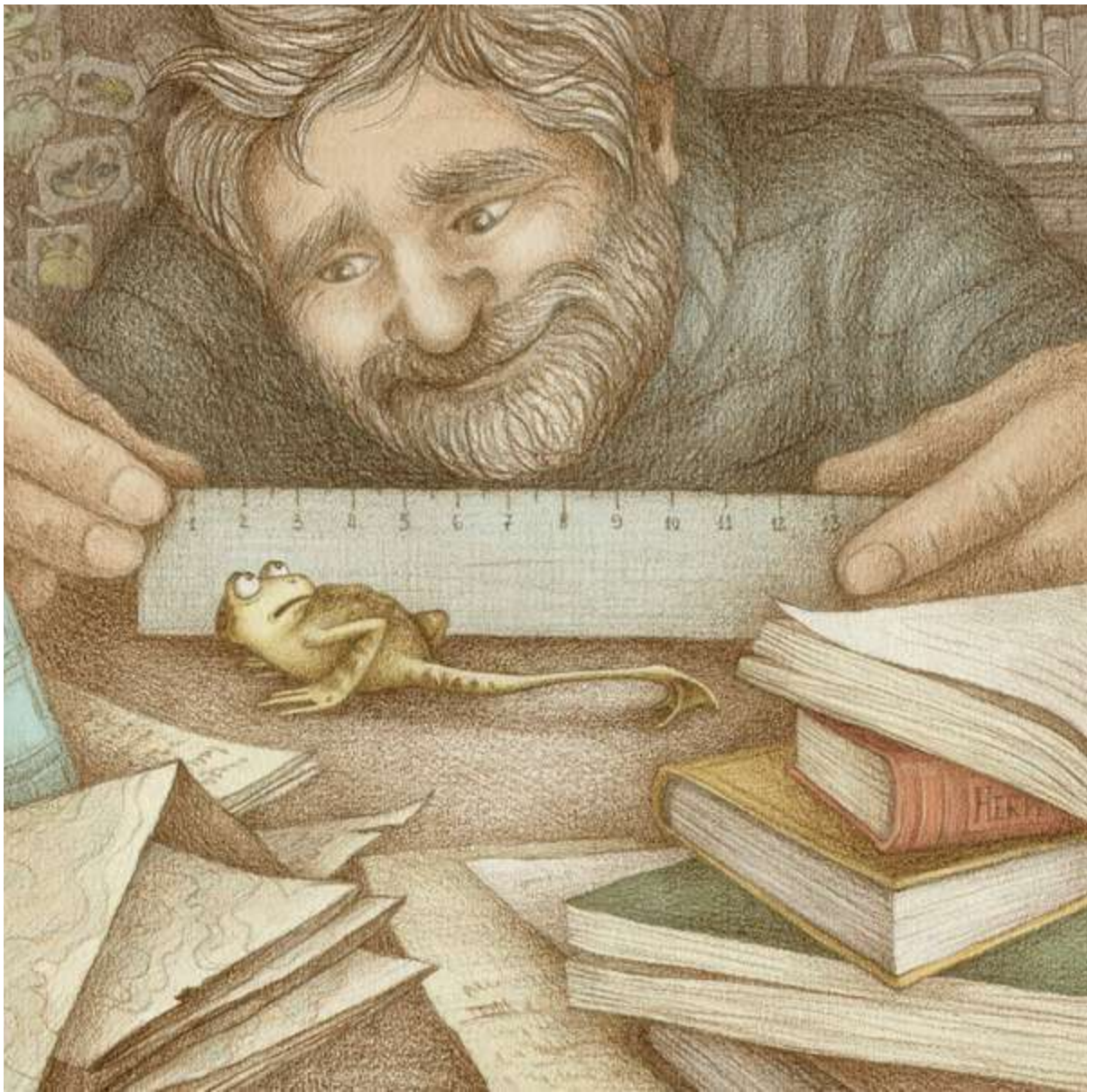
Vitan the Frog

Vitan the Frog is a book created with the idea of introducing children to the problem of the common frog or grass frog, *Rana temporaria*, in a fun way. In Bulgaria, they make their home in the higher altitudes of the Balkan mountain range, but every year they make a great migration to a swamp at the foot of the mountain so that they can create their descendants. Environmental pollution threatens their existence, and their fate is now entirely in the hands of humans. The main character, Vitan, is a poet and traveller. Yana Kazakova has drawn him in such a way that he immediately appeals to us. And that's quite an achievement for an illustrator, especially one involved in an important cause. The artist has also drawn everything else in this book delicately and carefully – the plants, the landscapes, the objects and the interiors, the otter, Alfredo the crow, and the rescuer – the Professor, a herpetologist. The stylization of the characters is subtle – the humanization of the frogs is achieved by adding small accessories – a cap, a scarf, a backpack. Yana Kazakova's style can easily be likened to classic English illustration. The pencil technique is fine, the textures are soft, and the colour range is calm and earthy.



