



Hans Christian
Andersen
Award 2018

Peter Škerl
*Illustrator
nomination*



Slovenian
section of IBBY

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1 Biographical information

PETER ŠKERL (1973) graduated in Illustration and Visual Communications Design at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is one of the most remarkable representatives of the Slovenian younger generation of illustrators with an oeuvre that is already very impressive. His career in the arts started in high school, when he created a short animated film titled *Three Caterpillars*. His artistic expression soon focused on illustration, especially on illustration for children, which remains his focus even today. He is fond of experimenting and utilizes a variety of different painting techniques and their combinations to track the character and atmosphere of each particular book he illustrates, while at the same time developing the complex manner of artistic expression that he is known for. He has also collaborated in theatre and puppet performances, initially as an amateur actor and later as artistic designer. His illustrator background features strongly in his artistic design in puppet shows based on picture books with his illustrations (e.g. *Mr. Constantine's Hat*, *Wormitch*). He has illustrated about 40 children's books (fiction and non-fiction) and many articles in Slovenian children's magazines.

2 A high-resolution portrait photograph of the candidate



3 A statement on the candidate's contribution to literature for children and young people

Pavle Učakar: The Magic of Peter Škerl

Painter Peter Škerl is an old-school master. When I say “old-school”, what I mean is his dedication to the project, his determination, even relentlessness in all phases of the execution. His absolute commitment to the task that he determines for himself. He never releases anything less than perfect. The criteria he sets for himself are always high and become higher with each new project he undertakes. His illustrations for *Marshlanders* (Močvirniki) by Barbara Simoniti have become a milestone in Slovenian illustration – particularly in terms of execution. For Škerl personally, however, *Marshlanders* were primarily the work that built up his artistic confidence. Škerl went on to create unforgettable illustrations for Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, as well as for *Sleepless Andrew* (Andrej Nespanec) by Barbara Simoniti, *The Little Bouncy Ball* (Žogica Nogica) by Jan Malik, etc. Each of these works is different, but at the same time distinctly Škerl’s.

His painting methods are extremely complex and complicated. Each phase of painting is executed meticulously, down to the last detail. It doesn’t even matter how it all starts; what is important is that all levels of the illustrated story come together perfectly. The protagonists’ personalities are clearly distinct. Each character is a separate “model” with unambiguous character traits and a clear role that they play throughout the story. Character traits are supported wonderfully by body language, which in itself is one of the most important elements of Škerl’s paintings. As are the interpersonal dynamics between story protagonists, which are always directed masterfully. Scenery is detailed, as well as unusual, dramatic, made extremely convincing, even spectacular, by Škerl’s skilful use of light and shadow. In final illustrations, the heroes, events and settings come together in powerful compositions, both in terms of image and in terms of narrative. It is obvious that Škerl enjoys these “scene plays”, no matter whether the events take place outdoors or inside – everything is always complex, but most importantly, everything betrays Škerl’s knowledge of “play mechanics”, i.e. of theatrical procedures and effects, which makes sense, as we know Škerl had spent years as a member of an amateur theatre company. Such experience seems crucial to his framing, both of individual scenes as well as, perhaps more importantly, of the whole series of scenes, from the front cover to the end of the story. All Škerl’s books unfold with deliberate rhythm, and mood changes, action and periods of calm are designed to give the story those dimensions intended by the illustrator. The same goes for the colours he uses. These are not colours “straight out of the tube”, but rather meticulous studies of emotions guided by the story.

However, while everything is designed, composed and thoroughly directed, the images turn out effortless, and our experience of the illustrations does not reflect their construction. Everything is soft and light, coincidental and natural, and last but not least, emotional. Škerl is well aware of the importance of technique and always strives to perfection. However, what makes his works magical, the little magic touch that makes both children and their parents wonder at the miracle of beauty, is invisible to the rational mind – and perhaps even to the author himself, however, he uses this *je ne sais quoi* masterfully, and we recognize it in Škerl’s works as the powerful, original, personal mark, which we call his style.

