Illustration from David Wiesner's Spot, one of the 2015 Mentions

2015 BolognaRagazzi Digital Award

The Winner, Mentions and Short List

by Warren Buckleitner

Last February, a small group of judges met in a small darkened room, deep inside in the Italian headquarters of the Bologna Children's Book Fair, to debate and select the winners of the forth annual BolognaRagazzi Digital Award.

The prize initiative is a big one, managed and paid for by the world's largest children's book fair, and directed by my own publication, *Children's Technology Review*. It's difficult work, but it's also a dream job. It gives me the chance to compare notes with others, and to expand my own knowledge of interactive design beyond the USA.

The winners are determined by a rotating annual jury comprised of international experts in both digital publishing, writing and illustration. You should also know that this is not a "pay to play" award -- any publisher of any size can enter, from any region of the world.

This year's jurors were myself, Cristina Mussinelli, Italian Publishers Association (Italy), Klaas Verplancke, illustrator/author (Belgium), and Max Whitby, Co-Founder, Touchpress (UK).

THE PRIZE, AT A GLANCE
- 192 entries from 27 countries.
- No cost to enter.
- Four independent jurors from different regions of the world.
- One winner and four mentions (two for fiction, two non-fiction).
- Ten short list selections.
- Winners formally recognized during a ceremony at the annual Bologna Children's Book Fair.

Watch the 2015 Juror Commentary video at
http://youtu.be/tPHa4aGl3z0

JURY MEETING

WINNER

My Very Hungry Caterpillar - StoryToys - Ireland www.storytoys.com. The overall 2015 winner brilliantly extended a loved work from children's literature into the digital world, with story-appropriate immersive interactivity, humor and surprises. Children help Eric Carle's famous caterpillar grow through each stage of life. Jurors noted "this app is brilliantly executed, with seamless engineering and 3D visual design It succeeds in communicating entirely without words and brings new depth to a classic work of children's literature. Unlike many previous attempts to bring a famous children's character to the interactive screen, this app puts the child's finger in the center of the story to assist the caterpillar through each stage of life." iOS

MENTION (FICTION)

David Wiesner's Spot - Houghton Mifflin Harcourt - USA http://www.hmhco.com is a delightful example of how a master illustrator can exploit the potential of a multi-touch screen to create an immediately beguiling work of infinite imagination. Despite some clumsy navigation and a lack of unifying narrative, jurors noted that "the sheer scope of this project is initially breathtaking and especially commendable." iOS

Good Night Dada - Elastico - Italy http://www.elasticoapp.com Playful, powerful responsive design is expertly mixed with lively Dada characters in this interactive storybook designed to help children overcome their fear of the dark. Jurors noted that the responsive design was appreciated by child testers with a delightful discover on every screen. iOS

MENTION (NON-FICTION)

Forme in Gioco (Forms in Play) - Minibombo - Italy http://www.minibombo.it is a truly charming example of creative design that has a vulnerable simplicity to it. Even the youngest child can think beyond the borders, to make connections between simple shapes and more complex objects. A circle can be a wheel, a cloud or a button. Jurors commended the designers "for creating a setting that mixes playfulness with exploration." iOS and Android

Toca Nature - Toca Boca - Sweden www.tocaboca.com is an excellent, playful biological simulation that invites children to build, encourage and explore their own ecosystem. The app's instant responsiveness is impressive, although visual quality has inevitably been compromised. Best of all is the real depth and quality of the interaction, which makes this a genuine child driven learning environment. iOS and Android. iOS

The hard working, well-fed jurors take a break with a multi-national game of foosball. From right to left: Max Whitby (UK), Warren Buckleitner (USA) take on Cristina Mussinelli (Italy) and Klaas Verplancke (Belgium)

SHORT LIST

The following ten titles, listed alphabetically, were deemed noteworthy by the jurors for their innovative contributions to the field.

Astropolo by Edoki www.edoki.net (France) impressed the jury for it's charming combination of old-school stop-motion paper animation in a futuristic outerspace context. The games appeal to a wide variation of skills, and some use voice driven interactivity. iOS.

Auschwitz, a Tale of Wind by Il Paragrafo http://www.paragrafoblu.it (Italy) successfully addresses a most serious topic with respect and a light touch. It avoids the pitfall of overloaded dark sentiments, and instead strikes a balance between confrontation, art and poetry, through moving visual and textual narration and special attention for revealing surprising details that bring light and hope. Jurors also noted the attempt to broaden the app with a timeline and maps. iOS.

Fiete, a Day in a Farm by Ahoiii Entertainment http://www.fiete-app.com (Germany) contains attractive animation and contemporary artwork that is enhanced by a meaningful farming theme and games that tie everything together. Jurors praised the progressive morning to night navigation technique for "thinking beyond the page." IOS, Amazon and Android.

Lars and Friends by Carla Susanto http://www.larsandfriends.com (USA) was shortlisted because of it's successful combination of storytelling and information, executed in a very elegant, manual technique. Jurors said "the animation and the stylization of the horses is particular noteworthy, providing proof of artistic and academic mastery." iOS

Loose Strands by Darned Socks Productions www.darnedsock.com (Canada) employs an innovative navigation technique that lets an older reader choose the direction of the storyline, by following a growing lock of hair. Jurors enjoyed this fresh approach in the way that a branching storyline could be presented, stating "this app contains

design lessons for any modern young adult author." iOS and Android.

