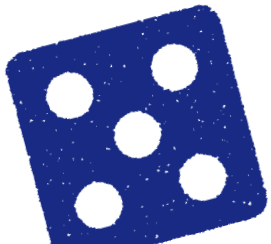


# *Five Czech Authors of Children's Pictorial Books*



- 1 What are the departure points of your work?
- 2 Who are the illustrators that provide you with inspiration and influence you?
- 3 What is the book of your dreams?

# Petr Níkl



Petr Níkl \*1960

Visual artist and performer

<http://www.petrnikl.cz/>

Furry Tales (Meander, 2010)

The Little Fool (Meander, 2009)

Orbis pictus or... (English, WALD press, 2008)

Deerly Beloved (Meander, 2008)

[Furry Tales \(Meander, 2007\)](#)

Linguistic Tales (Meander, 2006)

Rybaba and The Sea Soul (English, Meander, 2005)

A Fairy Tale about a Wee Fish Named Rybitinka  
(English, Meander, 2003)



❶ My work stems from fascination with world and life.

I keep being surprised by the imagery text can create, and by the reflections images can conjure up, by the way in which these two forms respond to one another, giving rise to a homogenous original book.

❷ From the numerous sources of inspiration, I choose for example Christian Morgenstern's book *The Moon Sheep*, illustrated by Paul Klee. As far as Czech artists are concerned, I drew inspiration from original children's books by Alois Mikulka. I also like fairytales by Oscar Wilde, Jacques Prévert, and nonsensical texts by Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll or Daniil Charms.

❸ The books of my dreams are such wherein images and text enhance one another and together with the binding and the very substance of paper they transform the book into a magnetising object.



# Tereza Říčanová



❶ I draw on my own experiences. In order to have the experiences I want to have, I live in the countryside, I see the woodpecker and the grey clouds every day, I tread in mud, I smell the wind and listen to fire. In the morning, on the bus, I observe the ancient countryside in the breaking dawn. Just yesterday the moon was shining high and below it clouds were riding on the wind and the children wondered: „I can see the moon fly!“ I love the old multilayered ancient stories, I like re-exploring them and discovering in them what I already know. The truth for myself, the truth for my five-year-old daughter. They also scare me a bit. When I connect the frozen rose hip just outside of the village with the evil fairy from the Sleeping Beauty I can clearly see how it all may have happened and what power lies hidden inside!

❷ Actually, I don't know. Perhaps it is some fatheadedness on my part, or selfishness, but every time I see something I like I have to run and also start painting. I am not capable of looking at and evaluating other people's works! I feel excitement when confronted with the frescos in Turkish Kapadokya (Gulshir) and in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. These are not only strong, but also picture-bearing places. When I leaf through the catalogue of the Prinzhorn collection (art brut), I enjoy it immensely. Naïve primitive art, prayer books, tarot cards, holy pictures, imprecise prints, all these are mighty sources of inspiration for me, most likely arising, however, from chance or lunacy. If I should name some artist, I keep returning to Bohuslav Reynek, Rembrandt's etchings.

❸ The book of my dreams was fished out during a sea storm. It swam in a pitch-treated chest, perhaps for many thousand years. It is therefore partly eaten by sea salt and inhabited by little creatures, but you can still open it without its falling apart. Naturally, it has a heavy wood-and-dragon-skin cover, with some rusted ironwork of unusual beauty... Inside, from front to back, it contains densely packed images and unknown writing. It probably describes all the wonders of the world. It contains many ornaments and decorations and close-up views of all the details we want to take a closer look at. Under this top layer of drawings we can sometimes see an older layer in turquoise colours. This lower layer tells the true story of the creation of the world! Someone has written mysterious magic spells on the edges of the pages and when you read them, you can, among other, fly. It also tells us why the book was carried by waves and where (plan) is the mighty castle from which it had to be thrown into the sea. It contains the fingerprints of a pirate crew, some blood stains, a pressed dried leaf of a Czech dogrose, the footprint of an unknown creature... Some pages are wet (abstract), others are probably missing and we have to invent them for ourselves. There are holes through which we can see a figure only supposed to make its appearance on the next page. As we lower our head to the book, we smell something resembling mushrooms, a salt cave and frankincense. Let's also take a good look inside that chest, it will probably contain some magical things (rings, swords, scrolls of power, a skull here and there, and a crown...)!

