

## **Bologna Book Fair Impressions**

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/bologna-book-fair-impressions/>

This entry is part 1 of 5 in the series [Bologna Book Fair 2016](#)

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**I've just returned from an amazing first-time-ever trip to the Bologna Book Fair, a special event that showcases and celebrates children's books, and where deals for new children's books (everything from baby books to YA) are clinched and cinched.**

**Representative publishers, art directors, editors, agents, writers and illustrators from all over the globe come to Bologna to discuss the craft and business of children's books.**

I know that many of you are keen to know ALL about this incredible book fair, but there is a lot to cover. So I'm going to start with my own personal gallery of pictures from the book fair (just keep scrolling), and over the next several weeks will write about the greater details. (YES, there is really *that much* to discuss!)

I knew going into this that I would learn. I hoped that I would meet creative, interesting people. Both of these did happen and I'm really happy about that. What I didn't expect is how transformative this experience would be for me personally. It changed my perspective of children's books completely and ultimately redirected my creative focus in what I want to achieve.

**That was a *huge* surprise.**

I can, without any exaggeration at all, say that the [Bologna Children's Book Fair](#) changed my life. If

you've been there, you probably know exactly what I mean. If you haven't been there yet and want to illustrate &/or write children's books (read: any stories with pictures), **YOU MUST GO.**

This is the easiest and - perhaps most overwhelming - way to boost your writing/illustrating career, experience the world of books for kids from the *crème de la crème* (seriously, this is the best stuff on the planet) from around the world, and meet a lot of people who love the same stuff you do: namely, great stories (moving, inspiring, funny, instructional - you name it) with great art (beautiful, cute, funny, awe-inspiring).

There were several art galleries scattered throughout the Bologna Book Fair, and all of them were amazing and inspirational. I felt like I had a golden ticket into the coolest art museum ever (don't ever take me to a museum of modern art; I'll just get ticked off). This was for me an experience to savor.

Here are some of the pictures (I took about 200 in total - and I'm no photographer!) that I took while in Bologna, with some quick notes. I'll write in more detail about this stuff *and more* over the next several weeks.

### **A few words about Nutella & stuff**

Nutella comes from Italy. At every corner, you will find specialty products made with Nutella. Every *Gelateria* (ice cream parlor) has at least two types of Nutella ice cream. I tried both. Ahem. Good stuff.

Bologna is proudly termed the "City of Food." I can attest to that! Pasta, pizza, gelato (you can't really call it ice cream), parmesan cheese unlike any parmesan cheese you ever had in your life (unless you're Italian), Parma Ham (Parma is a short ride from Bologna), mortadella deli meats that taste like sin, and other scrumptious delights meant I would definitely *not* be losing weight on this trip. And it was totally worth it.

### **Lots of Books and Bookshops in Bologna!**

Bologna is a university town, and so it's filled with bookshops (in Italian: *Libreria*). Here (above) is the Pickwick, directly next to the Bar Okay - which isn't a bar at all, but a cafe. The books displayed are outside of the bookshop.

A very short walk away from this is a huge, permanent book-tent about the size of a small warehouse (pictured below, photographed from the famous and [beautiful scenographic staircase](#) of the [Parco della Montagnolla](#)). They sell Italian and English used books on all topics. Very cool. We spent quite some time there on the days before the Bologna Book Fair.

This (just below) is the inside of a [Coop Bookshop](#), a 3-story bookshop in the renovated ruins of an old cathedral, located in [the Quadrilatero, the amazing medieval market](#). On the top floor is a small restaurant. If you love books and food, this is your haven.

## The Portico City

Grand porticos are all over the city. Pictured above is the ceiling of one so beautiful it's worth the neck-ache from looking up to stare and gawk.

The historical reason for all the porticos in the city - especially around the centre (not including [the San Luca porticos](#) and certain special buildings) is fascinating and surprisingly practical - in fact, it's due to [the university](#). The University of Bologna was the first in Europe (founded in 1088, it's the second oldest university in the world - beaten by the University of Karueein in Morocco, 859 AD).

When the university was built, it quickly grew - but there was a shortage of dorm rooms, so the city decided to add the needed space to the outsides of buildings all over town. To ensure that carriages could still get around without trouble, porticos tall and wide enough to let them pass were built underneath these added rooms for students.

The building on the left shows student apartments above the porticos.

## Many Competitions at the Bologna Book Fair

Much to my surprise, there were several illustrated storybook competitions hosted at the Bologna Book Fair. The Bologna Ragazzi for Fiction was one of them. Here (above) are some of the display cases showing the top picks. There were so many people around, it was difficult to get this shot. I had to be both early and patient.

## Impressive Publisher Displays

The publisher displays for the Bologna Book Fair were often bombastic and gorgeous. Here are a few grand impressions.

The eye-catching image above was one of several murals at the fair. This is about a fifth of the total mural that a publisher from Germany (this year's Guest of Honor country at the Bologna Book Fair) had on display.

Of the MacMillan display, this picture shows about 2/5 of the total breadth. It was impressive and inviting, and not the only publisher who included a sofa and comfy chairs (not shown) in their section.

This critter was larger than life. It really drew people into the book display. You didn't come up to it, you felt like you were in it.

## **Art Directors, Editors Actively Looking for Talent**

If you wander through the many buildings of the Bologna Book Fair (there are five in all), you'll see that many illustrators are lined-up at the publisher's counters. The reason: they're showing their portfolios to Editors and Art Directors. You can freely approach any publisher, but many plant a formal invitation to artists.

### **The Open-Door Policy to Artists**

These invitation-signs usually read something like this: "Artists Welcome! Portfolio Viewings: 12:30-13:30 and 15:30-16:30." The hours are different from one publisher to the next, but during those times you'll inevitably find a line of eager new artists. I spoke with several who have had success with this, so it's definitely worthwhile.

### **The WALL.**

This (below) is a small section of the Illustrator's Wall, one of the coolest things about the Bologna Book Fair. On the first day early in the morning, there was about half a wall covered in cards and small posters from illustrators. It grew, day to day. By the time I left, the Illustrator's Wall stretched over more than six walls. It covered windows, wrapped around the elevator, and even stretched across the floor in some places. It was fantastic.

### **So very, very much!**

I have a lot to cover! There were stands for publishers large and small, but there were also stands representing artists or representing organizations that support creative people (like the SCBWI - more on that).

Because the Bologna Book Fair is so relaxed, there was a lot of chatting and I never knew when I might strike up a conversation with an editor, agent or art director. They were everywhere and they were all very approachable. Though the [Bologna Book Fair](#) is considerably more expensive than the [Book Fair in Frankfurt](#) (for both visitors and for shelf space), it's extremely casual.

There were pros and cons to these differences and more, and I'll go into all that. I promise! Just check back here for updates (twice a week) - or you can just sign-up for my newsletter and get all that right to your inbox.

What do you think? Have you been to the Bologna Book Fair? Write below, let me know - or as ever, send me an email. I love getting those.

**Keep creating, no matter what.**

**This entry is part of the series**

[Bologna Book Fair 2016](#)

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