Metamorphabet by Patrick Smith http://metamorphabet.com/ (USA) is truly a feast of imaginative graphics, with mesmerizing transitions, effects and interactions. Every click opens the door to a new, surprising perspective in a world where letters turn into 3D images. Jurors said "this is a playful and appealing execution of a basic idea." iOS

My Little Cook: Cucino Ottimi Spuntini by gradoZero http://www.gradozeroedizioni.com/ (Italy) combines playful cooking themes with real, and tasty recipes and the ability to use the camera to put your own identity under the chef's hat. Jurors "it's always nice to discover this level of authenticity and connection to the real world in an app." iOS, Android and Apple

Sago Mini Fairy Tales - Sago Sago www.sagosago.com (Canada) mixes slippery smooth interactive design that can empower even the youngest child, in a masterful mashup of 30 popular fairy tales. iOS

Storest by Pixle http://www.pixle.pl (Poland) cleverly transforms an iPad's screen into a supermarket scanner, with specific shopping challenges. Jurors "we've seen an increasing number of augmented reality examples this year. In this case, the technology was used to let children participate in a task that is meaningful." iOS

Windy's Lost Kite by Loud Crow Interactive www.loudcrow.com (Canada) is a blustery adventure featuring traditional crafting and stop-motion animation. The result is a uniquely engaging story experience that will be enjoyed by children and parents alike. iOS and Android

About the Prize

Technology can detract from a story, cluttering the experience with animation, sounds or clever effects. Other times, a product is no more than a digitization of a printed product, with pages that turn, and perhaps some text scaffolding tools. These may even have some animations "sprinkled" on the page. In a few instances the magic of the interactive technology was woven perfectly with the highest quality "old fashioned" illustration, craftsmanship and narration, creating a rich experience that was a delight to explore. These were the finalists and winners of the 2015 BolognaRagazzi Digital Award.

THE 2015 JURORS

Warren Buckleitner has been reviewing children's interactive media since the 1980s. He teaches Interactive Design at The College of New Jersey, and is the editor of *Children's Technology Review* and creator of the Dust or Magic Institute (www.dustormagic.com) and the Mediatech Foundation (www.mediatech.org). He's covered children's tech for The New York Times for a decade, and is a former preschool and elementary school classroom teacher who holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology.

Cristina Mussinelli is a board member of the Italian Publishers Association where she is responsible for the technological innovation and digital publishing areas. The IPA represents more than 90% of the Italian book publishing market. She is Secretary-General of the LIA Foundation, www.fondazionelia.org, a non-profit organization focused on promoting books and reading, in all its forms, both traditional and digital, in particular with reference to visually impaired people through education, information, awareness and research. She also manages European and international projects, the digital publishing professional training course program, the Editech conference www.editech.info. Since 2010 she has been a member of the Board of IDPF (International Digital Publishing Forum), the global trade and standards association for electronic publishing, that develops and maintains the EPUB standard.

Klaas Verplancke is a full-time illustrator/ author and is a docent at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. He was the first Flemish jury-member for the Bologna Illustrators Exhibition in 2004, and has been honored with a series of national and international exhibits, awards and nominations, culminating in winning the BolognaRagazzi Award for Ozewiezewoze and a Special Mention for Jot (2001), as a finalist in the Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration (2006) and nine consecutive nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. www.klaas.be

Max Whitby is Co-Founder and Director of Touchpress Ltd. Max has a PhD in Chemistry and started his career at the BBC where he led an early collaboration with Apple. He co-led a management buy-out and subsequent IPO of the BBC's pioneering Interactive Television Unit. In 2010 he co-founded the leading app developer Touchpress (touchpress.com) with Theodore Gray. He was CEO for the first four years when Touchpress published many ground-breaking apps including The Elements, The Waste Land, The Orchestra and Disney Animated (named by Apple Best iPad App 2013). Max continues to work for Touchpress and has embarked on a new venture, RGB Research (periodictable.co.uk). Max was executive producer on the app Disney Animated. He has a lifelong interest in natural history, which takes him filming around the world.

ABOUT *CHILDREN'S TECHNOLOGY REVIEW*
Since 1993, Children's Technology Review (www.childrenstech.com) has provided objective product news about children's interactive media to teachers, librarians and interactive publishers. The weekly/monthly publication takes no ads. Review activity is supported by paid subscription and through the Annual Dust or Magic Institute (www.dustormagic.com).

ABOUT THE BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR
The Bologna Children's Book Fair is the most important international event dedicated to the children's publishing industry. In Bologna, authors, illustrators, literary agents, licensors and licensees, packagers, distributors, printers, booksellers, and librarians meet to sell and buy copyright, find the very best of children's publishing and interactive media production, generate and gather new contacts while strengthening professional relationships, discover new business opportunities, and discuss and debate the latest sector trends. The fair attracted 1200 exhibitors coming from 66 countries and 5000 international professional trade representatives in 2014. The Fair offers more than 20.000 square meters (about 215.000 square feet) of exhibition space with a simple and easy-to-understand layout.
For further information:
Bologna Children's Book Fair
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