Tereza Říčanová \*1974  
Illustrator, painter and graphic artist  
<http://www.illustratori.net/ricanova>

Noah's Ark (Baobab, 2010)  
Shining Moon (Baobab, 2008)  
Christmas Story (Baobab, 2006)  
Goat Story (English, Baobab, 2005)



Kdysi dávno se země zkazila.  
tu stvůry a jedová zvířata. Také lidé byli zlí,  
prali se a zabíjeli. Žily

Noe a jeho synové postavili na vysoké hoře  
obrovskou lod. Pro každé zvíře připravili vys-  
komůrku.  
molenou



Děšť byl prudký a hrozný, trval stopadesát dní a nocí.  
Celá země, i ty nejvyšší hory, byla pod vodou. Kdo nebyl  
v lodi, utopil se.



# Dagmar Urbánková

❶ My grandmother when she was embroidering.  
Mud bread baked in the sun by the stream.  
Home-sewn clothes of the communist era.  
Sculptor Alexander Calder, when performing his Circus  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS2q-8dFyiw&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GS2q-8dFyiw&feature=related).  
Australian artist Ruth Hadlow, when making her grass clothes.  
The transciency of objects by the English landartist Andy Goldsworthy, and his sculptures from natural materials in the landscape, on trees, on water – they are carried away by water, by wind, they are scorched by the sun. This means leaving a mark in the landscape rather than a painful cut. [www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/](http://www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/)  
And the guest professor at the Fine Arts Academy in Bergen, who, when looking at my mechanical object entitled Chair, 4cm in size, told me: Dagmar, you must make it bigger for people to see it. I said nothing. The next day I told him: That won't work. The leg of a two-centimetre chair on a thread falls down in a very different manner to a meter-long-one on the same thread.  
It was then I realised that my things are only good for books or table theatre.



Dagmar Urbánková \*1972  
Illustrator, stage designer and writer

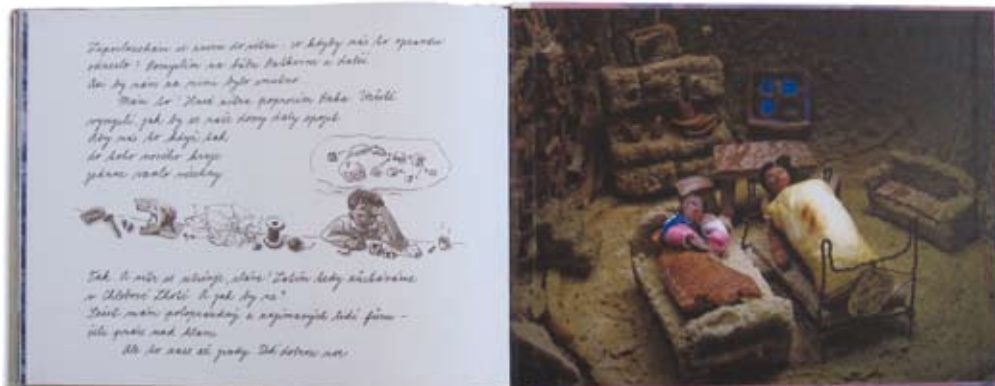
[Chronicles of Breadburg \(Baobab, 2010\)](#)

[Adam and the Knee \(Baobab, 2007\)](#)

[There Once Was a House \(Baobab, 2005\)](#)

❷ Czech artist and writer Daisy Mrázková and her original books for children, most notably *Můj medvěd Flóra* from 1973. I keep picking this book up, looking at it and wondering how come that I cannot separate myself from it. *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (pictures by Clement Hurd) – falling asleep with this book is just enough long. You manage to close the book and you are sleeping. Perfect timing. Astrid Lindgren's gentleness and humour.

❸ I would like to create a sand book. And a bead book and fun one. And a book that would be a little sad and a book of suspense and an entertaining book and a green one, a white one and maybe even one made of fog. And a book for the afternoon and early evening... And above all I would like to create such a book that children would not want to step out of – a book which they would hold in the other hand while packing their school bag, that they would pass from one hand to the other while changing clothes, a book that would be on the table while they are eating dinner...