4 List of awards and other distinctions

2016: O kravi, ki je lajala v luno/About a Cow that Barked at the Moon: Kristina Brenkova Award for Original Slovenian Picture Book

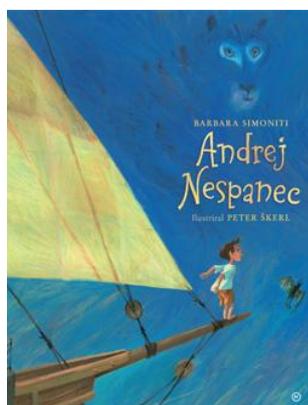


Statement of the jury: Beneath the comedy of the story hides a subject that is not funny at all, but rather worthy of contemplation: What happens to those over the hill, those who have grown old and cannot perform their assignments anymore? Crumb resists the notion that she is a tired old cow by, first of all, acting strange, and then by running away on a bicycle and meeting, after ending up in an abandoned house after a scary journey, a “ragged old horse in a dusty tuxedo” who cannot drag carts anymore. That there is yet room in the world for an old step dancing horse and a cow that sings the blues is proven by the ending of the fairy tale – the people welcome our two heroes and they both end up

by the sea, happy – the cow purrs with satisfaction. The story is enhanced by masterful, complex illustration that provides comedy, makes good use of the space at its disposal and creates a strong sense of coherence. Some of the illustrations are spreads, while some only take one page, next to a white page with text; the latter ones express a caricature of a linear perspective. About a Cow that Barked at the Moon, a balanced picture book with a wealth of verbal and visual language in harmonic interaction, is a multi-layered story about how everyone can sometimes be like Crumb; it is a textual and visual masterpiece for everybody young and old, and the jury hereby awards it the Kristina Brenkova Award for Original Slovenian Picture Book.

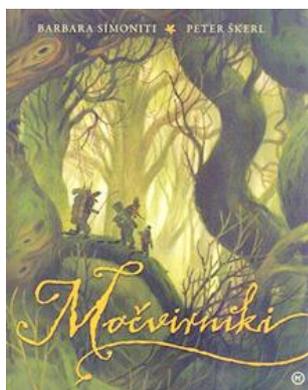
2016: O kravi, ki je lajala v luno/About a Cow that Barked at the Moon: The White Ravens (A Selection of International Children’s and Youth Literature), International Youth Library, Munich

2015: Andrej Nespavec/Sleepless Andrew nomination for Kristina Brenkova Award for Original Slovenian Picture Book



2015: Močvirniki/ Marshlanders: Nomination for Desetnica Award for children and youth literature awarded by Slovene Writer's Association

2014: Močvirniki/ Marshlanders: IBBY Honour List

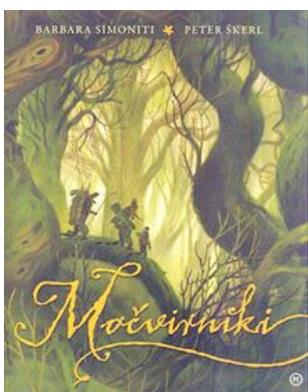


Statement of the jury: Peter Škerl's illustrations are exceptional artistic works that simply breathe the text. The illustrator adapts himself so much to the text, which carefully describes the nature of swamps and the life of those that inhabit them, that he becomes completely immersed in the author's setting. Because of the nature of the story, Škerl remains completely faithful to the events of the story, and his sensitive drawings of the animal heroes of the narrative are fully harmonic in terms of tone, with dull green swamp colouring, which gives the depictions a characteristic atmosphere and thus goes far beyond mere artistic description. The images achieve a mysterious charm, which is also radiated by the most concealed nature of the undergrowth, amphibians and insects; the author has created a simultaneously monumental and delicately sensitive work, in which full page illustrations, as well as vignettes, are an indispensable part of the integral literary work of art. Such a book transforms reading into pure aesthetic delight, which links the beauty of art and nature.

2013: Močvirniki/Marshlanders: Levstik Award for Illustrations, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana.

2013: Močvirniki/Marshlanders: The White Ravens (A Selection of International Children's and Youth Literature), International Youth Library, Munich

2012: Močvirniki/Marshlanders: Hinko Smrekar Award, Slovenian Biennial of Illustration



Statement of the jury: Škerl's work is distinguished by delicate, cultivated drawing with a mass of precisely drawn details and inventive compositions. Notable added value of the author's illustrations lies in their unconventional use of colour, which establishes chromatic relations in a completely new, original manner – so that the colour convincingly takes on the mood not just of the story itself but also of the prevailing characteristics of the time in which both the text and the illustrations are set.