Vitan the Frog

Author: Emilia Zafiraki
Illustrator: Yana Kazakova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 56
Format: 19.5 x 24.5 cm
Publisher: Lisiche, 2021
ISBN 978-619-753-803-8





Yassen Grigorov

*Dear House Mosquito**

“Everyone wants a canary, or a Dalmatian kitten, but who wants a mosquito for a pet?” Thus begins the book that illustrator Yassen Grigorov is currently working on. The main character – a mosquito – is looking for a master, an employer, or just a friend. The author Zornitsa Hristova truly had fun while writing these rhythmic, buzzing, and occasionally stinging texts in verse form. And Yassen Grigorov simply carries us away with the wild perspectives in his illustrations, with his insatiable desire to pack the scenes with important details. This repopulation with countless things fits the story perfectly – the parallel events around the main ones, the patterns and textures on the clothing, the meadows, the pavements, in the crowns of trees. The full-colour illustrations are digitally painted, using a technique similar to painting with tempera. Human characters are representative types with grotesque stylization. The movements of the figures and the looks on their faces are expressive. This book turns the hierarchies upside down, placing a small and despised insect at the centre of the world in a humorous Renaissance fashion. It is imbued with optimism, which culminates in the poem’s finale (at least for now).



** Dear House Mosquito (forthcoming)*

Author: Zornitsa Hristova
Illustrator: Yassen Grigorov
Cover: _
Page count: _
Format: 26 x 26 cm
Publisher: Tochitsa





Vesselin Pramatarov

*On Strings – 1968.
A True Story*

A personal story from the fateful year of 1968 was the documentary basis for the script and drawings of this graphic novel. A first of its kind in Bulgaria, it is already translated into Czech as well. In it, the author and artist Vesselin Pramatarov empathizes with the fate of three Bulgarian students who, after the tragic Prague Spring, dared to express solidarity with the Czechoslovakian people and then faced the brutal repressive system of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The point of view is through the eyes of the characters; subtle metaphors and philosophical dialogues transcend political clichés and transform the comic into an exciting and truthful humanistic narrative. The artist has chosen a complex and controlled colour range which, with its palette, takes us beyond the naturalism of the events, while the colour reinforces the dramatic twists throughout. The main characters, the political figures in the parallel "big story," and other participants in the events of those years are filtered through a masterful stylization maintained throughout the pages of the entire novella. It is supported by skilful storytelling and exceptional drawing.



Marionette. 1968. A True Story

Author: Vesselin Pramatarov
Illustrator: Vesselin Pramatarov
Cover: hardback
Page count: 48
Format: 22 x 28 cm
Publisher: Kibea, 2021
ISBN 978-954-474-916-3

...СТИГАМЕ ДО ТРАГИЧНАТА ИСТИНА, ЧЕ ВСЪЩНОСТ ПАРТИЯТА НЕ Е НИЩО ДРУГО ОСВЕН ИНСТИТУТ, КЪДЕТО НЕНОРМАЛНИ ЧОВЕШКИ СЪЩЕСТВА ДАВАТ ИЗРАЗ НА ВЛАСТНИЧЕСКИТЕ СИ, ПАРАНОИЧНИ ИЛИ ПСИХОПАТОЛОГИЧНИ КОМПЛЕКСИ, ЗА ДА УПРАЖНЯВАТ ВОЛЯТА СИ ВЪРХУ ДРУГИ НОРМАЛНИ ЧОВЕШКИ СЪЩЕСТВА, КОИТО НЯМАТ ТЕЗИ КОМПЛЕКСИ.

ГЕОРГИ МАРКОВ



11





Alya Markova

A Cookbook for Big Children

Drawing recipes is Alya Markova's way of showing her joy in the cooking process. Her style is expressive and cheerful, with a quick playful touch. In *A Cookbook for Big Children*, the colours are fresh and the open compositions spin in mad motion. The texts are written/drawn in different sizes and colours, the exclamations are an integral part of the imagery of the book, and the hands are in motion – they mash, knead, stir. Dialogues with imaginary witnesses – a mother, grandmother, or the readers themselves – are peppered with humour. The comic book symbols of speech bubbles and motion lines add emotion, and the exclamations draw so much sound out of the illustrations that we hear the clattering, bubbling, and all manner of kitchen noises from every page. This fun, masterfully illustrated book shares the joy of cooking, but you also feel, in an unexpected way, a longing for human interaction.