ŽITOVÍ

PAKO

U KORNŠPICŮ



HLADKOVI



# Alžběta Skálová



Alžběta Skálová \*1982  
Illustrator and graphic artist  
<http://www.ilustratori.net/skalova>

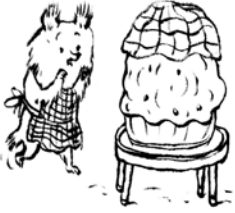
Pampe & Shinka (Arbor Vitae, 2010)  
[Honey Pete \(Kopr, 2009\)](#)

❶ I believe that my childhood and my family were absolutely decisive for my later work. Both my parents are artists, my grandfather is an illustrator and my grandmother was a choreographer. This means I also had very close ties to music and dancing. This entire environment formed me, I was surrounded by art, I lived with it and in it. Our parents spent a lot of time with my brother and me, they supported our creative spirit. We played for a long time. I think that is important, to be able to play to some extent all the time, even when one turns adult. I was drawing and creating things ever since childhood and it was natural for me, it was something I did not even think about. I was also strongly influenced by the environment I grew up in, our cottage in nature, among forests, below an ancient fortified settlement, where we spent our childhood with my brother, building ourselves little forest houses. Even today it is the best place for me to work and focus. There are, of course, many things that influenced me later and that influence me continually, but this was a certain basis I was provided with.

❷ There are many whose works I like for various reasons, be it my closest friends or the great authors of the distant past. The list of close authors would have to include illustrators from Baobab, Kopr and members of the Illustrators association, who all have something in common. As far as Czech illustrators are concerned, there is a number of those I like, but to be brief I will just give the following examples: Daisy Mrázková, Václav Kabát and Arnošt Karásek. More recently I very much enjoyed the work of Kateřina Černá. I also like Czech decadents and symbolists. I have also been touched by the work of the Russian animator Yuri Norshtein, especially his short film Hedgehog in the Fog. I admire the work of the painters from the French group Nabis, namely Bonnard, Vuillard and Denis. From contemporary artists I would name Sara Fanelli, whose illustrations I like very much.

[www.koprbooks.org](http://www.koprbooks.org)  
[www.ilustratori.net](http://www.ilustratori.net)  
[www.baobab-books.net](http://www.baobab-books.net)  
[www.sarafanelli.com](http://www.sarafanelli.com)

❸ The book of my dreams? It would have to be books. Some are so closely intertwined with the illustrations that I can hardly imagine replacing them with mine – that is if we mean books I would like to illustrate. Off the top of my head, I would like to illustrate the book *Le grand Meaulnes* by Alain Fournier and I also like books by Forrest Carter, and for children Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad*. The list of my dream books would also have to include *The Rose Garden: 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Manuscript Prayer Books* (published by Art Museum Olomouc and Arbor Vitae publishers).





KDE  
JSTE?

POJĎTE UŽ!



# David Böhm



David Böhm \*1982

Visual artist and illustrator

<http://www.davidbohm.net/>

[The Silence of Hippo \(Labyrinth, 2009\)](#)



❶ In every work I do I try to find adequate means of expression and to be honest in my work – I believe that one's approach to work is reflected in the result. I also try not to deny myself any opportunity in advance, thereby missing a potential surprise...

❷ Chris Ware, David B, Art Spiegelman, Cornelius, Blanquet, Bjorn Rune Lie, Béatrice Sautereau etc. Czech artists: Jiří Šalamoun and Pavel Reisenauer

❸ Right now it is probably the one I am working on and carrying around in my head...

# THE STORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST



JOHN THE BAPTIST HAD MANY CHILDREN. HE DECIDED TO CHOOSE SOME CHILDREN TO KEEP, AND TO CAST OUT THE REST.



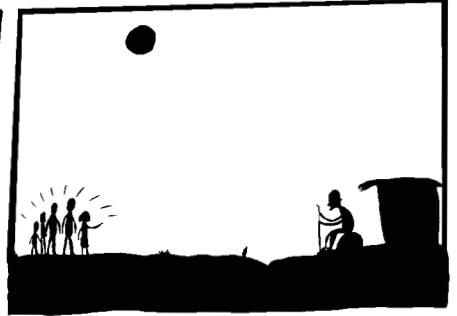
HE PICKED UP THE CHILDREN AND CARRIED THEM OFF TO CAST THEM OUT.