2012: Močvirniki/Marshlanders: Nomination for the Večernica Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature

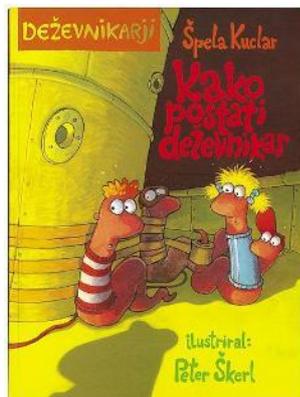
2007: Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's Hat: Best Designed Book Award, Slovenian Book Fair

2008: Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's Hat: Award for Original Slovenian Picture Book



Statement of the jury: *A genuine urban fairy tale, nicely rounded, humorous, probably intended for everybody, young and old – the story has a good point, i.e. that things always end as they should, as even nature makes sure beautiful stories of kindness have a happy end.*

2002: Kako postati deževnikar/How to Become a Plover: Hinko Smrekar Special Distinction for a Young Artist at the Slovenian Biennial of Illustration



5 Complete bibliography of the books for children and young people

5. 1 Fiction books

- Malik, Jan, illustrations Peter Škerl, translation Pavel Holeček: *Žogica nogica/The Little Bouncy Ball*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga (Velike slikanice). 42 p.
- Kralijč, Helena, illustration Peter Škerl: *Hačepsut*. Jezero: Morfemplus, 2016. (Zbirka faraoni), 26 p.
- Kralijč, Helena, illustration Peter Škerl: *Nefertiti*. Jezero: Morfemplus, 2015. (Zbirka faraoni), 24 p.
- Kralijč, Helena, illustration Peter Škerl: *Kleopatra*. Jezero: Morfemplus, 2015. (Zbirka faraoni), 24 p.
- Mlakar, Ida, illustrations Peter Škerl: *O kravi, ki je lajala v luno/A Cow that Barked at the Moon*. Dob pri Domžalah: Založba Miš, 2015, 34 p.
- Orwell, George, Illustrations Peter Škerl, translation Boris Grabnar: *Živalska farma: pravljica./Animal farm: a fairy story*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014, 133 p.
- Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Andrej Nespanec/Sleepless Andrew*. Illustr. Peter Škerl. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Velike slikanice), 32 p.
- Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Kje živijo živali?/Where do animals live?*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2013, 18 p.
- Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Različna sva, rada se imava/We're different, we're friends*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2013, 18 p.
- Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Močvirniki: zgodbe iz Zelene Dobrave/ Marshlanders: tales from greenwood forest*. Accom. text Marjana Kobe, Pavle Učakar. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2012, 294 p.
- Muck, Desa, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ko se želva izgubi .../When turtle is lost ...* Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2009. (Knjižnica Čebelica; 427), 15 p.
- Duša, Zdravko, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Kje so doma dobri možje/Where good men live*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2008. (Knjižnica Čebelica; 422), 16 p.
- Svetina, Peter, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's Hat*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2007, 2008, 24 p.
- Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ah, ti zdravniki!/Why do we need doctors?* Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2007. (Velike slikanice), 32 p.
- Razboršek, Mihaela, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ko Bog potrka na dušo: božična zgodba./When God knocks on the soul: a Christmas story*. Maribor: Slomškova družba, Slomškova založba, 2006, 25 p.
- Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ponoči nikoli ne veš/At night you never know*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2006. (Velike slikanice), 34 p.
- Kremenšek Križman, Manka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Po sedmih pravljicnih deželah/Through seven fairy tale lands*. Illustr. Peter Škerl. Ljubljana: DZS, 2005, 45 p.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Šola ni zame!/School is not for me*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2005. (Velike slikanice), 36 p.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Rdeča hiša/Red house*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2004. (Knjižnica Čebelica; 405), 16 p.

Arhar, Vojan Tihomir, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Pikapolonice/Ladybirds* Ljubljana: Mladika, 2003. (Pikapolonica), 28 p.

Dobravec, Mira: *Najlepše darilo: pobarvanka za najmlajše/The best present: a colouring book for the youngest*. Illustr. Peter Škerl. Ljubljana: Družina, 2003. (Mavrična knjižnica; 8), 16 p.

Kuclar, Špela, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Glistosrbeži in lepljiva snov/Wormitch and the sticky substance*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2003. (Deževnikarji), 36 p.

Kuclar, Špela, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Kako postati deževnikar/How to become a plover*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2002. (Deževnikarji), 36 p.

Svěrák, Zdeněk, Illustrations Peter Škerl, translation Zdenka Škerlj Jerman: *Očka, ta je bila pa res prima/Daddy, that was really great*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2000. (Velikanček), 30 p.

