

News release



V&A Illustration Awards 2024 Winner Announcement

V&A Illustration Awards 2024

18th September 2024 – 21st September 2025

Room 102, Leighton Gallery, V&A South Kensington



The V&A has named **Benjamin Phillips** the **Maira Gemmill Illustrator of the Year** for 2024. Winning the **Illustration for Children** category, Phillips’ deeply personal tale delves into ideas around Jewish identity, generational divides, and gentrification through the familial dynamic between a grandmother and her grandson. This 70-page graphic novel, imbued with empathetic and evocative hand-drawn scenes is described by judges as “unique, moving and powerful, with a subtle beauty”.

The awards - now celebrating their 52nd year - celebrate excellence across five categories: Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Advertising and Commercial, Emerging Illustrator and Illustration for Children. Entries this year came in record numbers, with

over 2000 works submitted, each tackling a variety of themes and exploring a multitude of ideas through the medium of illustration.

The 2024 winners were selected by an expert judging panel consisting of printmaker and previous Illustration Awards winner James Albon, author, illustrator and animator Yasmeen Ismail, founder and director of Gran Salón Mexico Maru Aguzzi, and esteemed illustrator and cartoonist Chris Riddell, with Director of the V&A, Tristram Hunt acting as chair. Selected artwork from each of the winners and runners up will feature in a display at the V&A from 18th September 2024 – 21st September 2025, in celebration of their outstanding achievement.

Judge Maru Aguzzi said: *Something that was surprising was the fact that I didn't really encounter trendy themes or traces, something that for me is very common in contests where you usually see a lot of illustration that doesn't necessarily represent the illustrator. Here I saw mostly unique styles, and that is very empowering.*

The work of Benjamin Phillips is so unique and powerful, so moving, that, while we all had our differences during the judging process, here there was no doubt.

Judge Yasmeen Ismail said: *This year's V&A Illustration competition was brimming with incredible work, and I was delighted to find that we were all in complete and immediate agreement that Benjamin Phillips' work filled our hearts with joy. Benjamin is truly a deserving winner.*

I am so honoured to have judged this prestigious award, and I am sure each winner and runner up will (and should) feel extremely proud of their achievement. I can't wait to meet them on the night and congratulate them in person.

Judge James Albon said: *Judging the V&A Illustration Award was an extremely difficult task. When I first looked through the enormous number of entries, I was stunned by the tremendous quality and diversity of so many of the entrants; especially in the Emerging Artist category, many of whom could easily have been included among the professional categories. The whole experience has left me excited and optimistic about the quality of work being produced in the British Illustration scene and particularly hopeful for the new generation of up-and-coming illustrators.*

Judge Chris Riddell: *Judging the V&A's Illustration Awards was an exhilarating experience. There was a wealth of talent in all the categories, playful, thought provoking and clever.*

Benjamin Philips' visual storytelling stood out, both for the subtle beauty of the artwork and the accessibility of his compositions. A worthy winner amongst outstanding entries.

Annemarie Bilclough, Frederick Warne Curator of Illustration at the V&A, said: *For the 2024 V&A Illustration Awards we broadened categories and added an extra prize to try and capture a wider range of illustration. More than 2000 entries of a very high standard covered everything from graphic novels to album covers, and techniques from*

watercolour to digital collage. The display features sketches as well as finished artworks so visitors will also get a sense of illustration as a process as well. There is such a diverse range of work, we can't wait to see how it all looks together!

Each category winner will receive £3,000, with runners-up receiving £750. The overall winner is named *Moira Gemmill Illustrator of the Year* and receives an additional £5,000, with their artwork entering the V&A's outstanding collections of illustration, joining works by renowned artists such as Aubrey Beardsley, Sir John Tenniel, E.H. Shepard, Quentin Blake and Posy Simmonds.

A full list of award winners and runner up entries for 2024 are below:

Winner of the Adult Fiction category: Jorge González, *The Shadow of the Wind*.

Published by Folio Society, 2023

Following the creation of his initial drawings for *The Shadow of the Wind* in oil pastel and pencil, Jorge González combined the resultant architectural backdrops and characters digitally. The rich multifaceted illustrations were coupled with digital layering to add atmospheric depth and pattern.

Runner-up of the Adult Fiction category: Mu Pan, *Monkey*. Published by The Folio Society, 2023

Monkey is an abridged version of the Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, attributed to Wu Ch'êng-ên and written in the 16th century. Mu Pan's intricate ink drawings recall Chinese scroll paintings, illustrating this folktale beautifully and bringing to life the characters and their misadventures in vibrant detail.

Winner of the Adult Non-Fiction category: Claire Harrup, *Britain's Landmarks*.