HE CARRIED THEM DEEP INTO THE WILDERNESS, PUT THEM DOWN AND WENT BACK TO THE VILLAGE, WITHOUT EVEN LEAVING THEM ANYTHING TO EAT.



THE CHILDREN FOUND THEMSELVES ALONE IN THE DESERT.



THEY HAPPENED UPON A WISE OLD MAN.



THE WISE MAN ASKED THEM  
WHERE THEY HAD COME FROM.



THE CHILDREN ANSWERED:  
OUR FATHER CAST US OUT HERE, BECAUSE HE HAD LOTS OF CHILDREN.



THE WISE MAN ANSWERED:  
I SEE. COME ALONG, I'LL HELP YOU.



HE GAVE ONE OF THE CHILDREN A CAMERA.



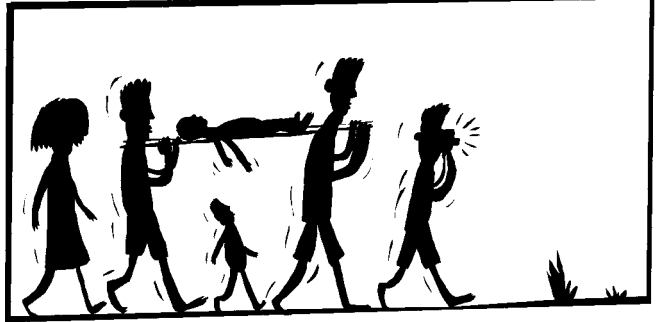
HE GAVE ONE OF THE OTHER CHILDREN A MAGIC POWER, THE POWER TO BRING PEOPLE BACK TO LIFE.



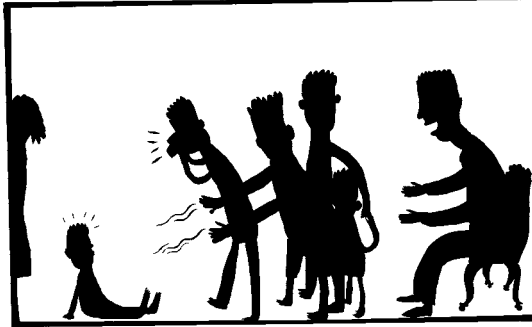
THE CHILDREN TOOK THE CAMERA AND BEGAN TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THEIR COUNTRY.



ONE DAY, WHEN THEY WERE OUT TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS, THEY FOUND THE BODY OF THE PRESIDENT'S CHILD.



SO THEY SET OFF TO SEE THE PRESIDENT.



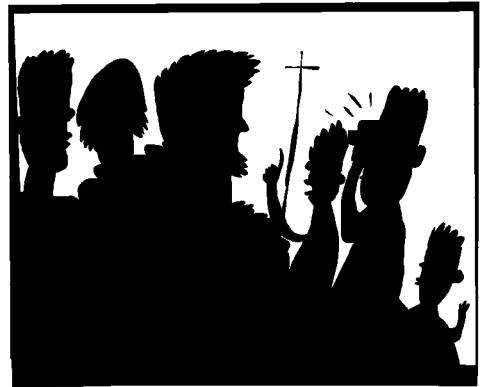
THEY SHOWED HIM HIS DEAD CHILD AND THEN BROUGHT HIM BACK TO LIFE.



PRESIDENT KABILA ANNOUNCED: I CAN NO LONGER BE PRESIDENT, LET THESE CHILDREN BE PRESIDENT.



SO THE CHILDREN BECAME PRESIDENT AND ORGANIZED A BIG CELEBRATION. IT WAS ATTENDED BY MANY PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. JOHN THE BAPTIST TURNED UP TOO, AND RUSHED TO FIND HIS CHILDREN.



AND THE CHILDREN SAID: PLEASE, COME AND EAT WITH US. AND THEY GAVE HIM SOMETHING TO EAT. THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS: EVEN IF YOU HAVE A LOT OF CHILDREN, DON'T THROW THEM OUT.