5.2. Non-fiction books

Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Lovšin Polona, Ana Razpotnik Donatti, Peter Škerl et al.: *Brihtna glavca za cicibane: ustvarjalne naloge [4–6 let]/Clever heads for little ones: creative themes [ages 4–6]*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2015. (Brihtna glavca), 59 p. Supplement: stickers

Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Lovšin Polona, Ana Razpotnik Donatti, Peter Škerl et al.: *Brihtna glavca za cicibane: naloge o živalih na travniku, v gozdu in v pravljicah [5–7 let]/Clever heads for little ones: themes on animals on meadows in forests and in stories [ages 5–7]*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Brihtna glavca), 59 p.

Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Lovšin Polona, Ana Razpotnik Donatti, Peter Škerl et al.: *Brihtna glavca za cicibane: naloge za kratek čas [5–7 let]/Clever heads for little ones: themes for a short time [ages 5–7]*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Brihtna glavca), 59 p.

Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Lovšin Polona, Ana Razpotnik Donatti, Peter Škerl et al.: *Brihtna glavca za cicibane: naloge za kratek čas [4–6 let]/Clever heads for little ones: themes for a short time [ages 4–6]*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Brihtna glavca), 59 p. Supplement: stickers

Zgodba zate/A story for you. Illustrations Peter Škerl, Editor Božo Rustja. Koper: Ognjišče, 2014. (Zgodbe za dušo; 11), 150 p.

Kupper, Lenčka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Pesmi o živalih/Animal songs*. Accom. Text Janko Zerzer. Celovec: Mohorjeva založba, 2013, 27 p.

Burger, Magda; Mamić, Tino; Rustja, Božo, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Moje prvo obhajilo/My first Communion*. Koper: Ognjišče, 2013, 39 p.

Hanuš, Barbara, Illustrations Ana Razpotnik Donatti, Peter Škerl, Mojca Cerjak: *Brihtna glavca za cicibane: naloge za kratek čas/Clever heads for little ones: themes for a short time*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2012. (Brihtna glavca), 59 p. Supplement: stickers

Konc Lorenzutti, Nataša, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Nihče ne ve ...: prilike v stripu in verzih/Nobody knows ...: parables in comic and verse*. Accom. text Jurij Bizjak. Ljubljana: Družina, 2011. (Mavrična knjižnica), 42 p.

Kupper, Lenčka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Prižgimo si lučke/Light the lamps*. Accom. text Tatjana Mihelčič Gregorčič, Ivan Olip. Celovec: Mohorjeva založba, 2010, 34 p.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ježek Snežek in poplava: kako ravnamo ob poplavi/Snowy the Hedgehog and the flood: how to act in a flood*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence RS, Administration RS for Protection and Rescue, 2009, 16 p.

Rustja, Božo, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Krstni album: spomin na moj krst in otroštvo/Christening album: memories of my christening and childhood*. Koper: Ognjišče, 2009, 39 p.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ježek Snežek in 112: kdaj in kako pokličemo na številko za klic v sili/Snowy the Hedgehog and 112: when and how to call the emergency number*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2008, 16 p.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ježek Snežek in suša: požar v naravi/Snowy the Hedgehog and the drought: a forest fire*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2007, 18 p.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ježek Snežek in požar/Snowy the Hedgehog and the fire*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2006, 17 p.

Jamnik, Tilka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ostržek bere za bralno značko/Pinocchio reads for his reading badge*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2006, 25 p.

Jamnik, Tilka, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Pika v knjižnici/Pippi in the library*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2004, 25 p.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Ježek Snežek in potres: kako poučiti otroke o pravilnem ravnanju med potresom/Snowy the Hedgehog and the earthquake: teaching children how to act in an earthquake*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2004, 17 p.

Zrakić, Đuro, Illustrations Peter Škerl, translation Đurđa Strsoglavac: *Vsi me imajo radi, samo oče ne/Everyone loves me except Daddy*. Koper: Ognjišče, 2000, 166 p.

Angerer, Tatjana, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Radovedna ovca Pikamojca/Dot Mojca the curious sheep*. Ljubljana: Družina, 2000. (Mavrična knjižnica; 6), 29 p.

Sivec, Ivan, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Zlati časi/Golden times*. Koper: Ognjišče, 2000. (Žepna knjiga Ognjišča), 200 p.

Angerer, Tatjana, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Od čebelnjaka do medenjaka/From beehive to honey*. Ljubljana: Družina, 1999. (Mavrična knjižnica; 5), 47 p.

Angerer, Tatjana, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Od pšenice do potice/From wheat to layer cake*. Ljubljana: Družina, 1998. (Mavrična knjižnica; 1), 16 p.