A Cookbook for Big Children

Author: Alya Markova
Illustrator: Alya Markova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 224
Format: 19 x 27 cm
Publisher: Aucm, 2023
ISBN 978-619-772-200-0



Antonia Mechkueva

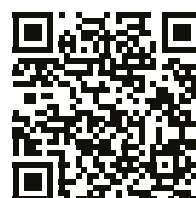
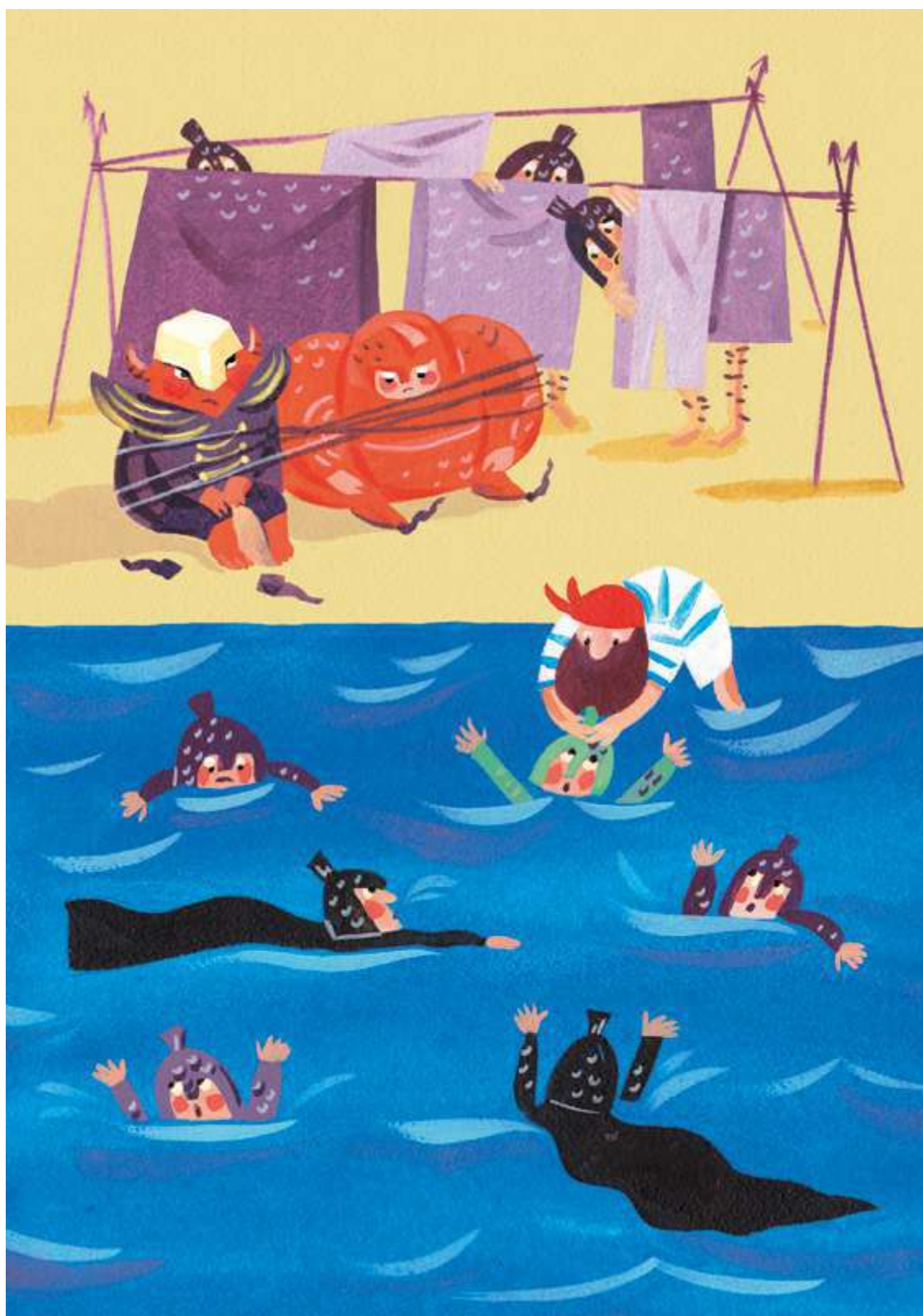
*The Adventures of Courage Forage,
Havesome Halva, and Crispin Cheesy...*