Published by National Trust and Harper Collins, 2023

Claire Harrup's enchanting artwork evokes the atmospheric qualities of Britain's ancient heritage sites, from mystical stone circles to isolated hermits' caves. Harrup sketches her compositions in ink and builds textures through brushwork and relief printing before adding the colour digitally, with results evocative of the romantic tradition of landscape art.

Runner-up of the Adult Non-Fiction category: Maisy Summer, *Elsie Plant Hatting Hero*. Hat Works Museum, Stockport, 2023

Maisy Summer's animation places community at the heart of a project for the Hat Works Museum in Stockport, telling the story of Elsie Plant's work as a women's welfare campaigner and suffragette. Through cutting and collaging scanned documents from the museum's archives in combination with digital drawing and handcrafted line-work, Summer created playful textures to engage the audience with this richly layered person-focused history.

Runner-up of the Adult Non-Fiction category: Andrea Serio, *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Published by Vintage Classics, 2023

The Gulag Archipelago, written by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, is based on his own experiences in Soviet forced labour camps and the testimonies of his fellow detainees. Andrea Serio's beautiful but unforgiving backdrop to a group of prisoners toiling in the snow conveys the extreme hardship of the Gulag. The cover design successfully transforms into three individual images when wrapped around the book.

Winner of the Advertising and Commercial category: Paul Blow, album cover for *New Modern Homes* by The Chesterfields. Mr Mellow's Music, 2022

Paul Blow's vibrant imagery is inspired by lyrics from indie band, The Chesterfields. On the album cover, a 10-foot-tall man looks into a Norwegian modernist house in daylight, and in the inner sleeve we see the depiction of a woman inside the same house, which glows orange in the twilight.

Runner-up of the Advertising and Commercial category: Simon Pemberton, *London Philharmonic Orchestra campaign 2022/23 Season*. London Philharmonic Orchestra, 2022

Commissioned for the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Simon Pemberton's richly textured illustrations reflect on music's ability to transport listeners far and wide, from dark forest to mountain valley. Inspired by the season's theme, *A Place Called Home* and quotes from the composers, Pemberton's artwork alludes to ideas of memory, sanctuary, hope and displacement.

Winner of the Emerging Illustrator category: Aditi Anand, *Marigolds*. 2023

Inspired by flower markets in her hometown in India, Aditi Anand's raw and powerful artwork recounts the story of a mother teaching her child to make marigold garlands for sale, but hint at the reality of child labour. The artist uses mixed media with a digital finish to craft her illustrations.

Runner-up of the Emerging Illustrator category: Shuyan Chen, *The Fliers of Gy*. 2023

Inspired by Ursula K. Le Guin's short story *The Fliers of Gy*, Shuyan Chen's delicate watercolour illustration captures the conflicting emotions of the winged people, whose gift of flying is sometimes a curse that can lead to death. In a contemptuous gesture, the winged actor holds a feather outstretched. Chen studied ostriches to realise the character's feathered hair and powerful grace.

Winner of the Illustration for Children category and Moira Gemmill Illustrator of the Year: Benjamin Phillips, *Alte Zachen / Old Things* by Ziggy Hanaor. Published by Cicada Books 2022

Alte Zachen follows a boy and his grandmother, Bubbe, on errands around New York as she reminisces about the past. Phillips' artwork combines rich imagery and great narrative detail, using colour to differentiate between Bubbe's vibrant memories and the muted grey of the present day. Using separate sheets for his delicate ink washes and outlines, Phillips later combines the digitally.

Runner-up of the Illustration for Children category: Coralie Bickford-Smith, *The Squirrel and the Lost Treasure*, Published by Particular books 2023

The Squirrel and the Lost Treasure is designer Bickford-Smith's fourth children's book, written and illustrated by herself. Her graphic page designs, inspired by William Morris's Kelmscott Press, become canvases for a playful depiction of nature. Bickford-Smith uses digital techniques to replicate the handmade feel of traditional printing techniques by collaging layers of colour.

- ENDS -

For further PRESS information about V&A Illustration Awards please contact Saffron Brown Davis on s.browndavis@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 7942 2502 (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

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About the Illustration Awards

Established in 1972, the V&A Illustration Awards is a free, biennial competition celebrating excellence in contemporary illustration, and judged by a panel of prominent illustrators and industry experts.

The Awards celebrate artwork made for the UK market by artists from across the globe as well as artwork made by illustrators living in the UK. This year has seen a revision to our Awards categories to now cover Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Illustration for Children, Advertising and Commercial and the Emerging Illustrator.

The Awards are generously supported by The Linder Foundation and the Moira Gemmill Memorial fund.