6 List of translated editions and their languages

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Maja Visenjak: *Snowy the Hedgehog and the flood: how to act in a flood (Original title: Ježek Snežek in poplava: kako ravnamo ob poplavi)*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2009, 16 p, English translation.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Maja Visenjak Limon: *Snowy the Hedgehog and 112: when and how to call the emergency number (Original title: Ježek Snežek in 112: kdaj in kako pokličemo na številko za klic v sili)*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2008, 16 p, English translation.

Svetina, Peter, illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Fabjan Hafner: *Der Hut des Herrn Konstantin = Klobuk gospoda Konstantina (Original title: Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's hat)*. Klagenfurt: Drava, 2008, 24 p. German translation.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Iolanda Rabascall: *iDe noche nunca se sabe! (Original title: Ponoči nikoli ne veš/At night you never know)*. Prev. Iolanda Rabascall. Ilustr. Peter Škerl. Barcelona: Malsinet Editor, S.L., 2008, 32 p., Spanish translation.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Iolanda Rabascall: *Qui sap què pot passar de nit! (Original title: Ponoči nikoli ne veš/At night you never know)* Barcelona: Malsinet Editor, S.L., 2008, 32 p., Catalan translation.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Maja Visenjak: *Snowy the Hedgehog and the drought: a forest fire (Original title: Ježek Snežek in suša: požar v naravi)*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2007, 18 p, English translation.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Maja Visenjak Limon: *Snowy the Hedgehog and the earthquake: teaching children how to act in an earthquake (Original title: Ježek Snežek in potres: kako poučiti otroke o pravilnem ravnanju med potresom)*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2007, 17 p, English translation.

Novak, Tanja, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Maja Visenjak Limon: *Snowy the Hedgehog and the fire: teaching children how to act in the event of fire (Original title: Ježek Snežek in požar)*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Defence of the RS, Administration of the RS for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, 2007, 17 p, English translation.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Lena Lamberth: *De skulle sendes langt væk. (Original title: Ah, ti dravnikeri!/ Why do we need doctors?)* Esbjerg: Lamberths Forlag, 2006, 32 p., Danish translation.

Sokolov, Cvetka, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Lena Lamberth: *Man kan jo ikke vide (Ponoči nikoli ne veš/At night you never know)* Esbjerg: Lamberths Forlag, 2005, 32 p., Danish translation.

7 Five of the most important titles by the candidate

Mlakar, Ida, illustrations Peter Škerl: *O kravi, ki je lajala v luno/A Cow that Barked at the Moon*. Dob pri Domžalah: Založba Miš, 2015, 34 p.

Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Andrej Nespanec/Sleepless Andrew*. Illustr. Peter Škerl. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Velike slikanice), 32 p.

Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Močvirniki: zgodbe iz Zelene Dobrave/ Marshlanders: Tales from Greenwood Forest*. Accom. text Marjana Kobe, Pavle Učakar. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2012, 294 p.

Svetina, Peter, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's Hat*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2007, 2008, 24 p.

Kuclar, Špela, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Kako postati deževnikar/How to Become a Plover*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2002. (Deževnikarji), 36 p.

8 List of the books sent to the jurors

Mlakar, Ida, illustrations Peter Škerl: *O kravi, ki je lajala v luno/A Cow that Barked at the Moon*. Dob pri Domžalah: Založba Miš, 2015, 34 p.

Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Andrej Nespanec/Sleepless Andrew*. Illustr. Peter Škerl. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014. (Velike slikanice), 32 p.

Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Močvirniki: zgodbe iz Zelene Dobrave/ Marshlanders: Tales from Greenwood Forest*. Accom. text Marjana Kobe, Pavle Učakar. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2012, 294 p.

Svetina, Peter, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Klobuk gospoda Konstantina/Mr. Constantine's Hat*. Ljubljana: DZS, 2007, 2008, 24 p.

Orwell, George, Illustrations Peter Škerl, translation Boris Grabnar.: *Živalska farma: pravljica./Animal Farm: a Fairy Tale*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014, 133 p.

9 One or two appreciative essays, interviews or articles

Peter Škerl, a Self-Reflection

I see the world of fine arts through a certain prism of expression. For me, this world is a world of yearning for the carefree childhood, of looking for security and of a desire to again encounter what is authentic and bring it back to life.

Illustration combines literature and fine arts in a unified work. This is reflected by the shifting of boundaries within the artistic genre in question, as well as in an emphasis on its equal role both within the discourse of the arts and exhibition programmes as well as in the general popularization of such works.