The artist had the difficult task of creating 40 different characters with human personas to correspond to their funny names, ingeniously constructed on puns from the names of various vegetables, sweets, and all kinds of other foods (an undisguised homage by the Bulgarian writer Ivan Radenkov to Gianni Rodari). The compositions are constructed with ease and imagination, the numerous adventures and battles of this army of deliciously named heroes somehow reminiscent of a medieval illustrated manuscript for children. The characters are in constant motion, and the artist depicts palaces, ships, and banquet tables with love and with beautiful drawing in every detail, while humour gushes out everywhere. In the background of blue seas and green meadows, there is no hierarchy or linear perspective in the arrangement of elements in the panoramic compositions. The costumes and ornaments, the expressive silhouettes, the dynamic gestures and facial expressions are interpreted with a recognizable decorative style in a classical and impeccably executed tempera technique. In these illustrations, every time you open the book, you come across new fun and entertaining scenes.



*The Adventures of Courage Forage, Havesome
Halva, and Crispin Cheesy in the Kingdom
of Auberginia*

Author: Ivan Radenkov
Illustrator: Antonia Mechkueva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 184
Format: 16.5 x 23.5 cm
Publisher: Enthusiast, 2023
ISBN 978-619-164-527-5

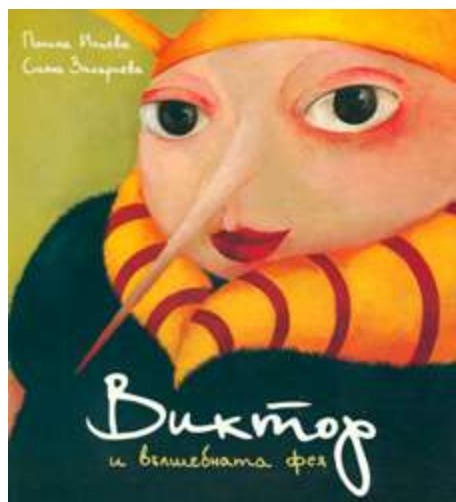




Siyana Zaharieva

Victor and the Magical Fairy

Looking at us from the cover of *Victor and the Magical Fairy* is the princess of the bees. It looks like a Renaissance portrait painted in oils. This is the first book illustrated by Siyana Zaharieva, published back in 2011. A story with a happy ending. The main character, Victor, is a child who scowls at everything. The milk, the apples, even the sun's rays in the morning. But an unexpected encounter changes that. As he's eating a slice of bread with honey, something tumbles down onto it. "It's a magical fairy!" he says to himself and puts her away in a box "to keep all for himself." This little book is about the path to happiness, which turns out lies in being good and not being selfish. Siyana Zaharieva's illustrations are located on the two facing pages. Each turn of the page opens a new scene of the action. The text is integrated into the compositions, with accented parts of it written by hand. The style of painting with thickly laid acrylic is more characteristic of classical painting, and this gives the book a special aura. Interesting lay-outs, close-ups, and angles are all part of the canon of good illustration.



Victor and the Magical Fairy

Author: Polina Ilieva
Illustrator: Siyana Zaharieva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 28
Format: 20.5 x 23 cm
Publisher: Paradox, 2011
ISBN 978-954-553-136-1





Elitsa Sarbinova

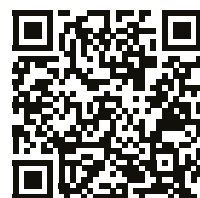
Impatience in a Box

A few little stars beckon us from the milky blue endpaper of *Impatience in a Box*. “Three snowflakes for a title is a good start” – begins the first poem. White, golden ochre, fresh green, and crocus purple. The light illustrations, drawn alla prima in a predominantly pastel range, at first glance act as decorative elements around the wonderful poems of Maria Doneva. Elitsa Sarbinova wrote the titles in calligraphy and composed the facing pages so that the text is always leading. But the book is sprinkled with cute little characters, pretty flowers, and playful details. Fields with delicate textures indicate a laconic sky, sea, land. This book glows and breathes.



