

Children Plus—Toddlers First Books

13–15 November

Booth 1A01 (Hybrid Zone)

A special event of the Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF), "Children Plus" is a new stream of events aiming to cast light on a trend, a topical subject, a book category or a theme of special relevance for the global publishing industry, whether because it has marked its past or because it is shaping its present through vigorous trends and an innovative production. The 2020 edition of Children Plus will focus on toddlers books.

Children learn to read long before they learn the alphabet, and toddler's books are likely to be the first printed media to make them penetrate the world of books. As such, toddlers books play a frontline role in the children's intellectual development and in building their future as readers.

At the core of Children Plus, the exhibition **Toddlers First Book** will showcase 140 board books and activity books targeting babies and toddlers aged 0–3. **Toddlers First Books** is an outstanding display of novelty and diversity, which features books mostly published in the very last few years in 21 different countries and territories.

Established by a team of curators led by children's book expert and former librarian Grazia Gotti (Italy), this rigorous selection includes the best titles presented in the Bologna Children's Book Fair's Ragazzi Awards, one of the most important prizes in children's publishing characterised by its taste for innovation.

The **Children Plus—Toddlers First Books** exhibition pays a special tribute to one of the most iconic Italian board book authors, 97-year old illustrator Attilio Cassinelli. Featured as this year's Children Plus's visual identity, Attilio's "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Ugly Duck" will keep you company throughout your visit to the exhibition.

This exhibition is hosted by the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair and curated by Giannino Stoppani Cooperativa Sociale, with the support of the Bologna Children's Books Fair. A live painting event for children directed by Gudong—a Shanghai-based illustrator and finalist in the 2017 Golden Pinwheel Young Illustrators Competition—will allow everyone to play creatively with Little Riding Hood.

Curatorial statement, by Grazia Gotti (Giannino Stoppani Cooperativa Sociale)

A child of nine, ten, eleven, twelve or thirteen months will crawl or totter, clinging to odd objects for support as he goes, towards the bookshelves at home or at school, if he is lucky enough to have been born into a family of readers or go to a nursery school and have the benefit of trained—mostly women—educators.

Let us imagine that the baby has just one-tenth of the books presented in this exhibition: ten board books spread around him so that he can reach and choose one to read. He is alone, apart

from his classmates and free to read by himself. The place is quiet—there’s just the noise of a building crashing down or a squabble that has broken out between a few children! Nothing disturbs him as he concentrates on the book. How is he reading? Looking at the pictures and turning the pages. He enters another world, another dimension, moving his eyes and hands. Even without the help of an adult, he can read by himself. Nobody really knows what happens, but it’s enough to discreetly observe the intimate relationship that is created between the child and the book to understand that a special bond has been established.

We have seen this intense relationship with a book many times: the penetrating gaze that nothing distracts. We have then recorded the words the child uses when the moment has come to learn to speak. This is the true revolution, the change of perspective. This is when that story comes alive, told not by the adult but by the child herself. For children learn to read well before learning any alphabet, well before any “Once upon a time”. That time is now, here in front of me: a book. Books are crucial.

If the early years of life are important, there are certain decisive months when the child starts to stand up and make her entrance into life and the marvellous world of invention and discovery.

OFFICIAL CONFERENCES

Children’s Plus:

First Books, First Looks—Entering the World through Toddlers' Books

13 November, 15:00–17:00

Official Conference Room (Copyright Zone)

Moderator:

Yu Ying (China), Former Executive Editor, Gusheng Research Institute for New Children's Books, Online Reading Promoter

Speakers:

Suzanne Carnell (UK), Publisher, Two Hoots (Macmillan)

Chen Hui (China), Chinese Language and Literature Professor; Director, Research Centre on Picture Books, Beijing Normal University

Xavier Deneux (France), Author and Illustrator

Gao Yuan (China), Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Beijing Poplar Culture Project Co., Ltd.

Grazia Gotti (Italy), President, Giannino Stoppani Cooperativa Sociale; Curator of the Toddlers First Books Exhibition

Alexandra Kennedy (USA), Executive Director, Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art

Zuo Wei (China), Picture Book Author

**Simultaneous interpretation in Chinese and English.*

**International speakers will be connected to the venue through online channels.*