I'm very thorough in my work. I never know exactly what will come out, but I try to come as close as possible to my original idea. I pay a lot of attention to colour details that help narrate the story. At the beginning, I'm not interested in the surface, but in the layers beneath it. Only when the foundations have set does it make sense to start paying attention to detail. I have always been drawn to literary classics precisely because of their multiple layers of meaning.

I think that the spirituality of people today is too superficial. I believe we need something more. I believe in the existence of something that is shrouded in mystery and that spirituality is the only channel that we can use to promote peace with others and with ourselves. Nature responds to peace with peace, nature teaches me and heals me.

I enjoy little things, capturing a moment, details that stick out of the whole. The view through my window is the view of a grown-up child, always accompanied by emotions – it is the understanding of life and the answers to life's big questions that I find in little images.

Marina Katalenič “From Mr. Constantine’s Hat to Marshlanders and Animal Farm: 20 Years of Peter Škerl’s Creativity”, in: Rast, February 2015.

This year, illustrator Peter Škerl marks twenty years of creativity in illustration. During this time, he has contributed to more than a hundred different editions, enriching among other publications numerous picture books, textbooks and magazines. Looking at the author's artistic language, it is clear that he has come a long way since the publication of the book of biblical stories that was his first commission.

As mentioned, Peter Škerl has proven himself to be an extremely productive author over the years, however, his artwork for *Marshlanders* by Barbara Simoniti certainly needs to be highlighted in his oeuvre. It seems as if in this work condenses the entirety of his desires and experience to date. Given the several awards that Škerl had received for these illustrations and the exceptional public interest in the book, this work could be seen as the peak of the artist’s creativity. Of course, the word peak is in no way intended to suggest any kind of conclusion – precisely the opposite, it is an anticipation of new discoveries.

First, though, we almost have to ask: how did it all start?

Škerl was initially interested mainly in comics and animated films but later decided to study Graphic Design at the Ljubljana Academy of Fine Arts and Design. He probably recognised the core of his own creative desires and the future polygon for his boundless imagination. During the course of his studies, he was mainly inspired by painting and its history, and this attachment can still be seen today. Škerl constantly expands his painting knowledge and at the same time skilfully transfers it to illustration, so we shouldn’t be surprised to see Pavle Učakar, author of the introduction to *Marshlanders*, state, among other things, that Škerl’s “layers of composition are just as complex as in the pictures of the masters from late 19th and early 20th century ...”.

For some time, Škerl had an insatiable wish to express himself in acting. Although today he “only” remains connected to theatre as co-creator of puppet shows, he will never forget the hours and hours of sitting, in-depth reading and text analysis for a role that had taught him a very important skill for an illustrator: entering a story and selecting a single moment that would express the whole story.

To summarise, we could conclude that both professionally and as an amateur, Peter Škerl has been guided towards illustration, and that he brings to it the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary for experimentation within the medium itself. This has resulted not only in shifting the boundaries within the art form in question but also in highlighting its equal role within artistic discourse and exhibition programmes, and general popularisation of this form of artistic production.

Škerl says that Slovene illustration in general is in good shape and has potential, although opportunities for publication are perhaps a bit more scarce than they used to be. He himself sees excellent young illustrators coming from the Academy and is delighted by the new, 11th Slovenian Biennial of Illustration, which opened on November 17, 2014. He is himself a recipient of the highest award in the field of Slovenian illustration, the Hinko Smrekar Award, at the previous Biennial in 2012. He recognises that the award means a seal of approval for his work and draws attention to it among the general public, as well as the publishing community, however, he has never modified his work in such a way as to have a better chance of winning it.

As he says, he has been drawn in recent years ever more towards illustration for adults. This shift has not resulted in a decision or conscious rejection of painting for the younger public, but he simply felt that – in light, among other things, of the successful realisation of one his major projects, the *Marshlanders* – it was time to go down a new path. The production of illustrations for an adult public is still in its infancy here, however, Škerl sees this not so much as an obstacle but rather as a challenge. He prefers to devote himself to the yet undiscovered, as that's what stimulates his imagination the most.

He began to realise his wish with an invitation for cooperation that came from publisher Mladinska knjiga. Peter was chosen to do the artwork for a new edition of *Animal Farm*, which was published at the beginning of this year. Like so many others, he recognised the topicality of George Orwell's work, its ability to show life as it is, even if in a different time and place. For the first time, Škerl found himself dealing with a socially relevant subject, which was very important to him as a socially aware person. The closeness he felt undoubtedly helped him in creating the contemporary visual reinterpretation of Orwell's fable. Illustrations for the book have also been exhibited in a gallery: in October, they were on display at the Simulaker Gallery in Novo mesto.