Impatience in a Box

Author: Maria Doneva
Illustrator: Elitsa Sarbinova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 32
Format: 21 x 27 cm
Publisher: Janet 45, 2021
ISBN 978-619-186-625-0





Liliana Dvoryanova

The Little Elephant Who Wanted to Fly

This story, which Liliana Dvoryanova calls “a rag tale with two endings,” can finish sadly and dramatically or happily and incredibly. The book she has written is a philosophical fairy tale. A stuffed animal, the rag elephant, wants to fly like the famous Dumbo. He is not alone on his way to achieving this dream, but with his faithful friend – a white mouse who never ceases to come up with ideas that the two try out, but – alas, without success. Neither the many inflated balloons nor the sewn-on big ears help. Even a flock of birds cannot lift up the elephant. If they fill it with clouds, will the little elephant become light enough to fly? What if they removed its heavy rag heart and filled it with fog? Liliana Dvoryanova “tailors” this book. Not only the rag characters but also the interiors and exteriors have the patterns and textures of textiles. Buttons and lace are strewn across the pages, the scenes have stitched frames, and the text balloons are clouds of patches. And she does not stop here, but paints flowers, birds, and little towns on this multi-layered digital collage. Up to the happy ending, where the two friends fly above the world.



The Little Elephant Who Wanted to Fly

Author: Lilyana Dvoryanova
Illustrator: Lilyana Dvoryanova
Cover: hardback
Page count: 32
Format: 22 x 22 cm
Publisher: Marmot Books, 2020
ISBN 978-619-724-113-6

- Ех, как искам да летя
като слончето Дъмбо! -
въздъхна слончето.

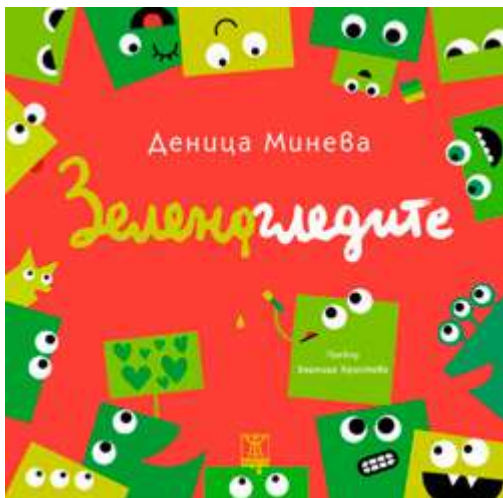




Denitza Mineva

Allgreens

Denitsa Mineva is the author and illustrator of her books. In *Allgreens*, in which there is a “war between colours,” she uses the language of symbols. Two primary colours represent “good and evil.” The artist is very inventive in this clear semiotic pattern. The green and red squares have been transformed into little people through the addition of minimalist graphic elements. Facial expressions are readable and expressive – joy, sadness, surprise, rage. In this fun combinatorics, the nuances of emotions are numerous. Denitsa Mineva works with ratios and scale – the sizes of the squares and their compositions on the sheet change in sync with the text, translated lightly and playfully into verses by Zornitsa Hristova. One of the great qualities of *Allgreens* is precisely the interaction of the text and abstract images, which sets children’s imagination in motion and nuances the meaning. The author generously allows the children to choose their own ending to this story with a complicated ending. Besides communication and the acceptance of our differences, the message to children is to be discoverers. And this is an important part of growing up.



Allgreens

Author: Denitza Mineva
Illustrator: Denitza Mineva
Cover: hardback
Page count: 44
Format: 23 x 22.5 cm
Publisher: Janet 45, 2020
ISBN 978-619-186-469-0



Колко
оригиналено!



Изключително!



Очервенован съм.



Това е черешката
на тортата!



Каква прекрасна
изнеервенада!



The Curators

Anton Staykov (1962) is an artist, journalist, researcher, PhD in advertising semiotics, teacher, and lecturer. He is the author of the award-winning books *A Brief History of Bulgarian Comics* (2013) and *The Bulgarian Primer. 200 Years in First Grade* (2015), as well as host of the segment *The Book as Art* broadcast on Bulgarian National Television (2017–2019) and a screenwriter of documentaries. He curates exhibitions in the fields of comics, illustration, and visual arts.

Svoboda Tzekova (1974) is a graphic designer and illustrator. She is engaged in visual research and works for causes related to children's rights. With her studio *format.bg*, she creates numerous projects in the field of print and digital media. She is the curator, author and designer of award-winning books and exhibitions, including the *A'Design Award* (2015) and the *Sofia Award* for outstanding achievements in the field of culture (2021).

