

2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award

Jury Laudation by Jury President, Liz Page

39th IBBY World Congress, Trieste, Italy, 31 August 2024

Welcome to this special ceremony to celebrate the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award – the highest international distinction given to authors and illustrators of children's books. The awards are given every other year by IBBY to recognize an author and an illustrator whose works have made an important and lasting contribution to children's literature.

The Andersen Award is sponsored by Nami Island Arts & Education Inc. based in Seoul. IBBY expresses its deepest gratitude to Nami for its generous support of this most prestigious international award. I would now like to ask Ms Lee to say a few words about the work and activities of Nami island and their support of the IBBY Andersen Awards.

It has really been an extraordinary privilege for me to lead the 2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award process. As many of you know, this task was unexpected. Our colleague and good friend Anastasia Arkhipova was elected to the position of Jury president at the IBBY General Election in 2022. But because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many people, IBBY members included, equated Anastasia with the activities of the Russian Government. She was mercilessly trolled and was forced to resign. Another consequence of these attacks was that the long-time patron of the Andersen Awards, Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, withdrew her patronage in January 2023. We deeply regret her decision.

It was an honour to chair this remarkable group of jurors. They come from all over the world with diverse professional and cultural backgrounds. Yet the meetings and discussions were extremely harmonious and the process of selection remarkably consensual.

I would now like to thank the jurors, some of whom are with us in Trieste. Please stand up and wave when I call out your names:

Evelyn Arizpe from Mexico and the UK, Brenda Dales from the USA, Sabina Fuchs from Austria, Diana Laura Kovach from Argentina, Shereen Kreidieh from Lebanon, Betting Kümmerling-Meibaur from Germany, Jaana Personen from Finland, Tan Fengxia from China, Pavle Učakar from Slovenia, and Morgane Vasta from France. Executive Director Carolina Ballester was the Jury Secretary and looked after the logistics for the meeting as well as for the award as a whole. Thank you all!

In the months leading up to the in-person meeting, the criteria were discussed via an online blog platform especially created for the jury. The jury finally met in Basel, Switzerland in January this year. Being wonderfully warm here in Trieste, it is hard to imagine just how cold it was in Basel during that meeting!

We initially spent some time discussing the criteria and refining them to reflect what the jury was looking for in this round of the award. Universality was an important theme and how the candidates addressed this issue. Further themes included the candidates' aesthetic and literary qualities as well as their freshness and innovation. We looked at their ability to see the child's point of view and to stretch their curiosity as well as the continuing relevance of the works to children and young people. As with every Andersen award, the Jury's assessments were based on each nominee's entire body of work.

From the 59 nominees submitted by 33 IBBY sections, the Shortlist of 12 nominees, was announced immediately after the January meeting.

The Authors list comprised: Marina Colasanti from Brazil, Heinz Janisch from Austria, Lee Geum-yi from South Korea, Bart Moeyaert from Belgium, Timo Parvela from Finland and Edward van de Vendel from the Netherlands. And the illustrators list comprised: Iwona Chmielewska from Poland, Nelson Cruz from Brazil, Cai Gao from China, Elena Odriozola from Spain, Sydney Smith from Canada and Paloma Valdivia from Chile.

We are very happy that seven of the shortlisted nominees and the two winners are with us today: The shortlisted nominees that are here, are the illustrators Cai Gao from China, Gusti from Argentina and Damijan Stepančić from Slovenia, and authors Roberto Piumini from Italy, Lee Geum-yi from South Korea, Peter Svetina from Slovenia, and Samar Barraj from Lebanon.

I would like to ask them to come to the front to receive their diplomas.

The jury also identified 20 titles that can help build bridges of understanding, which they felt were important enough to merit translation everywhere so that children around the world could read them, thus expanding their access to some of the very best books. Please find time to look at all the books on *The Jury Recommends*... list, as well as all the wonderful books submitted by the IBBY sections to support their candidates nominations,

From the outstanding array of shortlisted authors the jury selected **Heinz Janisch** from Austria as the recipient of the 2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award for writing. It is exactly 40 years since fellow Austrian Christina Nöstlinger won the same award! Heinz Janisch is a master at writing for young children. He opens spaces for children to stretch their imagination and invites illustrators to do the same. To say that *less is more* is an understatement for Heinz, he maintains that *nothing is too small for literature*. He encourages readers to think in a philosophical way, to pause and ponder on every page. Very often he introduces absurd scenarios, such as a bear and a giant trying to cross a narrow bridge at the same time. You can read and re-read Heinz's work and always find new or deeper meanings in them. Not only is he a profound writer, Heinz has also made an enormous contribution to reading promotion through literary and creative-writing workshops for children and adults. His writing is universal and unlifting.

Congratulations Heinz Janisch! Please come forward to receive your award.

[\[Acceptance speech by Heinz Janisch\]](#)

Now let me introduce the recipient of the 2024 Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration Sydney Smith. Sydney is the first winner ever to come from Canada! As with Heinz Janisch, Sydney uses the space on a page to give multiple perspectives that allow the reader a way

of “entering” the story. The child and father walking around the city shows us the father in his world and the world as the child sees it – we see both perspectives, which converge as they reach their destination. Sydney strips away the superfluous to express emotions through his use of colour and drama. His use of panels, whether they are an overview or a close-up, adds to this sense of drama as he explores universal feeling. He is a masterful storyteller whose illustrations take root in our hearts. Sydney has said that listening is how he approaches stories, whether he is illustrating his own text or those of others, he seems to listen to the very rhythm of life. The jury noted that his work is like a visual narrative or a short musical memory.

Congratulations Sydney Smith! Please come forward to receive your award.

[*\[Acceptance speech by Sydney Smith\]*](#)

Thank you Heinz and Sydney!

In the name of IBBY, I would again like to thank our sponsors, Nami island. At this moment we would like to share a video with you about the activities of Nami Island – a fairy-tale island shaped like a tear-drop in the Han River. After which, we shall go to dinner in hall 27.

Thank you to the Congress organizers, and thank you everybody for your attention.

Liz Page, 31 August 2024