In contrast with the subdued colouration that Škerl used to explore the shadowy world of swamp undergrowth, he was now set before the challenge of a black and white colour scheme. The technique of ink, from expressive dense hatching to the introduction of random red and drops of ink over the surface, allowed the author to create visually rich and eloquent images. What we see in *Animal Farm* is no longer the shadowy world of animals but a world of shadows, which grasp the grotesque and terrible images only as far as it allows us to gaze upon them before they disappear. The emergence of red, which appears at the first sign of violence, only increases the sense of unease. As the story unfolds, the colour becomes increasingly aggressively until it suddenly imbues the whole atmosphere. Another aspect of Škerl's successful construction of various scenes is the method he uses to fill the drawn surface. For example, the scene of the battle between people and the farm animals thus becomes almost apocalyptic, while the blank space in the scene of the death sentences against their own "species" draws us from the safe position of observers into the centre of events and thus makes us witnesses of the events. Although the conclusion of the book is anything but hopeful, it comes as a surprise that even the depictions that show the liberation from under the human yoke do not possess the expected enthusiasm of the animals. Instead they are uneasy, as if already in advance feeding the seed of disintegration or the augured transformation, in which certain actors will take on the roles of executioners. Apathy can be sensed in these images, akin to the apathy of our own time.

With the illustrations for *Animal Farm*, Peter Škerl succeeded in creating a topical and integral artistic image, however, the author did not ease off after this great and extremely successful project. *Sleepless Andrew* was recently published, in which he again joined forces with Barbara Simoniti. The successful collaboration in the past therefore resulted in another joint project. The author himself is tempted, recognising that they are clearly a very harmonious duo, but at the same time, he is prepared for the pivotal moment of stepping onto a new path. In light of his first illustrations for adults, we can expect a great deal.

10 Published reviews of the books submitted to the Jury

Simoniti, Barbara, Illustrations Peter Škerl: *Močvirniki: zgodbe iz Zelene Dobrave/ Marshlanders: tales from greenwood forest*. Accom. text Marjana Kobe, Pavle Učakar. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2012, 294 p.

Iztok Premrov: "Art Critics Choose, 2014, the exhibition In Swampy Meadows", Galerija Lek, Ljubljana, 2014.

With his illustrations for Barbara Simoniti's *Marshlanders*, Peter Škerl has certainly completed a project worthy of superlatives. As he says himself, he obeyed the rule that he is first and foremost a painter and that he understands illustration as an entirely painterly discipline. This means that in planning individual illustrations, which give the book its distinctive feel, he has seriously achieved exceptional artistic quality. The fact that in his watercolours for the book he "limited" himself to 10 to 15 colour layers in itself testifies to the loftiness of his illustration aims this time. In this, in his own words, he relied on the noble tradition of Flemish painting from the period of the golden 17th century. Painters at that time brought the set motifs – landscapes, still lifes and portraits – to such perfection that few ever surpassed them. Above all, they devoted themselves to the study of light in individual scenes and settings (Rembrandt), all supplemented with a special, perfect and harmonious use of colour.

In illustrating *Marshlanders*, Škerl combined his experience and the noble artistic tradition and added his own personal note. Humanised animal figures, mostly insects and amphibians, are his deftly drawn picturesque heroes who keep the story going. The painter acknowledges that in creating these illustrations, he was happy to return to his childhood, in which he learned from nature, recognised its mysteriousness and the living creatures in its arms. The forest he lived close to a child revealed to him the understandings that now help him as a painter. He would certainly not have been able to create the convincing and attractive images without an exceptional imagination and an extraordinary sense for the fabulous. His painted stories can be said to have an archaic air; perhaps it is not too much to say that they are also romantic. In these works, one can actually feel the author's profound respect for nature and the small beings in it that become marvellously worthy "persons" set in a completely specific environment, which derives from nature as imagined and personified by the author.

Peter Škerl has found sufficient creative space for himself with the given literary proposal. He devoted all his creative energy to the painted animal heroes and their adventures, which, as often happens in nature, can also be extremely dramatic; at the same time, as he says himself, they in turn uplifted the spirit of his inner child.

Orwell, George, Illustrations Peter Škerl, Translation Boris Grabnar: *Živalska farma: pravljica/Animal farm: a fairy tale*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014, 133 p.