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who participated, co-operated, and helped to make this project a reality. The artists – for the illustrations they provided, as well as the conversations and the shared experience. And all the publishers – for trusting us and sending materials and books for the exhibition in Bologna and its subsequent presentation in Bulgaria. We thank the institutions providing financial support for the initiative – the Ministry of Culture, the National Culture Fund, and the Capital Culture Programme. We are grateful to our colleagues at *Fontfabric* for the fonts *Mont* and *Audela*, which were used for all visual materials for the project; to our partners from the Bulgarian Book Association, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, the P. K. Yavorov Regional Library, the city of Burgas, the Museum of Photography in the city of Kazanlak, the Children's Book Foundation, and the municipality of Dupnitsa for their trust and support; and to *Bivalvia* printing house and *BMB Advertising*. We extend special thanks to Stefan Gadzhovski, Emil Markov, Veselin Mechkuev, Silva Hacheryan, Ivana Paseva, Zornitsa Hristova, Maya Bobeva-Atanasova, Rumen Chaushev, Dimitar Chaushev, Bozhan Vutov, Antoaneta Miteva, and Kristina Tuzharova.

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for **kids**

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portrait photographs

Nikolai Grozni (p. 8, Iva Sasheva); Ina Hristova (p. 10); Felia Baruch (p. 12, Kiril Zlatkov); Tania Cristofari (p. 14, Kalina Muhova); Youlia Tabakov (p. 16); Elena Papazova (p. 18, Miglena Papazova); Martin Stanev (p. 20); Lyuba Haleva (p. 22, Lyuba Haleva); Daniel Dimitrov (Mila Yaneva-Tabakova, p. 24); Yana Lozeva (p. 26, Sofia Popiordanova); Petar Hadzhikolev (p. 28, Mira Miroslavova); Desislava Vasova (p. 30, Katina Peeva); Svoboda Tzekova (Sotir Gelev, p. 32); Svoboda Tzekova (Penko Gelev, p. 34); Benne Kasteleijn (p. 36, Vyara Boyadjieva); Markus Kaesler (p. 38, Stella Dreis); Stoil Dimitrov (p. 40, Yana Kazakova); Temelko Temelkov (p. 42, Yassen Grigorov); Todorka Mineva (p. 44, Vesselin Pramatarov); Alya Markova (p. 46, Alya Markova); Iva Dafova (p. 48, Antonia Mechkueva); Assen Ganev (p. 50, Siyana Zaharieva); Sergey Todorov (p. 52, Elitsa Sarbinova); (p. 54, Lilyana Dvoryanova), Cesar Deslandes (Denitsa Mineva, p. 56). All photographs were provided by the authors.

illustrations

introductory text: pp. 2-3 (1.) Cover of the book From an Elephant to an Ant, Dora Gabe, Iliya Beshkov, pub. Narodna kultura, 1955; (2., 5.) Lyuben Zidarov, Mother's Tear, author Angel Karaliychev, pub. Sofia Press, 1975; (3.) Neva Tuzsuzova, Colourful Little Book, pub. Balgarski hudozhnik, 1973; (4.) We, the Sparrows, author Yordan Radichkov, pub. Narodna mladezh; pp. 4-5 (6.) Stella Dreis, Happiness Is a Watermelon on Your Head, Phoenix Yard Books, 2013; (7.) Yassen Grigorov (preparatory drawing for Dear House Mosquito, author Zornitsa Hristova, forthcoming, pub. Tochitsa, 2024; (8.) Miglena Papazova, sock, fragment of a preparatory pencil drawing, A Boy or a Guinea Pig, author Julia Spiridonova, pub. Marmot, 2018; (9.) Kiril Zlatkov, detail from When I Want to be Silent, author Zornitsa Hristova, pub. Tochitsa, 2015; (10.) Alya Markova, detail from an unpublished graphic novella; (11.) Lyuba Haleva, detail from Merry Tickling Laughter, Part II, pub. Janet 45, 2017; (12.) Katina Peeva, detail from The Stranger Child, pub. Enthusiast and Cultural Perspectives, 2019

cover: Kiril Zlatkov, detail from When I Want to be Silent, author Zornitsa Hristova, pub. Tochitsa, 2015; Mila Yaneva-Tabakova (detail, The First Five, One Book Bookstore, 2022); Luba Haleva, detail from Merry Tickling Laughter, Part II, pub. Janet 45, 2017

JOY, SADNESS, AND HOPE.

25 Bulgarian Children's Book Illustrators

catalogue

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