

“Spotlight on Polish Illustration”: Leading Artists of Poland’s New Generation of Illustrators on View in Taipei

From 14 July, audiences in Taiwan can now discover outstanding works by contemporary Polish illustrators. Curated by Patryk Hardziej, the “Spotlight on Polish Illustration” exhibition will be on view until 20 September in the historic interiors of Not Just Library at Songshan Cultural and Creative Park in Taipei. The exhibition centres around children’s book illustrations by some of the most acclaimed artists of Poland’s younger generation: Aleksandra Artymowska, Joanna Bartosik, Joanna Czaplewska, Maria Dek, Zosia Dzierżawska, Kasia Fryza, Susie Hammer, Gosia Herba, Anna Kaźmierak, Agata Królak, Paweł Mildner, Marianna Oklejak, Iga Ścibek, and Kasia Walentynowicz. Presented as independent works of art, the illustrations invite visitors to discover the unique power of visual storytelling.

Focus on Polish Illustration

Are contemporary picture books created exclusively for children? Or can adults also find something for themselves in stories that spark the imagination while embracing complex themes? By rediscovering our childlike curiosity, we can once again look at the world from a perspective that may have been forgotten, yet remains undeniably fascinating.

Illustration is a unique medium that brings stories to life while speaking a universal language. It transcends borders, cultures, and generations – says Patryk Hardziej, curator of the exhibition.

Illustration has long held an important place in Polish visual culture, where it has been regarded not merely as a decorative addition to text, but above all as an autonomous work of art. This perspective is particularly evident in book illustration, an area in which Poland has a rich and longstanding tradition shaped by publishing houses such as Czytelnik and Nasza Księgarnia. Its prominent place in Polish visual culture also owes much to the artists who, between the 1950s and the 1980s, came to be known as the Polish School of Illustration.

Today, Polish illustration continues this tradition while embracing new approaches. The illustrators featured in the exhibition employ a wide range of techniques, combining compelling storytelling with experimentation in form and composition.

Although Polish picture books are primarily created for children, their authors do not shy away from complex and challenging subjects. Nor is there any room in Polish illustration for oversimplification or purely decorative solutions. Illustration is expected to tell a story rather than simply accompany a text. Instead of imposing a moral, illustrated books leave space for readers’ own interpretations and personal engagement. This openness is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Polish illustration and one of the reasons it continues to be appreciated by readers around the world.

A Child's Perspective Captured in Picture Books

The exhibition “Spotlight on Polish Illustration” focuses on contemporary Polish illustration for children's books, introducing Taiwanese audiences to some of the most outstanding artists of the younger generation of Poland's illustration scene. The exhibition takes picture books as its starting point, revealing a rich variety of artistic forms, concepts, and techniques. Their true value lies in the diversity of perspectives and creative approaches they represent, coming together to form a multidimensional whole that captures the complexity of a child's experience of the world.

Gosia Herba, known for combining traditional techniques such as gouache and coloured pencils with digital drawing, invites readers into the fascinating world of insects and introduces them to an artist dog. **Maria Dek** presents large-format books for young readers—as well as for gardeners. **Kasia Fryza**, meanwhile, uncovers the secret lives of pets.

Agata Królak reveals how medieval castles were captured, while encouraging creative, interactive play with pencils and crayons. **Susie Hammer** demonstrates that even a seemingly blank space can tell a story, while **Anna Kaźmierak** and **Marianna Oklejak** reveal the beauty of Polish folklore.

Zosia Dzierżawska takes readers to meet Frédéric Chopin and to the city that was especially dear to the composer—Paris.

The expressive line of **Kasia Walentynowicz**, illustrator of the Polish Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, explores the complexities of self-esteem, the influence of other people's opinions, and the consequences of making hasty judgments. **Iga Ścibek**, in turn, addresses the theme of self-acceptance, with a fox serving as the reader's guide.

Through her illustrations, **Joanna Czaplewska** tells stories about women, giving voice to their experiences. **Joanna Bartosik** explores the closest and most meaningful family relationships. **Paweł Mildner** delves into the human body, revealing the fascinating ways it functions, while **Aleksandra Artymowska** creates puzzle-like worlds that invite readers on extraordinary journeys.

Beyond Illustration – Accompanying Events

“Spotlight on Polish Illustration” will be accompanied by a programme of events, including a curator-led tour, workshops for children, and meetings with representatives of Taipei's illustration community. Visitors will also be able to take home a postcard featuring the work of their favourite artist and learn more about the exhibition through a bilingual mini catalogue.

The exhibition has been organised by the Society of Polish Illustrators and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in cooperation with the Taiwan Design Research Institute, with support from the Industrial Development Administration of the Taiwanese Ministry of Economic Affairs.

“Spotlight on Polish Illustration”

- **Location:** Not Just Library in Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, Taipei, Taiwan
- **Exhibition dates:** 14 July – 20 September 2026
- **Curator:** Patryk Hardziej

- **Artists:** Agata Królak, Aleksandra Artymowska, Anna Kaźmierak, Gosia Herba, Joanna Bartosik, Joanna Czaplewska, Kasia Walentynowicz, Maria Dek, Marianna Oklejak, Paweł Mildner, Susie Hammer, Iga Ścibek, Kasia Fryza, Zosia Dzierżawska
- **Organisers:** Society of Polish Illustrators, Adam Mickiewicz Institute
- **Co-organiser:** Taiwan Design Research Institute, with support from the Industrial Development Administration, Ministry of Economic Affairs
- **More information:** www.tdri.org.tw/en

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The Adam Mickiewicz Institute (IAM) brings Polish culture to people around the world. Being a state institution, it creates lasting interest in Polish culture and art through strengthening the presence of Polish artists on the global stage. It initiates innovative projects, supports international cooperation and cultural exchanges. It promotes the work of both established and promising artists, showing the diversity and richness of our culture. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is also responsible for the Culture.pl website, a comprehensive source of knowledge about Polish culture. More information: <https://iam.pl/en>