Damir Globočnik: *Cycle of illustrations for the book by George Orwell, Animal Farm / A Fairy Story, 2014, ink on paper*, Ljubljana: Cankarjev dom, 2014.

In *Animal Farm* (1943), George Orwell presents the story of animals who revolt against their master but some of whom eventually, under the cover of working for a better common future, turn into exploiters and killers of their own animal peers. The farm stands in the English countryside, although Orwell planned his novel as a criticism of the Stalinist political system in the Soviet Union, but also as a criticism of any exploitative, totalitarian political arrangement and, in the end, also a criticism of human hierarchical, economic relations in communities of all sizes and located anywhere in the world. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is thus no less topical today than it was when it was written. It was first published in Slovene in 1970. This year, Mladinska knjiga created an illustrated edition of Orwell's »fairy tale«. The twenty-four illustrations, which help bring Orwell's novel closer to various groups of both adult and young readers, are the work of Peter Škerl.

Peter Škerl established himself as an illustrator slightly less than fifteen years ago, at first especially with illustrations for children's books and picture books. He gradually adapted his artistic solutions, interpretation of motifs and choice of technique to individual illustration challenges. The fantastic/imaginative side of Škerl's work achieved its pinnacle with illustrations for Barbara Simoniti's *Marshlanders* (2012). He received both main national illustrator awards for the illustrations made in a combined painting and drawing technique based on gradual design of the motifs through drawing and depositing of several layers of colour.

For Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Peter Škerl decided on black and white ink drawings (10 spread illustrations, 13 single page illustrations, cover drawing). In this way he followed the darkness of Orwell's short novel in which tyrannical pigs seize power and the fruits of the common work of the animal community by means of slogans. He connected the ink drawings with brush shading, by scattering tiny dots of colour and by concealing some details with red ink, which symbolically strengthens and draws attention to the horror of the events. The pigs, Moses the crow, Benjamin the donkey, Boxer the workhorse, the sheep and other animals are the main heroes of the illustrations and have some human attributes. Illustrations also feature the occasional human figure.

The main artistic technique is ink drawing, which the illustrator uses to successfully capture the vividness of the literary events. The protagonists are shown in slightly stylised realistic form, or in caricature or grotesque interpretations. Lines are sometimes linked into "bundles" that shape individual parts of the motif and at the same time create spatial depth. Covering motifs with wavy lines has a similar role. There are interesting compositional sectors in which the white of the paper on which Škerl has not drawn becomes part of the motif totality, or unusual perspective views of the motifs. Hatching strengthens the dynamics of events. The ink drawing is rough, sometimes sketch-like or even reduced to expressive markings. Škerl's cycle of illustrations for Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which can be characterised as an illustrated book for adults, combines artistic skill, a feel for the author's ideas and the illustrator's own conceptual world into a convincing whole.

Vanja Pirc: *Peter Škerl, illustrator ... who after the exceptional Marshlanders set about the eternally topical Animal Farm*, in: Mladina, 18. 7. 2014.

He takes his brush in hand and dips it in black ink. He then draws the farm and its inhabitants, the animals that gathered in the barn at night to hear the old pig tell them that they will in the end have to rise up against their master, who exploits them. When a revolt finally breaks out, Škerl reaches first for red, the only other colour in this black and white exploit. He scatters it across the paper, like droplets of blood.

He repeats this several times. The pigs proclaim themselves the new leaders and use cruel means to rise above the other rebels, so that it is no longer clear, even from the illustrations, whether they are animals or people. And other animals have to toil even harder than before. However, they never rise against the tyrants, preferring to just stay alive. The slogan of the revolution, "All animals are equal", gets an addition: "but some animals are more equal than others".

Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a book that holds a mirror to various social arrangements and ideologies over the course of centuries, has interested Škerl long before he first set about illustrating it. When he was invited to illustrate it by Mladinska knjiga, which had decided to reissue selected classics with art by chosen illustrators, he read it for the second time and was completely struck by it. By how unbelievably current it was in relation to the crisis of the present time: corrupt elites, tortured, exploited workers, protests ... The illustrations thus blaze with his ever greater awareness that we urgently need a transformation of the system, as well as a thought revolution. We must take care, though, that the revolution does not result in the opposite from what was intended.

Škerl took a great step forward with this work. Well, he actually does this all the time, as his work is one continuing experiment and because he prefers to deal with that which is yet undiscovered. However, *Animal Farm* is his greatest illustration project to date and is suitable for readers of all ages.